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**Research Paper**

# **Representation of Muslims' condition in America after 9/11 incident: Postcolonial study of the novel 'The Reluctant Fundamentalist'**

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The present study compares the conditions of protagonist of the novel "Changez" with the colonized nation. The Study shows the place of Muslims and Muslim countries in the eyes of Americans after 9/11 incident. Changez as postcolonial subject represents the state of the Muslims, colonized by Europeans. In America his way of living represents him hybrid, who, leaving his native culture adopts the culture of another country. 'Other' is the most important element of postcolonial theory found in the novel. After 9/11 incident Changez feels that he is 'other' means not fully human. Americans' changing attitude makes him diaspora. Before the fall of World Trade Centre he never remembered his home. As a nativist he has beard in protest and leaving his job comes back to Pakistan. Moreover, research will describe the values and demands of the Muslims who were well settled in America since long? The paper will focus on the sudden changing attitude of Americans to Muslims after 9/11 incident.

**Key Words:** Hybridity, Other, Diaspora (unhomed) and Nativism

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Changez is undoubtedly a post-colonial subject. His condition is far more complex than any colonized nation. He is free but everywhere he is in chains. He is hung up between fire and water. After the incident of World Trade Centre he wants to be back but his family ignores his request. On one hand his family, his beloved Erica, his ideal job and luxurious life prevent him to be back and on the other hand Americans' changing attitude, America's cruel attack on Afghanistan and Indo-Pak tense relation compel him to be back. Changez, after completing his graduation from Preston University, gets job in prestigious worth Assessment Company named

Underwood Samson. He is satisfied with his life; enjoying life as an American. He has adopted American culture. He wears clothes, deals in like an American. He falls in love with Erica; he loves her from the core of his heart. Everything was going on peacefully as it had gone on, but 9/11 incident brought earthquake in his life. On media the news of 9/11 incident spread like the fire of forest and it highlighted that Al-Qaida an Islamic religious extremist group attacked World Trade Centre. Their Physical appearance generated hatred in the hearts of Americans for Muslims. Though Changez did not belong to Al-Qaida, he was sincere with America and his job. But his beard

put him into hot water. People stared at him, called his names and behaved him unfriendly. His colleagues compelled him to think that where he had come. Now, he began to feel himself unhommed. In revenge, America attacked Afghanistan. As Muslim and Pakistani he started abhorring America because Afghanistan was Pakistan's neighbor and fellow Muslim nation. Just to finish a few people of Al-Qaida many innocent were killed. On the other hand India's attack on LOC grows tension for his country. Because of these incidents he could not concentrate on his job and failed to achieve the assigned target. So, on this ground he was fired from the firm. He experienced and understood that for him America had become unsuitable place. He came back to Pakistan and joined University as a lecturer.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

How has Mohsin Hamid presented the condition of Muslims in America after 9/11 incident in his novel: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*?

## METHODOLOGY

### Descriptive Qualitative Research

The present research in its nature is qualitative and employs textual-narrative analysis of the novel "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" from the vantage point of Postcolonial Literary Discourse. The collected data for the present paper are descriptive and narrative. Therefore, the qualitative tools like definition, explanation, interpretation are employed to analyze the data and draw generalization and conclusion.

According to Kothari the writer of "*Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*" discusses the major purposes of the descriptive research and description of the state of affairs as present. The research can report what has happened or what is happening. (Kothari, 2008, p.3). Moreover, in the eyes of Calmorin et al (2007) Descriptive Research is to find new truth. According to his deep study in the field of research methodology truth may have different forms such as increased quality of knowledge, a new generalization or a new „law“, an increased insight into factors which are operating the discovery of new causal relationship, a more accurate formulation of the problem to be solved and many others" (p.70)

### Post-Colonial Literary Discourse Research Method

So far as Postcolonial Literary Discourse Research Method is concerned Ashcroft et al. (1989) maintains the

very momentous aspect of this literary discourse in which Indians have been colonized and made them slave in their own territory. One of the greatest postcolonial theorists Homi K. Bhabha describes that form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once colonized Third World come to be framed in the West" (Bhabha in P. Mongia, 1997, p. ix). The treatment of English people with native people has microscopically been studied in the light of postcolonial theory. The elements of postcolonial theory which the present paper has selected are Other, Diaspora, Nativism, and Hybridity. These aspects of postcolonial literary discourse are very much relevant to the textual study of the novel "*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*".

## DATA ANALYSIS /DISCUSSION

### a. Hybridity

Hybridity shows combination of two products. In literature hybridism is used to represent the character knotted between two cultures. Any character who leaves his own native culture and adopts another's culture called hybrid. MR Habib says 'the nation hybrid is central to Bhabha's work in challenging nations of identity, culture and nation as coherent. Hybridity express a state of 'in betweenness' an in person who stands between two cultures.'(Habib, 750). This characteristic of hybridism is found in the character of Changez. He is basically a Pakistani, loves his country very much. On scholarship he comes to America and does his graduation from Princeton collage. After graduation he gets job in Underwood Samson Company, a small yet exalted in reputation, valuation firm. Now Changez has got his ideal place, he is enjoying his luxurious life with peace and contentment. He has adopted American culture and made America his home. He says at the very outset of the novel.' I am a lover of America". (Hamid, 1) Changez adopts American culture completely. He loves Erica; he makes love with her "and we made love with a physical intimacy that Erica and I had never enjoyed. (Hamid, 120) He often goes out with her. But in Pakistan his way of living was totally changed. Changez replies to Erica when she asks him of his experiences about the nature of sex. 'I told her I had never had to nothing in the way of sex before coming to America.' (Hamid, 104) In America changez starts drinking as Americans are used to. He shows his interest in drinking when Erica's father asks him if he drink alcohol. Changez says 'I do sir'. (Hamid, 61) In America his way of living was totally different from Pakistan.

### b. Other

Other as Post colonialistic element represents discarded

people. Colonizers considered native people different; that's why they kept them away from them. They treated brutally as though they would be worst creature of the world. They could not join their company and even their entrance was not allowed in their colonies and hotels. EM Forster writes in '*A passage to India*' that Indians and dogs were not allowed in their colonies and clubs. It is discussed in detail in critical theory today by Lois Tyson.

As the embodiment of what a human being should be, the proper 'self'; native people were considered 'Other' different, and therefore inferior to the point of being less than fully human. This practice of judging all who are different as less than fully human is called othering, and it divides the word between us (the 'civilized') an 'then' (the 'other' or 'savages'). (Tyson, 420)

After 9/11 incident Changez realized that he was 'other' for America. The country for which he was working, the people to whom he was benefitting and the colleagues to whom he considered his friends at all sudden they had become indifferent to him. At the Airport of New York he was strictly checked and asked his purposes of to be in America. He answered; he lived in America since long. But on his irrelevant answer he was again asked that for what purpose he had come in America. Though Changez lived in America and worked in well known firm for a considerable time, but his beard and Eastern look mixed his services of years into dust. Now he was not more than a Muslim. When his checking was under process his colleagues leaving him at the port left for Manhattan. It was the first time when he had to travel alone after 9/11 incident. Before this incident such moment had never come in his life in America. My team did not wait for me; by the time I entered the custom hall they had collected their suitcases and left. As a consequence, I rode to Manhattan that evening very much alone.' (Hamid, 86) Elements of other was also mentioned in chapter two when group of Erica and Changez got together in evening, they asked to reveal their dream one by one that what they would most like to be. When Changez's turn came; he said he wanted to be a dictator of an Islamic country that owns its nuclear power as well. Everyone in the group confirmed that if he was joking. His dream shocked the group, because his beard was a solid proof of him to become what he had expressed. That's why for confirmation he was forced to explain that he was serious or joking 'when my turn came, I said I hoped one day to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability; the others appeared shocked, and I was forced to explain that I had been joking.' (Hamid, 33) In chapter number eight the elements of other is obvious. After 9/11 incident Changez had become joke in the eyes

of America. His colleagues had not been sincere with him. Every American considered him their enemy and agent of Al-Qaida. People contemptuously stared at him and called his names. He was irritated with different ways: 'once I was walking to my rental car in the parking lot of the cable company when I was approached by a man I did not know. He made a series of unintelligible noises- "*akhala-makhala*," perhaps or "*khalapal-khalapala*"- and pressed his face alarmingly close to mine. (Hamid, 133) Beard had become enemy of his life. People called him 'fucking Arabs.' (133) Overnight Changez had become the hot topic among his colleague. It seemed as if he was entangled in America. His condition was like a colonized people. Day by day his life was becoming difficult for him. Americans looked at him with such glance as if he had demolished World Trade Center or he was the master mind of the plan. He felt that life had been narrowed for him. He could neither sleep calmly nor awake coolly. Americans had snatched his sleep of night and peace of day. He came to the state of dilemma when he heard people talking about his involvement in 9/11 incident. 'I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers, and Underwood Samson I seemed to become overnight a subject of whispers and stares.' (Hamid, 148) Due to unfriendly attitude of colleagues, baseless talking of people and Indo-Pak tense relation distracted his attention from his duties. He failed to completely concentrate on his task. His less concentration devalued the firm which caused his termination from the job. At last he had to say America farewell forever. He had never wept in his young hood but after losing his job he lost his control on him and he could not stop his tears. If he had not been compelled he would have not left America. He did not come here to be back. He graduated from top ranked university, got job in prestigious valuation firm. His dream had come true; he did never think that he had to be back with broken-hearted and weeping eyes.

'I realized how deep was the suspicion I had engendered in my colleagues over these past few -beaded and resentful-weeks; only Wainwright came over to shake my hand and say farewell; the others, if they bothered to look at me at all. The guards did not leave me until I was outside the building, and it was only then that I allowed myself to rub my eyes with the back of my hand, for they had been watering. (Hamid, 181-182)

### c. Diaspora (Unhomed)

According to Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary Diaspora or (unhomed) people are those who have spread or been dispersed from their homeland. In post-

colonial theory the term is used to discuss the feeling of people separated from their original homeland. Though separate people are well-settled in new place but they remember their native place very much. According to the term people leave their home for employment so that they could support their family. They kept on helping their family and become slave of other country. They want to be back but they could not do so. If they come back, how they will fulfill the need of their family.

Forced migration, either as quest for employment, including indentured servitude, or as the result of enslavement scattered large numbers of people around the globe and large populations of their descendants have remained in the diaspora, or separated, from their original homeland.' (Tyson; 421)

In the novel Mohsin Hamid depicted Changez as diaspora. Changez is doing job in America and his family is in Lahore. His family is financially weak; facing domestic problems and Changez is only one to support his family. After the incident of World Trade Centre, Changez realized that he was actually a diaspora; separated from his homeland. Before the incident of 9/11 attack Changez was living peacefully. He was enjoying his life with Erica and his colleagues. He always focused on his work; his busy life schedule never let him remember his family and country. He believed that America was his country and its people were his compatriot. He never thought that he would suddenly be stranger in the country with which he loved a lot and where he wanted live forever.

'but as I reacclimatized and my surroundings once again became familiar, it occurred to me that the house had not changed in my absence. I had changed; and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled an unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classroom and workplace of your country's elite. This realization angered me; staring at my reflection in the speckled glass of my bathroom mirror I resolved to exorcize the unwelcome sensibility by which I had become possessed. (Hamid, 141)

For Changez Americans detestation was unbearable. He said he was a lover of America but his love had turned into hatred when he observed that the country which he loved a lot had become enemy of Muslim World. And the people whom he had been considering his brothers and friends had become haters. America, to take revenge from Al-Qaida, had attacked Afghanistan. Afghanistan was one of the closest neighboring countries of Pakistan;

its border was connected with Pakistan. Afghanistan was a Muslim country and it was friend of Pakistan. Americas cruel Attack on Afghanistan and killing of its innocent people broken Changez's heart into uncountable pieces. When he saw destroyed areas and scattered corpses of innocent Afghans; he shocked and could not tolerate pain of his Muslim brothers. He was caught by the acute thought that Pakistan might be next target of America.

'Afghanistan was Pakistan's neighbor, our friend, and a fellow Muslim nation besides, and the sight of what I took to be the beginning of its invasion by our country men caused me to tremble with fury.'(Hamid, 113-114)In the beginning Changez avoided America's unwise decision of removing terrorism by attacking Afghanistan. But when he observed extremism in destruction and killing of Afghan People; he was discouraged and hated to be called American. He completely knew that he was not American; he was just there for earning and to financially support his family. When Changez came to Pakistan on vacation he did not want to go back.

"what sort of man abandons his people in such circumstances? And what was I abandoning them for? A well-paying job and a woman whom I longed for but who refused even to see me? I grappled with these questions again and again. When the time came for me to return to New York I told my parents.' (Hamid, 145)

Now he understood that Pakistan is his homeland and did not want to remain unhomed anymore. Now he could not bear Americans' contemptuous look and Laughing at him. Moreover Americans' cruel attack to Afghans had disheartened him and devalued the image of America what he had in his mind. He said that he wanted to stay more but his family did not accept his request: 'when the time came for me to return to New York I told my parents I wanted to stay longer' (Hamid, 145) but they would not hear for it. Unabated firing from both sides on border and test of atomic missiles had much worsened Indo-Pak relation. Furthermore America, between India and Pakistan was playing its apparent neutral role to fulfill its mission. America's scheming role provoked them to take action against one another, but these countries did not understand America's plane. Due to tense relation of Indo-Pak Changez could not concentrate on his task. This was the reason of sudden change and the problem he was facing; but there was no one to understand man inside him. He was always obsessed with Pakistan, which distracted his mind from his work. He could not paid required attention to his work. And at last on this ground he was fired from his beloved firm.



#### d. Nativism

The term nativism defines 'the protest of the native people against the colonizers' culture; and readoption of their native culture.' Basically after colonization native people showed their hatred with colonizers by rejecting and cursing the bad governance and culture which replaced their ways of living. Natives in post-colonial theory are shown leaving everything which connected them with colonizers. They don't want to live under western influence that's why they even leave the job offered by Europeans. Natives don't want to have anything related to Europeans. Nativist prove that they were and will ever be civilized, no colonizer can crush their noble culture under their feet. To cast erode western ways of living and adopt native culture is called nativism or nationalism. This element of post colonialism is discussed in detail in critical theory today by Lois Tyson.

She says many ex-colonial therefore feel they must assert a native culture both to avoid being swamped by western culture so firmly planted on their soil and to recuperate their national image in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. This emphasis on indigenous culture especially when accompanied by the attempt to eliminate western influences is called nativism on nationalism. (Tyson 423)

To leave the desired job and his favourite country proved Changez that he did not want to stay there anymore under the influence of that country where Muslims had no respect and innocents Afghans were brutally killed with massive munitions. Changez in protest had beard, left the job and said farewell to America forever.

Jaun-Bautista made Changez realize that he was indirectly involved in all corruptions made by America. Through conversation with Jaun-Bautista Changez came to know that he was indirectly helping America in attacking Afghanistan. Changez was shocked to think that he was killing his Muslim brothers. His money was involved in destructive weapons. He cursed himself that he was killing his brothers and destroying his Muslim country. In America, whoever was working; they were directly or indirectly supporting America in its corruptions. After having discussion with Jaun-Bautista, Changez perceived himself Modern Janissaries, he was being utilized against his own Muslim country, but he was unaware of his participation in corruption done by America. Jaun-Bautista told him that their Christian boys who had been captured in their childhood and were made devoted and dangerous soldiers. They were utilized against their own homeland. They unknowingly killed their people because they didn't know about their birth place. In the same way Changez came to America,

worked for it and indirectly helped in attacking weak countries:

Have you heard of Janissaries?' 'No,' I said. 'They were Christian boys,' he explained, "captured by the Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in Muslim army, at the time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal; they had fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to. (Hamid, 171-172)

After listening Jaun-Bautista's comment on Janissaries he realized that he was modern Janissary. He was annoyed at his versatility that how he failed to know that he was supporting America in destroying his Muslim brothers: 'In any case, Jaun-Bautista's words plunged me into a deep bout of introspection. I spent that night considering what I had become. There really could be no doubt: I was a modern day- Janissary.'(Hamid, 173)

#### CONCLUSION

Americans' attitude to Muslims after 9/11 incident reminds us the treatment of British with Indians. American Muslims' condition, after the incident of the fall of World Trade Centre, can be compared by any means with that of Muslims shortly after the war of independence 1857. Changez the protagonist of the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* depicted as post-colonial subject represents the state of the Muslims, colonized by Europeans. In America, his way of living represents him hybrid who leaving his native culture adopts another one. 'Other' is one of the most important elements of postcolonial theory that is prevalent in the novel. After 9/11 incident Changez feels that he is "other" means not fully human for America. Americans' changing attitude and its attack on Muslim country made him diaspora. Before such cruel behavior of America he was not much worried about his home and homeland. As a nativist he has beard in protest and comes back to his homeland.

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**Research Paper**

# De-Stereotyping the History of Africa: the Hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt and the Manuscripts of Timbuktu as the Clues Establishing the Anteriority of African Civilization

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The paper strived to deconstruct the commonly held stereotypical myths about Africa. In this dynamics, it has been discovered that two salient elements like Africa does not have any history as well as the black race is an inferior one, had been developed by Eurocentrists to justify the horrendous practices of slavery and colonialism in Africa. In other words, the first element was generally related to the lack of any writing practice or system existing in pre-colonial Africa before the arrival of Arabs and Europeans and the second one was linked to the color of the skin of the African people, their blackness. However it must be pointed out that the study also explored, explained and showed how the Hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt and the Manuscripts of Timbuktu could effectively and efficiently contribute to the De-Stereotyping of the History of Africa if their exploitation, teaching and dissemination were popularized in and outside Africa. In so doing, the study's data were collected and analyzed in the context of the postcolonial theory as well as the adoption of the Homi Bhabharian Third Space of Enunciation to advocate a democratized globalization of cultures and nations.

**Key words:** Hieroglyphs, Manuscripts of Timbuktu, Africa, stereotypes and Eurocentrism

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically, Africa is the cradle of humankind and the birth place of one of the oldest and greatest civilizations on earth. However these historical facts about Africa have unfortunately been ignored or denied by some

Eurocentrists in their works. They invented stories and myths about Africa to account for their coming to Africa. Thus by Eurocentric myths, we mean the multifaceted invented clichés, stereotypes and archetypes about

Africa and the African. In addition, they refer to the different ways through which Eurocentrists positively represent, describe, praise and perceive Europe and the European in contrast to Africa and the African too. In this frame of mind, Eurocentrists have deliberately developed and adopted a particular discourse on Africa and the African on the basis of two key elements: race and the lack of any written system in precolonial Africa. Such a discourse is rooted in the binary opposition of Europe and Africa. It clearly indicates that Africa has become the antithesis of Europe in terms of civilization and development, mainly in the domains of writing and culture. It is in regard to the foregoing that the objective of the study is to deconstruct the commonly constructed myths, perceptions, and misconceptions by Eurocentrists about Africa and the African.

As in the above, the study is highly important because it is observed that many Africans as well as Europeans still believe in the propagandas coalesced in the discourse of Eurocentrism on Africa. Its importance and relevance also lie in the facts that many Africans still do not know that Africa had always had her own writing systems like the *hieroglyphs*<sup>1</sup>, the *Ajami*<sup>2</sup> and the *Tifinagh*<sup>3</sup> before the arrival of Europeans and to some extent before the Arabs in Africa and she had produced some of the worldly greatest civilizations as well. Also, it is noticed that the vast majority of postcolonial Africans are easily losing what is indeed admirable in their indigenous traditions, customs and cultures. This is due to the way western cultures are packaged, diffused and advertised in consistence with the ideology of Eurocentrism which is rooted in strategies like polarity and the *Hamitic Theory or hypothesis*<sup>4</sup>. At last, by writing about such an extremely salient topic, many postcolonial Africans would eventually be interpellated into accepting, learning, praising, revisiting and cherishing African culture and authentic history. It implies that the ultimate pertinence of the study is therefore to enable the contemporary African to acquire appropriate knowledge about his history, culture, writing systems and others in a

<sup>1</sup> They refer to the first pictorial system of writing invented by the people of Kemet in the ancient world. The French scholar JEAN François Champollion was the first European to decipher them on a stone found near Rosetta by French soldiers in 1799.

<sup>2</sup> It comes from Arabic and it etymologically means for non-Arab or for foreigner. Thus, it should be understood as a writing practice using foreign languages by modifying the Arab script.

<sup>3</sup> It is a writing system which was devised by the Touareg people to mainly produce and promote their literature, especially poetry. The system was highly mastered by women who were the principle artists for poetry production and writing.

<sup>4</sup> It consists in relating the origins of any artistic or scientific inventions or creations found in Africa to the influence of white people. It was thus an implied manner to deny intelligence, reason and creativity to Africans by advocating the supremacy of the white race over the black one.

globalized context of Westernization. In implementing the study, the following research questions need to be asked:

- What is Eurocentrism and its implications?
- What may be the psychological impacts of Eurocentrism on the postcolonial African?
- Is the first writing system the work of the African genius or due to outside non-African influence?
- And how can the knowing, exploitation, teaching, promotion and the preservation of the Hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt and the Manuscripts of Timbuktu effectively and efficiently contribute to the De-Stereotyping of the History of Africa?

The answers to the foregoing research questions would purposively show the anteriority and importance of African civilizations before the coming of Europeans and Arabs in Africa. In the same frame of mind, the research data are collected and analyzed in the context of the postcolonial theory. In analyzing the data, some cultural studies and postcolonial concepts, like multiculturalism, Otherness, binarism, Louis Althusser's Interpellation, Bhabha's Third Space of Enunciation, are therefore utilized to reach the specific objectives of the study as indirectly conveyed through the research questions. Let us now review some of the Eurocentric myths about both Africa and Europe in the coming paragraphs to better comprehend the issue at stake.

### **Eurocentric Myths about Africa and Europe**

Most of the stories (*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inferieures* by Lévy-Bruhl, *Lectures of the Philosophy of History* by George Hegel etc) written by Europeans about Africa and Africans at the beginning of slavery and colonialism were deliberately prepared to distort the reality of Africa. By distorting the reality of Africa, they wanted to render their interventions in Africa humanistic by pretending that Africa did not have any history. Their justification of the latter was constructed on the so called inability of the African to cleverly devise a writing system to record his past deeds, daily activities and future planning. Even today, this myth is unfortunately still disseminated through western televisions and radios' channels, literature, Media, schools' handbooks and many others. For instance, the former president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, in a speech delivered on July, 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar sustains such a falsified view on African history and the African as follows:

The tragedy of Africa is that the African man has not gone far enough in history. The African peasant, who

for millennia has lived with the seasons, whose ideal life is to be in harmony with nature, knows only the eternal beginning of time punctuated by the endless repetition of the same gestures and actions. Same words. In this imaginary where everything starts all over again, there is no place for human adventure, nor for the idea of progress (...) The problem of Africa and allow a friend of Africa to say it , He's there. Africa's challenge is to go deeper into history. It is to draw from it the energy, the strength, the desire, the will to listen and to marry its own history. The problem of Africa is to stop always repeating, to constantly rehearse, to free oneself from the myth of the eternal return, is to become aware that the golden age that it never stops regret, will not return for the reason that it never existed (p.6).

This excerpt from the speech of Sarkozy indeed highlights and confirms the Eurocentric propagandas against Africa. She is unfortunately, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by a French president in office at the time of the speech, described as having had no history, but she should rather seize the opportunity to finally enter history. That is, she must now inscribe and have her own history by becoming civilized and reasonable in dealing with the present so as to better prepare her future. Besides, the foregoing passage indicates that the future does not depend on the past and it is therefore assured only through work and anticipation. Like Sarkozy and even before him in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the same view was developed by George Hegel in *Lectures of the Philosophy of History*, another key Eurocentrist, cited in *Africa in World History* in the like manner: "Africa is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit"(P.XVII). This shows the extent to which Westerners have had a wrong view on Africa and the African. The paradox is that many archeological and scientific pieces of evidence have attested and proven the inventions of writing systems by Africans like the hieroglyphs, *Tifinagh* and the most recent one which is *N'Ko*<sup>5</sup>. These writing systems are the testimonies that Africa has always had her own history and had also recorded it through the foregoing writing systems. The works of Cheikh Anta Diop (*Civilization or Barbarism*), Williams Chancellor (*The Destruction of the Black Civilization*), Ivan Van Sertima (*They Came before Columbus*), Gerald Massey (*Ancient Egypt: The Light of the World*), Martin Bernal (*Black Athena*) and many other scholars are good illustrations of the existence of history and civilization in Africa and they at the same time deconstruct the Eurocentric belief based on the non-existence of history in Africa.

<sup>5</sup> It is a writing system devised by Souleymane Kanté, a Guinean scholar at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to write the Manlinké language. It is a complete system which can produce any sound made by man.

The second major myth developed and promoted is related to the ideological constructed meaning given to the color of Africans. Their blackness becomes synonymous with inferiority, savagery, backwardness, timeless whereas whiteness incarnates superiority, civilization, development and time-consciousness as devised and fathered by Eurocentrists. At the same time Africa is represented and perceived by the West in terms like *primitive Africa, wild and dangerous Africa, exotic Africa, broken Africa* and many other falsified descriptions. This stance is substantiated and summarized by Coulibaly, Aboubacar Sidiki (2017) in an article entitled " La représentation de l'Occident et de l'Afrique dans la littérature africaine: une analyse comparative de *No Longer at Ease* d'Achebe, de *Second Class Citizen* d'Emecheta and de « Minutes of Glory » de Ngugi in the like manner:

Historically, it is from the 15th century that the question of the binary confrontation between Africa and the West begins with discourses, writings and representations on slavery. For example, it is precisely since the 15th century that the history of Cham has been used to excess and by many white slavers and missionaries to extol black slavery (...) Slavery thus marks the beginning of this West-African paradigm and it reached its peak with colonization in the 18th and 19th centuries. During this period, everything in Africa was perceived, described and represented under the sign of ignorance, bestiality, obscurantism and absolute barbarism. At the same time, the West was projected as the antithesis of Africa. He was magnified and represented in terms and qualifications always positive as if the West was synonymous with absolute beauty and perfection. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the writings of Hegel and Gobineau are a perfect illustration of this paradigm (p.449).

As in the above, it is clearly ascertained that such thoughts about Africa are rather myths than being stuck to actual facts. That is why Paul Bohannan cited in *Africa in World History* also confirmed the foregoing thought by explaining that: "Africa has, for generations now, been viewed through a web of myth...Only when the myth is stripped away can the reality of Africa emerge" (XVII). Unambiguously, the excerpt reveals that Westerners manufactured such stereotypes about Africa for economic and materialistic purposes as well. The truth is that Africa is not only the birthplace of mankind, but also the continent responsible for the creation of the first writing on earth. The latter is to be developed and illustrated furthermore in the second major part of the paper. Yet, it has now become axiomatic to explicate what Eurocentrism is and its operating mode because it

is the main ideological channel through which history and writing have been denied to Africa.

### **Eurocentrism: a definition**

Although several definitions and ways of defining Eurocentrism have been elaborated by scholars all around the globe, making the postcolonial Africans and non-Africans aware of the ideological meanings and engagements at play in Eurocentrists' discourse is a complex and long-range intellectual activity. The first step of this activity accordingly consists in telling people in clear and illustrating terms the true nature and definitional meaning of Eurocentrism. As African scholars, concerned with the negative impacts and effect of Eurocentric discourse and representations on the mind of the postcolonial African, we see and define Eurocentrism as any western propaganda about Africa and the African or non-Westerners in order to mentally, politically, culturally and economically dominate and exploit them. It also refers to a set of strategies devised by the West to subtly promote their civilization and maintained their ideologically constructed superiority through multiple channels such as literature, cinema, school handbooks, schools syllabi, international institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund), NATO, etc.

Besides, it operates and works through binary confrontations, polarities between the North and the South or the Developed World and the Third World. This binarism is better illustrated in the following words while talking about European and African concepts and perceptions of time:

The concept of time has been developed and explained by different scholars around the world depending on their cultural or ideological orientations. For instance, the way it is conceived in the West varies from the way it is perceived in the South. In certain cases even if links exist between Western and African conceptions of time, ideology antagonizes them into a binary confrontation (Coulibaly et al, 2017, P. 779).

### **The Effect of Eurocentrism on the Psychology of the African**

As in the foregoing stance, it is also preponderant to account for some of the noticeable and visible influence and effect of Eurocentric propagandas on the psychology of the contemporary African. By addressing them, many Africans would eventually be aware of the psychological effect that Eurocentrists' perceptions and representations of Africa may have developed upon themselves as Africans. Our conviction is that when you know your

problem and its nature, you can successfully find the appropriate ways through which you can finally overcome or deal with it. Among the influence and the effect of Eurocentric discourse on Africa and the African, we have observed and noticed multiple psychological problems which affect the daily life of the contemporary African inside and outside the continent. The first remark is that the vast majority of Africans strongly believe that writing is a pure European invention. The second one is that they consider their traditions, customs and way of life as primitive and uncivilized. The third one is that they admire, praise and value more whatever comes or is conceived in the West at the expense of whatever is African or African made. For instance, most African national teams (football teams of Gabon, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Morocco, and the Malian national team of basketball...) are coached by Westerners whereas local competences exist. Sometimes; the local competences are more qualified for the job than white foreigners ignorant of African cultural and sports' reality. The complex and the paradox lie in the fact that when an African coach is recruited, he is less paid and trusted than the white foreigner who is believed to possess godlike power and intelligence. The case of the former coach, Mamadou KEITA called Kapi, of the national football team of Mali is a good illustration of the latter. He took the Malian national football team to the semi-finals of the African Cup 1994. He was paid 500.000 FCFA whereas white foreign coaches were paid about 9.000.000 FCFA. In spite of the fact that they were 8 times more paid than the local coach, none of them succeeded to do better than him. This third element reveals the psychological complexes and pathologies that the practice and the dissemination of the ideology of Eurocentrism have engendered upon the postcolonial African.

This last element is so prevailing in Africa that even in the domains of education, infrastructures' building, capacity building, planes piloting, non-African engineers, trainers, teachers, universities, schools, pilots, technicians are privileged and preferred to Africans. As illustrations, the plane of the current President of the Republic of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita reelected 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2018, is piloted and maintained by Europeans. His security staff is exclusively composed of white people as well. The question needed to be asked is how and why can an independent African nation still rely on non-Africans for his security and development? The answer to this question is thus simple because it is nothing else than what we have named the *autophobia* of the African. By *autophobia*, we mean the rejection of the Self (Africans and his *Africanity*<sup>6</sup>) at the profit of the Other (Non-Africans and Non-African ways of living) as well as

<sup>6</sup> It refers to the sum total of all the typical cultural ingredients or ways of living that make up the African identity.

the blindly belief in the Eurocentric ideological propagandas about the so-called inferiority of the African. In so doing, the second major part of this study however develops, demonstrates and illustrates how the two major myths (lack of any writing system in pre-colonial Africa and the color of Africans' skin as synonymous with inferiority and backwardness) mooted by Eurocentrists to deny history, intelligence and civilization to Africa are actually mere purposive inventions more than being based and articulated around scientific and ascertained proofs.

### De-stereotyping the African History

By de-stereotyping the African history, we entail deconstructing Eurocentric myths on Africa by restoring the historical and scientific proof about the anteriority of Africans' invention of writing and their rich and glorious civilization. That is, revisiting and reminding both Africans and non-Africans of the huge historical and cultural heritage that Africa has handed over humanity. Without this African heritage as the foundation or origins of Europeans' civilization in diverse domains, the world would have not known the significant developments that it experiences currently<sup>7</sup>.

### Hieroglyphs: The first Writing System

As a reminder, it was made to believe that Africa did not have any history because she did not invent or establish any writing system before her contact with Europe. Such a belief can no longer be held today in regard to the availability of several historical and scientific clues. In this context it becomes pertinent to specify that since in the Ancient World, Africa, through the case of *Kemet*<sup>8</sup>, had her own writing system to record history, every day's activities and keep administrative records. Be it the Phoenicians, who were one of the earliest people to establish trading relations with Ancient Egypt, or the Greeks, they were all inspired or learned from ancient Egyptians before being able to come up with their own writing systems. Concerning the anteriority of the invention of writing by Africans, two Malians scholars MAIGA, Abida Aboubacrine and COULIBALY, Aboubacar Sidiki (2016) in "The Social Role of Literature and the Accountability of the Artist". *Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult.* 4(9) confirm the foregoing as follows:

At first, the main social function of literature was religious and ritualistic in the Ancient World. The writings of that period were about religious beliefs and practices of a given people, of a given culture. Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman mythologies had had a very powerful influence on Western cultures in their totality. That is due to the fact that both writing and religion started in those nations, especially in Egypt, and then travelled to the other parts of the universe. However, it is very important to specify that the origins of Greek and Roman myths are in the history of Ancient Egypt ... (p.200)

These two scholars while accounting for the social function of literature offhandedly reveals that Africans were the first to indeed establish a writing system to record and practice their literature and religion. Besides, the quotation also indicates that Greece and Rome both had learned from the African civilization before being able to develop theirs. That is, the source of the development of Europe is found in Africa across several spheres of human activity.

In clear terms, the reference is made to the hieroglyphic system of writing which was invented and developed by Africans in *Kemet* before the Sumerians<sup>9</sup>. All their daily, weekly and yearly activities were recorded as well as the future planning of the country. The activity of writing was mainly the profession of trained administrators in writing and reading called scribes. They were clerks and archivists. This writing system was so developed that they had simplified it into two types: *demotic* and *heratic* systems. The simplification was done in order to permit people to appropriate and adapt the hieroglyphic writing to diverse social activities. The first one was used for trade and daily activities whereas the second one was exclusively utilized for religious purposes. This is actually confirmed in the following passage:

Education was cherished very much by Egyptians. By 2430 B.C they had devised a picture writing called hieroglyphics (priest writing). Originally each picture represented a word but gradually it came to represent a letter. A man was thought to be well educated if he could copy this writing really well. Such a scholar wrote on paper made from lengths of papyrus reeds stuck together in a crisscross fashion and stored in rolls. A brush reed dipped in ink made from soot, water, and gum was used to write... For everyday life, however, few could afford the time for this complicated writing so a quicker version called hieratic (priest writing) was developed. Busy traders later produced yet a simpler version called demotic... (Gadzekpo, 2011, pp.80-81).

<sup>7</sup> See Cheikh Anta Diop's *Civilization or Barbarism* and Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* to better understand this standpoint.

<sup>8</sup> It refers to name that ancient Egyptians had given to the country in which they were living through their hieroglyphic writing. It means the land of the black people or the world of the black people.

<sup>9</sup> They were the people who were living in the place now called southern Iraq.

Thus, people could now grasp the extent to which writing is not an imported European practice. Since the Phoenicians were one of the first non-African peoples to establish trade ties with Ancient Egypt, we could utter that their invention of an alphabet of 22 consonants was favored by such links. Without these trading ties, Phoenicia could have not been able to set up such a system of writing later completed by the Greeks and the Romans to make it 26 letters. This alphabet of 26 letters is nowadays used by most Westerners as the basis for their writing systems (French, English, Italian, Spanish, etc.). Below are some illustrations the hieroglyphic writing:

glyph	translit.	phonetic	glyph	translit.	phonetic
	z	[z]		h	[h]
	t	[t]		h	[x]
	y	[y]		h	[c]
	e	[e]		x	[s]
	w	[w]		s	[s]
	b	[b]		k	[k]
	p	[p]		k	[k]
	f	[f]		s	[s]
	m	[m]		t	[t]
	n	[n]		t	[tʰ], [c]
	r	[r]		d	[d]
	h	[h]		d	[dʰ], [θ]

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Many of the past practices and beliefs of Ancient Egyptians were revealed through these hieroglyphs. This is to voice out the truth about the existence and production of history by Africans across the continent. Africans did not only invent the hieroglyphs but also other writing systems such as *Tifinagh*, *Ajami* and *N'Ko*. *Ajami*, unlike the two others, is rather the adoption and adaptation of the Arabs' system of writing to record, preserve, promote and teach their history, culture, artistic and scientific inventions. The manuscripts of Timbuktu are corroborative of such a fact about Africa. In other words, it consists of adopting Arabic script to produce African languages such as Hausa, Fulani, Soninké, Bambara, Wolof and others. In the form it is Arabic but in content and utterances it is purely African.

As for the *Tifinagh* and *N'ko*, they are uniquely the fruit of the African creative genius. It means that both their forms and contents are the confirmation of the African intelligence although the first is closer to the hieroglyphs in form and the second one is a bit closer to the Arabic script but they are different in the way they are uttered, read or written. Unlike western systems of writing, the *N'ko* is much more effective in sounds' production than any invented western system of writing. This therefore deconstructs the Eurocentric myth which pretends that Africa does not have any history because she was not able to devise her own writing system.

### The Manuscripts of Timbuktu: the World Heritage of African Civilization

The manuscripts of Timbuktu and the multiplied scientific and literary evidence now available about the anteriority of African civilizations before the coming of Europeans in Africa dismantle the second Eurocentric myth based on the assumption that the black race is par excellence an inferior one. This belief can longer be held because Cheikh Anta Diop, Martin Bernal, Williams Chancellor, Gaoussou Diawara, and Ivan Van Sertima have shown the intellectual, artistic and cultural brilliance of the African in all the domains of human activity and the contributions of Africa to world history through their various works:

It is important to note that before the coming of Arab historians and merchants and explorers from Europe to West Africa, the people of the region had developed the secrets of many medicinal herbs and how to use them to cure sickness. They had discovered how look after cattle in very hot weather; they had become experts in growing food, they had found out how to recognize mineral in rocks, how to sink mines, how to get the ore and smelt and work it; they had developed a wide range of hand manufactures in many materials; they had worked out religions of their own; they had evolved methods of government. All those activities were indeed illustrations of improved cultures properly identified as civilizations. (Gadzekpo, 2011, p.54)

The foregoing passage hence evidences the anteriority of African civilization before the arrival of Arabs and Europeans in Africa. Like Gadzekpo, thanks to his exploitation of the manuscripts of Timbuktu, MAIGA Aboubakr Ismail (2003) as well sustains that:

The system of government under the Empire of Ghana as well as the foresight, equity and extent of power of its kings stand out as the oldest experiences of African national government known in this country. The prosperity of the Empire both before and after the advent of Islam ... attest to the ability of black Africans of the time to manage their own affairs and build on the style of government and the regime in place . (P.14)

He means in French that Africans were able to set up their own system of government before their contact with the Arabs. In other words, MAIGA explicates that even before the advent of Islam in West Africa, especially in Mali, Africans had developed and established a solid system of government based on justice, equality and planning and anticipation of activities for the welfare of the Empire. In the light of all the scientific proof available

<sup>10</sup> Source : taken from "the story of Egyptian Hieroglyphs" by pen2paper at www.Pens.co.uk



about the greatness and the dynamism of African civilization and history, Basil Davidson (1994) in *The Search for Africa* also affirms that:

THE STARTING POINT IS THAT THE CONDITION OF AFRICAN HISTORY NOW yields a picture of long, continuous, and broadly definable movement from one phase of sociopolitical relationships to another; and that this picture is generally valid, if with many partial modifications, for every large region of the continent. Thirty years ago, or even less, this kind of statement would have seemed perfectly absurd. (P, 67)

As for the manuscripts of Timbuktu, they are written in different African local languages through a modified Arabic script. They have allowed researchers across various disciplines and around the world to discover that Africa did not only produce great artistic, intellectual and scientific heritage for the world, but she was also able during the pre-colonial and colonial eras to Africanize and hybridize the Arabic script to adapt it to the local indigenous languages as asserted by Fallou Ngom in the following:

Although written records are rarely regarded as part of sub-Saharan Africa's intellectual heritage, important bodies of *Ajami* literature have existed in Oromo, Somali, Tigrigna, Kiswahili, Amharic, and Malagasy in East Africa, and Bamanakan, Mandinka, Kanuri, Yoruba, Berber, Hausa, Wolof, and Fulfulde in West Africa for centuries. (P, 1)

This Senegalese scholar carries on explaining the richness of this Africanized Arabic script by Africans by specifying that:

*Ajami* developed in communities with a long history of practicing Islam, and who sought to adapt the Arabic alphabet to their own tongues, first for religious purposes such as prayers, writing magical protective devices, and disseminating religious materials and edicts, and later for secular functions such as commercial and administrative record-keeping, writing eulogies and family genealogies, recording important events such as births, deaths and weddings, and writing biographies, poetry, political satires, advertisements, road signs, public announcements, speeches and personal correspondence. There are also *Ajami* documents describing traditional treatment of various illnesses, the properties of plants and ways of using them and occult sciences; translations of works from Arabic into African languages; and texts on administrative and diplomatic matters (correspondence between Sultans and provincial rulers), Islamic jurisprudence,

behavioral codes, and grammar. (P,1)

Through the above, it may be construed that through imitating the Arab system of writing, Africans came up with a new system of writing adapted to the grammatical, phonological, phonetic, pragmatic and semantic rules of indigenous languages. This new system of writing as found in the manuscripts is no longer Arabic in utterance and grammar but a new system called *Ajami*, this fact is corroboratively authenticated by Ngom as follows:

This adaptation of the Arabic script to write African languages was not easy; the Arabic consonants and vowels reflected by the Arabic script do not necessarily correspond to those in specific African languages. Therefore scholars within each community devised systems of transcribing their languages by modifying the Arabic script, thereby allowing speakers to learn to write, read and recite *Ajami* texts. (p,1)

In regard to this excerpt, we can grasp the complexity of the adaptation of Arabic script to African languages and the ingenuity of the African to establish his own system of writing through an adaptation process referred to as the *Ajami* system. Besides, the discovery of the manuscripts of Timbuktu is another salient clue proving the existence of a writing practice in Africa several years before the white colonizer. It is also a landmark evidence which laudably espouses the highly important contribution of Africa to world civilization and history. That thus implies that we are in a multicultural world where people from different epochs, races and nations have had to contribute to the development of mankind as done by Africans particularly. It is in line with such a stance that Seyni Moumouni (2017) in an article entitled "Scribes et manuscrits à Tombouctou: La Chaîne Du Manuscrit" reveals the African contribution to civilization in the like manner:

The prodigious work of the copyists began from the foundation of Timbuktu, it continues uninterrupted to the present day; Nearly twenty thousand manuscripts have thus reached us and they represent only a small part of the production of the workshops. Timbuktu was a true publishing house, it is the symbol of Africa's contribution to the written tradition of universal culture. Thanks to the work of these copyists. The works of famous and marginal authors are kept in private and public libraries. The debt that "civilization" owes to the scribes of Timbuktu is immense; without them, knowledge and acceptance of a written tradition in Africa would not have been possible. Today there are still copyists in Timbuktu, they are fighting for this old craft to continue. (p, 55)

In other words, Moumoonni, through the latter, highlights the importance of the manuscripts of Timbuktu and their consideration as a world cultural heritage worth of treasure.

However, it is highly necessary to underscore that nearly all Europe has adopted and adapted the Greco-Roman alphabet to the grammatical, phonetic and syntactic requirements of their local languages. In spite of this adoption and adaptation of the Greco-Roman alphabet, the ways, French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian are written, are all considered as original and independent systems of writing distinct from the Greek or Latin writing system. Paradoxically and even today from our own experiences, whenever we talk about the *Ajami* as an original way of writing, some Africans (students and colleagues) as well as Eurocentrists consider it as a mere imitation rather than being a different system from Arabic. What they have forgotten or failed to understand is that imitation does not mean blind exact reproduction but should rather be construed as a creative process to ascend to originality as sustained by Aristotle in his sense of poetics.

## CONCLUSION

All in all, people may now espouse the laudable idea that the numerous Eurocentric propagandas about Africa are nothing else than mere myths invented by Westerners for specific purposes. The first being related to the desire of Eurocentrists to economically trade Africans and exploit their lands' raw materials instead of true civilizing mission because the cultural reality and humanism of Africans on ground contradict its relevance and pertinence. We imply that we only civilize a people when they are not culturally, socially and politically organized. The second purpose was to ideologically construct their superiority by relating the invention of any artistic, scientific or intellectual creation to the only genius of the white Man. He is thus represented, in a kind of binarism with the black Man, as possessing intelligence, creativity, reason and civilization. However, the findings of this study have proven the converse.

On that basis, the first conclusion that can be drawn is that the first writing system of the world is the work of the African genius, particularly the *Negro-Egyptians* of Ancient Egypt. The African has not only invented the hieroglyphic writing but he has also invented, through the imitation of the Arabic script, a new writing system called *Ajami*. In addition, he has devised other original systems of writing known today as *Tifignah* and *N'ko*. The second conclusion is that the discourse of Eurocentrism has had a traumatic effect on the postcolonial African mind and behavior due to the different stereotypes and misconceptions developed and promoted by Eurocentrists through channels such as literature,

anthropology, cinema, media, school syllabi and many others. Its effect is so prevailing that whatever is black is automatically and unconsciously rejected by Africans and at the same time they prefer and privilege whatever is white or comes from the West.

The last conclusion is that the correct exploitation, diffusion, teaching and preservation of the manuscripts of Timbuktu all around the world would greatly contribute to the de-stereotyping of the African history by creating a Homi Bhabharian Third Space of Enunciation because of their richness. This space would become the locus where races and cultures dialog in a kind of negotiation based on a give and take cultural relationship. It means the rejection of all the invented myths and stereotypes about races and cultures by accepting and recognizing the differences in the name of multicultural diversity. It would also allow the postcolonial and neocolonial African and European to transcend the boundaries of Manichaeism and mental complexes to engage in a sincere complementary brotherhood based on their differences. Thus, the differences become a window of reconciliation, conciliation, complementarity and acceptance as favored by the Third Space of Enunciation.

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**Research Paper**

# Slavery in early America as Portrayed in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and other novels

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Since the publication of her debut novel in 1970, Toni Morrison is interested in the black community in America characterized by community life, gossips, and solidarity. However this community is victim of slavery and segregation due to skin complexion. The publication of *A Mercy* in 2008 has provided a new dimension to the scope of her literary motivation. She has gone deep in the history of America at the beginning of the settlement of Europeans in the 1680's to uncover the universal form of slavery without racism including Europeans, native Americans, and blacks. They were servants owned by the gentry that submitted them to harsh work and difficult conditions. In *A Mercy* there exist slaves, indentured servants, and freed blacks. The objective of this research paper is to explore the slavery system without racial pigmentation unknown or forgotten in America. As a matter of fact, Jacob Vaark's farm is a sample selected by Morrison to portray the bondage pattern in the 1680's. Messalina is shortened (Lina), she is an Indian native on the farm. Florens is offered by her mother to pay the debt of her master. Florens's mother is regularly raped, she does not want her daughter to be raped by her master. The blacksmith is a free black man, Willard and Scully are Vaark's Europeans indentured servants, etc. They all work on the same farm together with Vaark's mailed wife Rebekka. Vaark's servants are not happy because they are not free but they do not suffer racial discrimination. They are not happy because the middle passage is unbearable, some prefer to end up in the mouth of the sharks following their ship, but they are not stereotyped as they are blacks, Indians or Europeans. They are servants or free workers.

**Keywords:** Slavery, Indentured servants, free blacks, race, discrimination.

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## INTRODUCTION

In most of her previous novels Toni Morrison has explored the impacts of racism on both the white and the black American population. African Americans live in communities bordered by cities where white people live. The Black communities are segregated and their inhabitants alienated and lynched. With the publication of her ninth novel, *A Mercy* in 2008, a new aspect was considered taking her to plunge into the infinitely vast and nebulous origin of slavery and human servitude in

America. In *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison has explored a world where slavery exists without being racialized. Slaves, free blacks as well as indentured workers live together. They are: Lina, a Native American slave woman, a mongrel red-haired girl called Sorrow, two European indentured servants called Willard Bond and Scully, a black-Portuguese girl called Florens and the blacksmith, a free black man. Slavery in this novel is portrayed as a universal phenomenon that had been

present in one form or the other in almost all the regions of the world. Both the whites and the colored races were equally subjected to human servitude. Toni Morrison goes back to the origin of slavery in this novel for providing the readers with an opportunity to understand the facts behind racialized slavery in the U.S.A.

The objective of this paper is to uncover the primary system of bondage noticeable in the seventeenth century in America. Toni Morrison has worked to reshape this system in *A Mercy* in order to spotlight the problem of Blacks in the U.S which caused the American Civil War and initiated the Civil Right Movement of the 20th century. In *A Mercy*, Toni Morrison uses the combination of different histories to explore American multiculturalism and to expose at the same time her view about the genesis of the United States of America. Thus, the fragmented narrative produced by this polyphony allows the characters to expose their respective physical and psychological pains while constructing the American national identity. They can be regarded as the representatives of their respective ethnic groups (European, African American, Native American). From this analysis, it can be asserted that *A Mercy* traces back the history of the United States of America. It deeply plunges the reader into the roots of the construction of America's multicultural identity which results from the coexistence of many ethnic groups; namely, Africans, Native Indians and Europeans.

### **Slavery system in America in the nineteenth century and its social impacts**

From the 1520s to the 1860s an estimated 11 to 12 million African men, women, and children were forcibly embarked on European vessels for a life of slavery in the Western Hemisphere. Many more Africans were captured or purchased in the interior of the continent but a large number died before reaching the coast. In an article entitled *Transatlantic Slave Trade* published in Microsoft Encarta Africana Third Edition by S. Behrendt (1998-2000),

About 9 to 10 million Africans survived the Atlantic crossing to be purchased by planters and traders in the New World, where they worked principally as slave laborers in plantation economies requiring a large work force. African peoples were transported from numerous coastal outlets from the Senegal River in West Africa and hundreds of trading sites along the coast as far south as Benguela (Angola), and from ports in Mozambique in southeast Africa. In the New World slaves were sold in markets as far north as New England and as far south as present-day Argentina.

On the ships toward the New World, Ships' officers confined the men, women, boys, and girls in separate

compartments. Slave vessels, according to S. Behrendt (1998-2000), were fitted with numerous wooden platforms between decks to allow captains to pack in greater numbers of captives. As the between-deck space was generally from 1.2 m (4 ft) to 1.8 m (6 ft), platforms reduced the head room for captives to only a few feet. All slaves suffered from numerous scrapes and bruises from lying on these bare planks. Captains claimed that when safely away from shore, slaves were given greater freedom of movement. Women and children, some claimed, were never shackled and were allowed to roam above deck with minimal supervision.

Slaves who survived the middle passage were prepared for sale in slave markets. As described by S. Behrendt (1998-2000) they were revitalized with 'water and colonial provisions (such as citrus fruit) and were shaved and cleaned. Ointments (to hide scars from diseases such as yaws) and oils were applied on their skin in preparation for sale'. Agents placed advertisements in colonial gazettes and in taverns for the sale of African labor, which usually began a few weeks after arrival. Many sales occurred on ship deck; other sales took place on wharves or in agents' houses or slave pens. Some planters contracted with merchants to purchase a preset number of slaves. Many slaves were sold by scramble or by auction. During the scramble, planters or their representatives placed ropes or handkerchiefs around groups of slaves whom they wanted to purchase. During auctions, the highest-valued slaves, often adult men, were first sold; then, over several weeks or even months, less-valued slaves were sold too. The last slaves sold were often old, sick, or debilitated Africans. According to S. Behrendt (1998-2000), they usually were purchased by doctors or poor colonists. In some sales prime slaves were sold by scramble and "refuse" slaves were sold at public auction.

On the plantations of their masters, the living conditions of slaves in the antebellum American South were some of the worst for slaves across history. As legal property of their masters they had no rights themselves and fared far worse than Roman slaves or medieval serfs<sup>11</sup>. Africans sold as slaves in the

<sup>11</sup> In an article entitled *Slavery in the Roman Economy*, W. Scheidel (2010, p.3) explains that 'Slaves were engaged in an enormous variety of activities, as estate managers, field hands, shepherds, hunters, domestic servants, craftsmen, construction workers, retailers, miners, clerks, teachers, doctors, midwives, wetnurses, textile workers, potters, and entertainers. In addition to private sector employment, they worked in public administration and served in military support functions. They were owned by private individuals as well as the state, communities, temples, and partnerships. As *servi vicarii*, slaves were put at the disposal of fellow slaves. Their responsibilities ranged from the most basic tasks of footmen and water-carriers to the complex duties of stewards and business managers. Slaves could be kept in

Americas had to rely on their owners providing them with housing or building materials, pots and pans for cooking and eating, food and clothing. Many slaves did the best they could with what they were given. Most did not dare complain for fear of receiving a whipping or worse punishment.

By law, slaves were the personal property of their owners in all Southern states except Louisiana. The slave master held absolute authority over his human property as the Louisiana law of June 20 1825 made clear: "The master may sell him, dispose of his person, his industry, and his labor; [the slave] can do nothing, possess nothing, nor acquire anything but what must belong to his master." (Article 35)

Slaves had no constitutional rights; they could not testify in court against a white person; they could not leave the plantation without permission. Slaves often found themselves rented out, used as prizes in lotteries, or as wagers in card games and horse races. When a master died, his slaves were often sold for the benefit of his heirs.

Separation from family and friends was probably the greatest fear a black person in slavery faced. Seth, in *Beloved*, has murdered her daughter, Beloved, for fear of seeing her become a slave as she has been herself. The act is viewed both as a crime and profound love, as her intention is to save her daughter's life from the atrocity of slavery. The atrocity of the living conditions of black slaves has created frustrations of all types. Racial hatred became part of the human tragedy; Blacks were separated from the rest of the community. Toni Morrison refers to the fact in her novels by putting the black and white communities side by side to allow the reader to see segregation at work. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola Breedlove is the only one in her class who sits alone at a double desk. Her teachers never try to glance at her, only when everyone in the class is required to respond. When one of the girls at school wants to be particularly insulting to a boy or wants to get an immediate response from him, she says: "Bobby loves Pecola Breedlove! Bobby loves Pecola Breedlove" (Morrison, 1970, p.34). This shows that blacks have become a target for each opportunity of humiliation and insult as if they are strange creatures and not human beings, who have the right to live, eat, and get education like other citizens in the United States. Pecola screams inside herself asking why everyone she meets does not respect her as a human being, why everyone she meets emphasized that she must stay back. In fact, she is black. As such, she

deserves no respect in a segregated area. One day when Pecola finished her class, a group of boys circled around her and began making fun at her. They said "Black e mo. Black e mo . yadaddsleepneked. Black e mo black e mo". (Morrison, 1970, p.55). Even her classmates see her skin darker than their skin and too ugly to accept. With both her teachers and classmates being so cold to her, it is inevitable that Pecola would feel alone and isolated. At the same time, Maureen who is the new comer to the school is very popular because she has the lightest skin of the colored people. All the teachers and the pupils treat her kindly not like Pecola. They all wished to speak with her; the blacks and whites pupils respect her not like the ugly Pecola. The reason for this treatment is because Maureen is the whitest of the colored pupils and with a lot of money.

When Maureen and Mac Teer sisters walk together and they get into an argument Maureen yells from across the street saying: "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly e mos. I am cute". (Morrison, 1970, p. 61). It seems that as if "black e mo" is the worst name you could be called. It is an insult based on the children's degree of blackness. Being black e mo is the most degrading thing in this community. Maureen acquires the impression that being black means never being beautiful and admired.

Mr. Yocobowski, the white shopkeeper refuses to waste effort of a glance at her. He takes the three pennies from Pecola and he is aware that his hand does not touch her hand while he gives her the Mary Jane candies she wants. So many other examples of black race hatred cases can be mentioned to illustrate the fact. However, I prefer gliding to *Sula* which bears the stigma of discrimination too.

Like most of Toni Morrison's novels, *Sula* studies the ways that black people struggle to live in America, a country with a notorious history of persecuting and oppressing black people. Black characters in the novel face the weight of a history in which white Americans have consistently swindled blacks out of their property and their rights by manipulating laws, social norms, and even language itself. In the city of Medallion, where the novel is set, Afro-Americans have traditionally been confined to the Bottom-ironically the area with the highest altitude, and the least desirable neighborhood of the city. Whites promised blacks land on the "bottom" - meaning, seemingly land that was close to the Ohio River - then backed out of their promise by giving away land in the hills, supposedly the "bottom" of heaven. By the end of the book, it's clear that whites have been systematically denying blacks in the Bottom their health care and heating, by always saying that the extra resources will be used to pay for a supposed New River Road. The road construction is not open to the black manpower. As a

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chains or placed in positions of trust, resided in their owners' homes or were apprenticed or rented out. They are attested in every part of the Empire. Freed slaves were active in a similarly wide range of occupations, and in addition rose into the most senior echelons of private and public administration'.

matter of fact, in hope of being employed in road building, Jude Crane repeatedly goes to the job site looking for work. He is never selected because of his race. Morrison describes the episode, she explains that ' It was after he stood in lines for six days running and saw the gang boss pick out thin-armed white boys from the Virginia hills and the bull-necked Greeks and Italians and heard over and over, "Nothing else today. Come back tomorrow," that he got the message'. (Morrison, 1973, p.82)

In *Song of Solomon* (1977) racism is noticeable from the very beginning of the novel. The fierce racism remains as a backdrop throughout the novel. One day, Freddie tells Milkman about his bad situation and how he is a victim of racism. He explains why he was raised in jail: "You know they ain't even got an orphanage in Jacksonville where colored babies can go? They have to put' em in jail. (Morrison, 1977, p.109). Adequate facilities for blacks are not available. A member of the Seven Days enumerates the material items and the luxury lifestyle that are inaccessible to blacks: "no private coach... no special toilet and your own special-made eight- foot bed either. And... no valet and a cook and a secretary to travel with you and do everything you say. "(Morrison, 1977, p.60) Society maintains the cultural practice of separation. The novel depicts the struggle of black's culture in white society, depicting discrimination as well as separation. When Ruth Dead goes to the Mercy Hospital, on Main Avenue, Milkman becomes the first black to be born there. The Southside residents playfully call Mercy Hospital, No Mercy Hospital.

The black community like to Call Main Avenue Street as Not Doctor Street, because when Ruth's father, Dr. Foster received his patients there, he had referred to it as Doctor Street. But the whites in their concern for separation and propriety decree that "Doctor Street was never used in any official capacity" and they decide that the street" would always be known as Main Avenue and not Doctor Street".(Morrison, 1977, p.4) So they create a lasting nickname by referring to it as Not Doctor Street. The black community establishes "a way to keep their memories alive and please the city legislator as well" (4).

In *Beloved* (1987), Toni Morrison depicts her novel with the sense of alienation of blacks due to the bitter race discrimination prevailing with blacks in the American society. It moves around the alienated position of all black slaves. Sethe, the protagonist of the novel, reveals clearly about the long rooted brutality of whites over the blacks. Sethe is physically and emotionally alienated from her husband Halle, from her children, from her mother and, from her society and most vitally from herself. Her husband is separated from her when they run away from the Sweet Home. She has to kill her eldest daughter and

make her physically distant from her because of the brutality of slavery.

Illustrations can flourish as long as we continue opening other novels written by Toni Morrison. She is confined in the very circle of slavery coupled with racism because she is an African American and therefore more concerned with this situation. In this frame, and as a talented writer and Nobel Prize winner, she has the duty to shed light on the past of her community not in terms of revenge or with a belligerent attitude; the truth deserves to be known throughout generations. Story telling is the best and the most usual way to transmit knowledge in Africa, the same tool is used for the same outcome in the African American communities but with the writing techniques Toni Morrison champions in. In the same perspective, Toni Morrison happens to get down to the very beginning of slavery in America just to compare what happened and what is commonly known today. This adventure drags her to the birth of the American colonies because the first successful settlement of the British colony in the New World took place in 1607 and the first group of Blacks appeared in America in 1619. *A Mercy* is set in 1690 on D'Ortega's plantation in Maryland. From there on, a new experience of slavery is excavated by Toni Morrison to be compared with what is commonly known so far.

### **Slavery system as described in *A Mercy***

With the publication of her ninth novel, *A Mercy*, in the year 2008, Toni Morrison has the courage to plunge into the infinitely vast and nebulous origin of slavery and human servitude. In most of her previous novels she explored the diabolical impact of racism on both the white and the black American population. However, in *A Mercy*, Morrison goes beyond the evident visible aspects of slavery and its impacts in America in order to dig out a world where slavery exists without being racialized. In her fiction, Toni Morrison portrays the evolution of slavery in order to provide the readers with an opportunity to understand the facts behind racialized slavery. This novel also brings to the forefront a social milieu, where the tag of racial inferiority has not been imposed on the black population. Slavery in this novel is portrayed as a universal phenomenon that had been present in one form or the other in almost all the regions of the world. Both the whites and the colored races were equally subjected to human bondage. Set in the early stages of the slave trade, *A Mercy* gives voice to a remarkable group of characters: Jacob, an Anglo-Dutch farmer, trader, and lender; his wife, Rebekka, newly arrived from England; their servant woman, the Native American Lina, whose tribe has been wiped out by

smallpox; Florens, the slave girl Jacob reluctantly accepts as payment for a bad loan; and the permanently shipwrecked Sorrow, daughter of a sea captain killed in a storm off the coast of the Carolinas. These characters take turns narrating the story, and their voices carry the physical and emotional scars of the struggles of their lives. These are voices that have not been heard before, voices silenced first by cruelty and then by history.

In a nutshell, in what European colonizers called the Americas, or the region of New England there were innumerable slaves and indentured servants, serving their despotic masters and plantation owners in vast sugar cane, tobacco, rice and other plantations. As informed by Audrey Fisch in the chronological history of slavery, the Spanish inaugurated the importation of African slaves into the Caribbean region in 1510. In the early seventeenth-century, "A Dutch ship sells twenty slaves kidnapped from Africa to the English settlers at Jamestown, Virginia, establishing slavery in the New World" (Fisch xiii). Slavery is an ancient institution and many scholars and historians have investigated it and have examined the ways in which it affected both the ancient and the modern societies. In this respect P.J. Schwarz (1996) observes:

Numerous ancient and modern slave societies were based on chattel slavery - the legal ownership of human beings, not just their labor. . . . Throughout history, there were slaves in African, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and East Asian societies, as well as in the Americas - and of course, there were slaves in European countries. (p.5)

This universal side of slavery appears in *A Mercy* and can be referred to as a type of revolution or maturity of the writer. As P.J. Schwarz (1996) further explains that, "In early to mid-17th-century colonial North America, slavery developed slowly, beginning in Maryland and Virginia and spreading to the Carolinas in the 1670s. Southern colonists originally relied on white European servants" (pp.6-7). The European indentured servants, who worked on contractual terms under their masters, were allowed to leave after the completion of their term of service. The slaves, who were black or colored, were not allowed to leave their service even after the completion of their term. They were marketed as a commodity and were deprived of their basic rights. Tobacco, sugar and rice plantations grew rapidly during those days in America because massive workforce was available from the African and the Caribbean colonies. Thus, slavery established a strong foothold in America by the mid-seventeenth-century.

In *A Mercy*, Morrison revisits the era of early slavery

and examines the way in which slavery was racialized. Though she is a contemporary author, yet she comprehends the importance of visiting the past in order to comprehend the nature of pre-racist servitude.

### Slavery and Slave Treatment in *A Mercy*

The Middle Passage in *A Mercy* according to Florens' mother as she narrates it in the last chapter of the novel is the harsh life of slaves from their captivity and their voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. This voyage known as the middle passage is not to be experienced because it is inhuman. Morrison has described it in the following words:

Everything heats up and finally the men of their families burn we houses and collect those they cannot kill or find for trade. Bound with vine one to another we are moved four times, each time more trading, more culling, more dying. We increase in number or we decrease in number until maybe seven times ten or ten times ten of we are driven into a holding pen. There we see men we believe are ill or dead. We soon learn they are neither. Their skin was confusing. The men guarding we and selling we are black. Two have hats and strange pieces of cloth at their throats. They assure we that the whitened men do not want to eat we. Still it is the continue of all misery. Sometimes we sang. Some of we fought. Mostly we slept or wept. Then the whitened men divided we and placed we in canoes. We come to a house made to float on the sea. Each water, river or sea, has sharks under. (Morrison, 2008, pp. 163-164)

Captives are chained and shackled. As many as 30 men would sit in an 8-square-foot cell with only a small slit of window facing outward. Once a day, they were fed and allowed to attend to their needs, but still the house was overrun with diseases. Those who refuse to eat are strangled and thrown to the whirling sharks. They are naked, except for a piece of cloth around their waists. They are put in a long narrow cell used for them to lie on the floor, one against the other. The children are separated from their mothers. The mothers are across the courtyard, likely unable to hear their children cry. Rebellious Africans are locked up in an oppressive, small cubicle under the stairs; while seawater is sipped through the holes to step up dehydration. In such conditions, some captives jump overboard into the sea, death is preferable in such conditions. Toni Morrison describes it:



I welcomed the circling sharks but they avoided me as if knowing I preferred their teeth to the chains around my neck my waist my ankles. When the canoe heeled, some of we jumped, others were pulled under and we did not see their blood swirl until we alive ones were retrieved and placed under guard. (Morrison, 2008, p.164)

What is important to mention here is the philosophy behind this type of shipment. It was not limited to Blacks. People are sent to the New World because they are a threat for the others, or a solution for their problems. Rebekka is not an African or a black lady. She was born in England, where she has lived with her devotedly religious but cold and unloving parents. In England, Rebekka has begun a training program to become a domestic servant, but dropped out because the head of the program is sexually harassing her. Rebekka's father has sent her to marry Jacob in order to relieve him of the burden of paying for her upkeep. An Anglo-Dutch trader by profession, a lender and a farmer, Jacob Vaark never wants a farm, but he is pleasantly surprised when a distant uncle has left him a plot of land. Suddenly wanting roots, Jacob has paid for Rebekah's passage and has married her, straight off the ship that has brought her across the ocean. The bargain goes on the following way:

Already sixteen, she knew her father would have shipped her off to anyone who would book her passage and relieve him of feeding her. A waterman, he was privy to all sorts of news from colleagues, and when a crewman passed along an inquiry from a first mate—a search for a healthy, chaste wife willing to travel abroad—he was quick to offer his eldest girl. The stubborn one, the one with too many questions and a rebellious mouth. Rebekka's mother objected to the "sale"—she called it that because the prospective groom had stressed "reimbursement" for clothing, expenses and a few supplies—not for love or need of her daughter, but because the husband-to be was a heathen living among savages. (Morrison, 2008, p.74)

Rebekah's father is a British citizen, he has sent her to the New World just to get rid of her because he does not love her and he faces some financial problems. In fact, Rebekah is always curious about everything and is eager to ask questions to know more. Her father never likes that. He offers her to an unknown man to take her away.

### Slaves life in the New World

Living conditions in the New World are not attractive because of the hegemony of the gentry employing servants but racial segregation was not a part of the game. The slaves in *A Mercy* are more productive in assisting the White supremacy system. They do everything ordered by their white master even if it is extremely hard to be done. However white people do not fear them even if they are rebellious. The gentry's supremacy on the slaves is shown in the novel when Florens is in her errand to search for the blacksmith. She is at a Widow's house where she stays for a night but has become the source of curiosity. Morrison describes the scene:

The Widow waves both hands saying she is a guest seeking shelter from the night. We accept her how could we not and feed her. Which night the man asks. This one past she answers. One woman speaks saying I have never seen any human this black. I have says another, this one is as black as others I have seen. She is Afric. Afric and much more, says another. Just look at this child says the first woman. She points to the little girl shaking and moaning by her side. Hear her. Hear her. It is true then says another. The Black Man is among us. This is his minion. (Morrison, 2008, p. 111)

The widow has offered her a shelter and food out of moral obligation. Nobody considers first her skin complexion. Indeed, Florens is seen by some white men as something horrific or dreadful and they think she is the one that carries diseases to the village. From the way the white man points at Florens with his stick and how the little girl gets scared of her because her skin is black, as if Florens is not human. Her being different and colored is something unnatural, and for the white people it is something related to demon. In the 17th century America, people believed in superstition and easily suspected independent women of being witches.

The Widow's family thinks that she is running away but fortunately her Mistress has given her a letter as a pass that allows her to continue her way:

The signatory of this letter, Mistress Rebekka Vaark of Milton vouches for the female person into whose hands it has been placed. She is owned by me and can be known by burne mark in the palm of her left hand. Allow her the courtesie of safe passage and witherall she may need to complete her errand. Our life, my life, on this earth depends on her speedy

return. Signed Rebekka Vaark, Mistress, Milton 18 May 1690 (Morrison, 2008, p. 112)

The letter is the very proof that she is not illegal and that her journey is not running away, but a task she needs to complete for her mistress. Without the letter or any legal declaration, she will be easily arrested. Nevertheless, even when Florens has shown the letter to white people to know who she is, she still has to get undressed for the white people to check her body every inch. As if not satisfied to find her without flaws, they still stare at her and think that she is a little devil: "A woman's voice asks would satan write a letter. Lucifer is all deceit and trickery says another says another" (Morrison, 2008, p. 113). People want to be convinced about her being a human because they are afraid of the presence of a phantom. Let's notice that Florens is going without shackles because her mistress is sure she cannot run away. Florens is concerned with the health of Rebekka Vaark, her mistress. This environment shaped here is free of hatred and a slave is happy to serve his owner.

Another aspect to raise here concerns the Blacksmith who is a freed black man. He has come to the Vaarks' farm to make an iron fence and gate for Jacob's new, fancy house. Rebekka sends Florens to him when she falls ill and he has healed her. Rebekka is white and the Blacksmith is black, however they happen to cooperate easily. Toni Morrison has even valued the black folk through the Blacksmith. The latter is alone to be able to cure her disease and he is sent for. Rebekka has recovered. Without his action Rebekka could die like her husband. Morrison has presented America as a world of wilderness where solidarity and complementarity work to secure life and survival.

Another facet of slavery in America in the 1680s regards the indentured servants. The slaves and indentured servants working in the plantations during those days experienced a similar sort of discrimination based on class and sex. In *A Mercy*, Morrison mentions some of them with a critical view. As a matter of fact, two European indentured servants called Willard Bond and Scully are exploited and maintained in bondage through tricks. Morrison explains:

Sold for seven years to a Virginia planter, young Willard Bond expected to be freed at age twenty-one. But three years were added onto his term for infractions—theft and assault—and he was re-leased to a wheat farmer far up north. ....Theft of a shoat was invented and thrown in just to increase Willard's indebtedness. (A Morrison, 2008, pp.148-149)

Both Willard and Scully are hopeless, but Scully seems more rooted in despair. They can imagine no way out, they are trapped and are unable to foresee the end of their contracts. About their case, Toni Morrison writes:

Both were Europes, after all. Willard was getting on in years and was still working off his passage. The original seven years stretched to twenty-some, he said, and he had long ago forgotten most of the mischief that kept extending his bondage. The ones he remembered with a smile involved rum; the others were attempts to run away. Scully, young, fine-boned, with light scars tracing his back, had plans. He was finishing his mother's contract. True, he didn't know how long it would take but, he boasted, unlike Willard's or Lina's, his enslavement would end before death. (Morrison, 2008, p.57)

In short, Willard and Scully are Vaark's European indentured servants. They are homosexual characters and are living the injustice that characterizes slavery in this part of the world where immigrants from Europe have discovered new opportunities to solve their social, economic and religious problems. So the New World is like a monster that swallows anyone that ventures in and squeezes his or her last energy before dropping the carcass. Females are also submitted to damage, decay and trauma.

Florens and her mother initially belong to D'Ortega, a Portuguese slave owner, who owes money to Jacob, a tradesman. Jacob goes to D'Ortega's plantation to receive his payment, but "it became clear what D'Ortega had left to offer. Slaves" (Morrison, 2008, p.21). D'Ortega insists that Jacob should take a slave as payment, but Jacob is hesitant because slaves are not goods he trades in. But near the house, Florens's mother catches Jacob's attention: "He saw a woman standing in the doorway with two children. One on her hip; one hiding behind her skirts. She looked healthy enough, better fed than the others. On a whim, mostly to silence him and fairly sure D'Ortega would refuse, he said, 'Her. That one. I'll take her'" (Morrison, 2008, pp. 23-24). Jacob describes Florens's mother, who is a house slave quite valuable to D'Ortega. He answers: "Ah, no. Impossible. My wife won't allow. She can't live without her". (Morrison, 2008, p.24) Jacob perceives from his reaction that "there was more than cooking D'Ortega stood to lose" (Morrison, 2008, p. 24). It is implied that Florens's mother is abused by D'Ortega and, for that reason; she is kept around the house. Although D'Ortega says his wife cannot live without her, it is he that wants her close. Interrupting the conversation between both male characters, the

narrator describes the scene of Florens and her mother by saying this:

The little girl stepped from behind the mother. On her feet was a pair of way-too-big woman's shoes... The woman cradling the small boy on her hip came forward. Her voice was barely above a whisper but there was no mistaking its urgency. "Please, Senhor. Not me. Take her. Take my daughter. (Morrison, 2008, p.26).

In an act that surprises Jacob, the woman offers her own daughter to be taken away. Because of this event, Jacob misinterprets Florens's mother's actions, describing Florens as the: "ill-shod child that the mother was throwing away" (Morrison, 2008, p.34). Like his peers, he has a distorted view of motherhood that sees black mothers as cruel and detached. This assumption benefits Jacob, because it releases him of any guilt for his action of buying a young girl and, thus, depriving the little girl of her mother's company. Florens's mother is judged through the lenses of a white male who fails to understand the reality of black women during slavery. He conveniently portrays Florens's mother as monstrous and convinces himself that he is doing Florens a favor by taking her away from this unnatural mother. Jacob thinks to himself that the "acquisition [of Florens]... could be seen as a rescue" (Morrison, 2008, p. 34), insisting on the fact that he saved Florens from a mother who rejected her.

However, later in the novel, Florens's mother has the chance to tell her story and shed light on her actions. This is possible because she narrates the last chapter herself. She tells the story from her viewpoint as if speaking directly to her daughter: "you [Florens] wanted the shoes of a loose woman, and a cloth around your chest did no good. You caught Senhor's eye" (Morrison, 2008, p. 166). Despite Florens's mother's attempts to keep her as a child as long as possible, she is worried because D'Ortega started to notice her daughter. She knows that if Florens stays, she is doomed to have the same fate as herself: to be abused and to serve the sexual needs of her white master. She continues to explain her actions: "One chance, I thought. There is no protection but there is difference" (Morrison, 2008, p.166). Florens's mother is aware that there are no guarantees for slaves, but she knows that there are different kinds of oppression and abuse. She asks Jacob Vaark to take her child because she believes he would treat her as a child, not as a sexual possession. She takes whatever action available to prevent her daughter's rape by D'Ortega. Florens's mother has very limited choices, but she fights to save her children. She describes the same scene of the encounter with Jacob, but from her own point of view by declaring in the following words:

You stood there in those shoes and the tall man laughed and said he would take me to close the debt. I knew Senhor would not allow it. I said you. Take you, my daughter. Because I saw the tall man see you as a human child, not pieces of eight. I knelt before him. Hoping for a miracle. He said yes. It was not a miracle. Bestowed by God. It was a mercy. Offered by a human. I stayed on my knees. (Morrison, 2008, pp. 166-167)

Florens's mother sees in Jacob the only chance for Florens to escape from D'Ortega. As a mother, she tries to secure a better future for her daughter - a future with hopes that Florens will escape at least - the cruelty of sexual abuse. She experiences the dilemma many mothers faced in slavery. Florens's mother refuses the role of helpless victim and takes whatever action available to help her children live.

Morrison presents two slave mothers in different novels who sacrifice their daughters due to the atrocities of the system but the contexts are different. Sethe in *Beloved* kills her own daughter to protect her from falling prey to racism, whereas Florens's mother abandons her own daughter in order to save her from the tyranny of her lewd and exploitative master. Though Florens can hardly overcome the pain of this separation and betrayal, she learns that it was an act of maternal devotion on part of her mother, who had very limited choices to protect her daughter. The mother in *A Mercy* saves her daughter by abandoning her instead of killing her.

### **Analysis of Toni Morrison's perspective**

In the 17th century America, slavery and racism were not bound together. There are white orphan, Indian woman, free black and white indenture servants in this novel. By putting them together on a farm, Morrison explored the living conditions of different people, and revealed the essence of slavery.

Four women living in the farm have various fates, but to some extent they are all enslaved and deprived of freedom. They cannot choose their destiny and social position. Just like what Lina said: "We never shape the world she says. The world shapes us." (Morrison, 2008, p.71). Messalina is the first woman bought by Jacob to the farm. Her name is shortened to become Lina. She is not a black woman, but an Indian native. Smallpox has exterminated her tribe. She works in the home of white owners and is named Lina, which means "a sliver of hope." (Morrison, 2008, p.47). She has no origin and tries her best to serve her owner in order not to be alone and homeless. She strengthens herself by religion and pieced belief.

Rebekka is the mailed bride of Jacob from Britain. Her

parents marry her to Jacob just because they want to get rid of her. Rebekka does not expect too much to marry a stranger far away from her home. On her ship to America, she thinks "her prospects were servant, prostitute, wife, and although horrible stories were told about each of those careers, the last one seemed safest." (Morrison, 2008, pp.77-78). But her marriage is beyond her expectation; Jacob is kind to her and calls her "my northern star". They are just like two trees. "They leaned on each other root and crown." (Morrison, 2008, p.87). But their four children die one by one, and followed by the death of Jacob. The death of her husband leaves her rootless, nothing to lean against, to rely on. Without husband, Rebekka cannot live alone, she returns to religion to gain relief. She is cruel to her servants because she thinks her husband has rejected her. "Refusing to enter the grand house, the one in whose construction she had delighted, seemed to him a punishment not only of herself but of everyone, her dead husband in particular." (Morrison, 2008, p.153). She suffers spiritual slavery and hurt people surrounding her.

*A Mercy* is a visceral, intricately textured novel that takes readers right to the origins of America, a place where the seeds of the racial, religious, and class tensions that would later come to fruition in revolution and civil war were already being sown. It is a place where people are forced to make wrenching decisions. Jacob does not wish to take a slave as payment for a bad debt, but he feels it is the best option available. Nor does he wish to traffic in slavery, he prides himself on his honest work though he is willing to make huge profits off the slave labor of sugar plantations in Barbados. Florens's mother does not want to part with her daughter, but feels that Florens will be better off with Jacob than with her own cruel master. Rebekka knows that even as a white woman, the only choices open to her are wife, servant, and prostitute. Florens, Lina, and Sorrow, who are

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servants, know that if both their master and mistress die, their already circumscribed choices will disappear completely and they will be fair game for anyone. This is a world in which women, white, black, and Native American are especially vulnerable, literally at the mercy of the men who hold power over them. It is a world without racial separation where live the gentry and their multiracial servants.

## CONCLUSION

In this novel, Morrison brings together representatives of all the major racial categories in the New World African, Native American, Anglo and mulatto. It is a historical fact that slavery was not confined to any particular race. Slavery in ancient times was not race-oriented because slaves were not enslaved on the basis of color. Before 1500, slavery was not based on skin color in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, or the Americas. Most slaves were prisoners of war or sold into slavery as a punishment for a crime. It made no difference to the buyers or sellers if the slaves had light or dark skin. Black people were identified through a mere accident. They proved more resistant to hard work than the Indians who 'perished under the ordeal like sheep'. Shufeldt (1907, 50) In this process, the Europeans encouraged the discrimination based on skin color, which finally transformed into racism. Skin color was deliberately connected to slavery in order to acquire a greater number of slaves for creating a massive workforce.

Slavery in America in the very beginning of the settlement of Europeans was neutral and aimed at buying people for the need of workforce. Toni Morrison has worked to uncover the phenomenon in order to locate the origin of racism in America. In short, America was not born with racism, but racism has come later as an institution, a philosophy to show the supremacy of a group over other groups in the same society.

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**Research Paper**

# Common Errors in Oral and Written Communication of Nigerian Undergraduate Students: A Study of Joseph Ayo Babalola University Undergraduates

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Some errors varying from grammatical to spellings are usually discovered while marking scripts of undergraduate students either school based assessments that we often refer to as take home assignments or the summative assessments-the final examination. This precipitated the writer to bring to the knowledge fore in this paper, which highlights the places of oral and written forms of communication and certain common errors usually associated with them. Experimented methods of administering take-home assignments and on the spot tests; and class seminars were adopted involving 78 respondents in a Writing Composition course. These errors are clogs in the wheel of communication process and this paper deems it fit to identify these errors and also proffer solutions to them. The students were allowed to go over the tests with corrections already made (pre-test and post test) and in another session, using the same questions, the students showed evidences of studying the scripts. The methods helped in reinventing studying strategies of students particularly in higher institutions. The post-test mechanism helped reveal to students the need to read wide, take notes of correct use of spoken and written words and the need to build vocabularies to enhance both spoken and written skills.

**Key words:** Written communication, Oral communication, Electronic writing

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## INTRODUCTION

Western civilization brought along the art of writing besides speaking, which is a unique gift that nature has endowed mankind with. Writing then came into being as another major means of communication; and nowadays, writing has gone beyond ink, pen and paper; today we write through our telephones and with our computers to initiate our intentions, send information, contribute to global issues and with a supersonic speed of sending,

receiving and even more interestingly withdrawal or retrieval (Olugbamigbe, Udofia, and Bulya, 2008). Today's genre of written communication has dumped the era of typewriting, it has moved up to the era of electronic writing, electronic mail, (e-mail), e-governance, internet chat, Facebook chat, telephone handset texts etc. Written communication has helped the humans' document imaginations to illustrate, inform, communicate and

initiate ideas, like the art of writing proposals and bringing up issues of life that they agitate for through the newspapers, magazines, journals and other written means of communication.

Oral and written communications are forms of communication that are inter-related. In the past, reading was regarded as passive, while writing as active; however today reading is as active as writing, because reading demands concentration in order to ensure comprehension, which is equal to feedback in communication process. Again, an attempt at decoding (reading) meaningfully what was encoded (written) could nothing be less than active! (Arua, 2009, Onukaogu and Ohia, 2003).

In every facet of life, both living and non-living are involved in communication. This could be explained, particularly talking about non-living or something like a chair, for example, the communication or the language between man and a chair is that the chair is capable of offering a seat; and if a chair does that, the chair "communicates". This means that beyond speaking, writing and body gestures, communication means getting along with anything that may present or offer itself usefully to the user. When the radio, TV, phone, computer all work effectively with us, it could be said that these equipments are communicating with us. This is an abstract form of explaining communication and language. An example is to say that the communication and language one has with a chair is to provide a seat.

This then underscores the fact that communication remains a basic and an all round cycle in the human society. Human beings communicate round the clock except perhaps only when asleep and even the animals also communicate but could not speak, but animals make all manners of sounds and the ways they relate usually suggests that they express feelings like hunger, satisfaction or even anger. When a dog wags his tails and does something like a dance we know that such a dog is being friendly and if a dog tugs his tail in between his legs, it suggests a sense of fear and caution and when a dog barks and charges furiously at someone, we know what communication is on-going.

Humans communicate either by speaking, writing, or use gestures to inform, indicate a desire, initiate an idea, suggest and to respond or react to issues. Hence we need many skills to be proficient in communication and two of the obvious skills are writing and speaking. (Lewis 1987:61)

Achieving successful decent reports and giving decent oral presentation are susceptible to proficient skills of both oral and written communication. The human society today in this hi-tech era is extremely a verbal communication system oriented. Our opinions are shared and raised through the newspaper, magazines, journals, Radio, TV and lately through the internet.

## Communication

Communication is an act or instance of transmitting verbal or written message. It is also a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary). Taking a closer look at the second sentence, it talks of meaningful exchanges between the initiator of messages and recipients. This also shows that for communication to have taken place, the exchanges and transactions should involve and elicit mutual understanding.

Webster's Dictionary also referred to communication as the technique for exchanging ideas effectively, either through speaking, writing or through any modern means of technology that can transmit information from one place to another. In this definition, effective communication stands out as the major pivot on communication process. What makes communication effective? There are some elements that make communication effective, these elements must be operated effectively to achieve effective communication. Shannon and Weaver, two communication experts, claim that communication is a means of transmitting messages from one person to the other. They identify the processes from the initiator of communication called the sender or source. From this point, the sender must be effective about his personality, the sender is as sure as confident about the move he is initiating in the communication process. (Wikipedia.org)

Another element in the process or chain of communication is the message; the message must be clear, precise and understandable. The message element is the central point in the communication process. Message is also the content and as such the language of the message/content must be presented in a way that should also elicit and guarantee understanding. Another effective element is channel/medium. The means through which a message is sent is the channel or medium, in the past we mail letters through the postal agency, but as time goes on, telegram came and today we have the e-mail, which guarantees that the message reaches the recipient in a flash of a speed so swift regardless of the distance.

The next element is the receiver. The receiver too must be available, otherwise communication reaches nowhere; the receiver is the destination of the message and as such the receiver must be available and alert to understand the message encoded. Very close to the receiver is the feedback element, this element is the reaction of the receiver to the message received and the receiver's reaction whether positive or negative shows how far the message goes by understanding.

The last element in the process is noise. Noise is an impediment that could interfere with the free flow of the message. Right from the message, the sender must

ensure that noises like grammatical or environmental (conduciveness) or physical (lousy environment) are avoided to ensure that communication actually took place.

Another look at Wallzlawick and Beaver's definition of communication is quite phenomenal to this study; they said: communication is information shared, exchanged and translated. This claim is synonymous to the communication's scale and pyramid. The first scale on the pyramid situates intrapersonal communication, which is the processing of information within oneself. It is also a type of oral communication, when one soliloquies or in monologue without talking to another party and often times it is spoken or verbalised. This is information not shared with anyone but yet one is communicating to oneself. Such questions like, "where do I go from here?" directed to the speaker by himself is raising a self-reappraisal, which is communicative and always effective to the speaker.

Next to intrapersonal communication is interpersonal communication which is actually shared and exchanged form of information and communication, this involves two or a couple of people, another is intragroup, which involves more than two or family members and/or classroom situation, amongst the students. Intergroup communication involves a whole speaking community, like the head of a clan interacting with the members of the village or community at the market square or the village hall. We also have institutional/organizational communication; this is a systematized formal means of communication in offices, business, industrial institutions etc, while down at the pyramid is the society-wide communication, which involves the help of the mass media to really reach the entire society.

### Language and Communication

Language is the main ingredient in communication process. We either write or speak through a certain language to communicate our thoughts or idea. Each country has its languages and language is the main distinguishing feature that humans use to interact meaningfully amongst themselves. Language is also that property that separates the humans from the animals in the communication process.

Language is the 'conveyor belt' humans employ to communicate, initiate, negotiate and to make their intentions known. Language is innate, particularly the mother tongue that is called L1, the first language the child grows up with in his immediate language community. Even though the language could still be learnt but mysteriously the child grows with this language and a quite a level of proficiency is acquired as the child grows.

The second language, the L2 is acquired by the child

by learning through formal means of the classroom. The L2 is usually, the adopted official language that always helps multi ethnic setting like Nigeria. Nigeria has well over 250 ethnic groups that speak close to 500 languages. The English Language, which is also the L2, comes in very handy here as a language that cuts across in helping information dissemination easy officially.

Often times, language could be non-verbal. Humans use gestures to communicate by using eyes, snapping of fingers, waving of arms and whistlings or hissings to express reactions to certain perceived information. Hands are waved to say goodbye or when both hands are placed on the head, it suggests tragedy or calamity; this gesture is found to universal expressed in practically all human culture.

### Forms of Communication

There are various forms of communicating our intentions. The first form is verbal which is divided into two; oral and written communication. Another is non-verbal, which is demonstrated by gestures and other use of our parts of the bodies without necessarily talking. We also have formal /informal communication; these two do not mean the same thing. Formal is a deliberate official form of sending information like serious communication like business/official letters like memos, letters of application, proposal letters etc; while informal is such information that are friendly or with some level of acquaintanceship devoid of any formality. Other forms of communication are intentional and unintentional. As the term implies, there are certain information that we have deliberately programmed to send, while in unintentional communication, something just happen without notice.

### Oral Communication

Oral communication, according to *freedico.com* is communication by word of mouth. The word, spoken with the mouth marks out the basic feature of oral communication and, oral communication is defined as a process in which a speaker interacts verbally with a listener to influence the receiver's behaviour (Lewis 1987:64). Lewis emphasized verbal interaction which was corroborated by *freedico.com* as word of mouth. In order to avert error, the speaker should choose how best to reach the listener, present the message and the extent to which the receiver translates or receives the message heard is dependent upon the speaker's choice and use of words. The communication skill of the speaker and the listening skill of the receiver are very important in any given oral communication situation. Another definition says, oral communication is a form of communication that is connected with the two basic skill of language-listening



and speaking. Speaking involves thinking, because one thinks before saying something. Oral communication involves the use of oral cavity which includes the mouth and other vocal organs like the lips, teeth, lungs and the tongue. It also involves uttering of words through the mouth to elicit some information. It is an expressive means of communication. Various forms of oral communication are storytelling, classroom teaching, lectures, seminars, folktales, newscast on radio and television, discussions/talk shows, dictation, monologues, soliloquy, etc.

Another website, *answers.com*, describes oral communication as any type of interaction that makes use of spoken words. It is also a very vital and an integral part of the modern business world.

Oral communication is face-to-face (generally), while written communication is impersonal. Telephone conversation is though oral, but it is a kind of voice communication, it is not face-to-face, to verify the exact personality of the other party one is speaking with on phone, it is pertinent one recognises the voice at the other end of communication. Without excellent oral communication skills, there would neither be meaning nor communication in any given setting of oral communication. In order to achieve success in oral communication, the following understated are essential:

- Selecting the subject/message: whether the topic is simple or complex, the speaker should make some research efforts on the topic in order to know the basics of the subject and how to address it.
- Gathering the material: While doing the research on the topic, materials on origin, statistics that explain how, why and where and frequency of the related topics must be gathered for presentation.
- Arranging and outlining the parts: Deliberate drafting of the skeletal structure of the presentation should be done thematically.
- Practicing the speech: There should be a rehearsal of the presentation, a mock presentation, where if need be could be done aloud.

### Presenting the oral text

Some research questions like, how do I begin or introduce my topic? How do I phrase the main points? How do I appeal to the listener's interests? And How can I use gestures and body language to communicate?, always agitate the mind of an impending speaker.

Some tips on presenting the oral text are provided below:

- Opening/Introduction: It is very important and pertinent, how a speaker opens the discourse. The opening should be very convivial, very exciting and warming. It should arouse the interests of the audience. The speaker could start with a current issue in a comic manner. At introduction, a speaker may refer to a previous occasion, use a personal reference, a quotation or tell a relevant joke.
- Phrasing major points: This is where factors of coherence, unity and objectivity, positivism, emphasis and readability set in. The main points are phrased around the characteristics listed.
- Appeal to the listener's senses

### Written Communication

This is the documentation of information, ideas and intentions through the use of accepted codes and symbols. Written communication is an expressive form of communication, as through the means of writing we express our thoughts, feelings and ideas by documenting them in a text for posterity and reference purposes. It could also be receptive as it could elicit the receiver's feedback and reactions. Written communication are letters, memos, notes, narratives documented in prose, essays, short stories, novels, plays, poems, newspapers, magazines articles, on-line texts, books, journals etc.

Written communication is the deliberate attempt at 'arresting' one's thoughts, ideas, and intentions into coded and documented form in order to inform, record and communicate for posterity. What if great writers like Professor Chinua Achebe never documented (or captured) his imaginations on *Things Fall Apart* (TFA) into written form of communication? Obviously we could not have had the iconoclastic master piece called TFA.

Before doing an analysis on errors of written communication, it would be convenient to identify the basic skills of language and communication. These skills would lead us to the process of writing as writing just did not occur from the blues, some things apparently should occur before writing. These skills of language and communication are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Recently, thinking is gradually being added to the four skills as thinking or what is known as thought-flow is also a process of either speaking or writing. Like speaking or oral communication, one thinks deeply before, during and after writing.

Writing has also been described as "a process of discovery to be approached with care, commitment and energy". Writing is a very careful venture, it gets printed and documented for future references and so a lot of industry and vigour are put into it with very careful preparations. (Buscemi 2002: viii).

### Problems/Errors of written communication

Some errors identified as plaguing the process of written communication are stated below:

- The appearance of the content of communication: The content of communication must be well planned, neatly typed and a favourable impression should be created by the physical compartment of the communication content.
- The choice of words: The expressions of words should be simple and self explanatory. Definitions of concepts should be stated clearly in simple terms.
- Correctness: Coherence, Unity and Accuracy must be achieved. The sentences must agree with the focus of the topic.
- Conciseness: There should be brevity and exactness of presentation of facts and ideas. The topic sentences must easily be located, while ambiguous and unclear statements must be avoided.
- Completeness: There should be a holistic treatment of the subject. The whole import of the subject must be addressed. The what, who, why, where and when should all be wholly considered.
- Language: Whether oral or written, the state of courtesy or politeness is very important

### The Written Communication Process

While taking into consideration the above nuggets to be taking care of, three major steps should be considered by the writer before clinching the final draft. Failure to adhere to these processes is also tantamount to errors or failures of written communication.

The three processes or stages are:

- Careful Drafting: This stage involves the pre-writing time of researching the topic, consideration of the audience or the reader and the exact purposes of the topic. An outline on the topic is considered relevant at this level on various issues garnered from the research.
- Revising: After the first draft, the writer attempts a revision of all the ideas gathered by revising all information documented and seeing to which ones could be added or removed.
- Editing/Proof-Reading: The writer could give someone else to help re-read the draft, edit the draft and proof read the entire concept in order to arrive at a presentable final draft.

### METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted with the administration of take-home assignments, on the spot tests and class seminars involving 78 students. The seminars had 14 students address the class in oral presentation because the entire 78 were grouped in 10, the group leaders and assistant group leaders made oral presentations.

The tables were details of findings in the study and errors discovered both oral and written forms of communication.

The Table 1 data shows that majority of students have problem with conjugation nouns or subjects with the appropriate predictor or verbs that should go along with it. The post-test sessions helped correct these anomalies. After scripts were shared to the students, the students were asked to make corrections and made to study together in their various study groups; and at the other sessions, students with such defects were asked to write the correct sentences on the board and to verbalise them as they wrote.

The table 2 was administered to test spelling and vocabulary knowledge of the students as they were asked to also give meanings of the selected words. The students were earlier instructed not to alter any of their attempts; they were given 3 minutes each to ponder on what should be the correct spelling and the exact meaning of the words. Sample 1-Critique, was deliberately tested to see if students could differentiate it with-critic. This was to test the students on the usage of the two words, because of common errors likely to occur. The researcher emphasized the place of phonetics and phonology in pronunciation and also directed the students to refer to their pronouncing dictionaries for accurate reference purposes. It was discovered that these hints helped a great deal, when students reclined to their various study groups. The data also revealed that the randomly drawn words were not known to the students. A very few percentage knew the words while overall average of 65% neither knew the meanings nor correct spellings of the words while –lampoon was not known by 50, representing 65% of the whole class never knew about the word.

This revelation has prompted the writer to do another test by drawing some words from the two prose texts the students are to study for a particular course. This would reveal whether students read at all and/or take into cognizance the words they encounter while reading and also to prove if they bothered to comprehend the meaning as the words were used by the author. (Table 3)

It was discovered that the students could speak better than writing, even though logical presentation was a bit shaky, yet the group leaders delivered averagely well. It was noted that group 10 with a minimal number of participants performed creditably well. They also formed

**Table 1:** Grammatical Errors (Subject + Verb Agreement, Punctuation, Spellings)

Total Number/Error type	Frequency of Errors/%	Difference/%
78-Subject+ Verb	58-74%	20-16%
78-Punctuation	36-46%	42-54%
78-Spellings	39-50%	39-50%

**Table 2:** Dictation Test

Sample of Dictated Words	Total number of Students	Frequency of Rights Responses/%	Frequency of Error/%	Indifference
Critique	78	35-	40	3
Didactic	78	20-	50	8
Paediatrician	78	10-	45-	23
Lampoon	78	05-	23	50

**Table 3:** Oral Presentation

Serial Number	Total Number	Performance	Time Accuracy	Initiative	Overall Score 10	Diction
Grp. 1	9	Below Average	Exceeded time limit of 4minutes	Average	4	Average
Grp. 2	10	Above Average	Within time limit	Above Average	6	Very Fair
Grp.3	10	Good	Within time limit	Well above	7	Good
Grp.4	9	Fair	Within	Average	5	Fair
Grp.5	8	Good	Before time limit	Above	7	Very Good
Grp.6	7	Fair	Above	Average	5	Fair
Grp.7	7	Fair	Within	Average	5	Fair
Grp. 8	10	Good	Within	Above	7	Good
Grp.9	8	Fair	Within	Above	7	Good
Grp 10	7	Exceptional	Within	Well above	8	Excellent

the crop of students that performed well in the written exercise; this was a shortcoming of the study, because the students would have been deliberately mixed with those who are average and below average performing students. This discovery also precipitated another study as earlier mentioned with students being tested with words drawn from a particular text of study. Some French words that are often used in everyday use of English like *debut*, *coup de tat*, *a la carte*, were also tested to discover pronunciation skills and spelling skills.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Speaking and writing are interrelated and this also means that errors or brick walls relating to the two are common features that could be juxtaposed. Like in writing, the pre-writing stage is synonymous to oral. In oral communication, the speaker brainstorms about the topic and relies on the outline drawn before addressing the topic. A seminar, for example is a typical form of oral and written communication, during the conceptual stage, the speaker or the writer does a lot of research before putting the pen on paper.

With the topic in mind, the speaker /writer also takes into consideration the kind or make-up of the audience. He considers whether the audience are neutral, hostile or favourable. Another error or shortcoming is avoiding non-proficiency. Whatever language of choice in communication, one must be proficient in the language, while other errors like grammatical noise, phonological noise and coherence and unity noise must all be avoided. Incidences of bad use of subject + verb agreement must be avoided. An example is the common error of saying or writing, “‘ I sees it coming’ instead of ‘I see it coming’ or ‘they watches home video everyday’ instead of ‘they watch home video everyday’.

Public speaking act needs some tact and finesse. The speaker should be eloquent by having a firm understanding of the topic, should be bold to face crowd and ensure inter-personal communication by ensuring he maintains eye contacts with his audiences. While in written communication, the thought-flows are arranged in paragraphs, which are made up of sentences built from simple, compound and complex sentences.

Right from the inception, the introductory paragraph should be so immersing and also present and locate the thesis statement and the topic sentence.

When writing news releases, the first paragraph should reflect the inverted pyramid principle, this is the thesis statement. The first paragraph should ‘tell the news’ by telling us who did what, and when, where, how and why. When a writer fails to do this, it presents s a major error.

Written communication like news release, features and articles should reflect interesting and fascinating flairs that would make the reader to read again; at this point, clichés, slang and other freer words are allowed, but in academic papers, journals, seminars and business and official memos, clichés are cut-off because the language here is strictly academic and official. Another error to avoid is wrong spellings and this is also reflective of phonetics and phonological knowledge of the writer. During the pre-writing or drafting stages, one is expected to reference the Dictionary and Thesaurus and/or on-line dictionaries and Thesaurus for correct spellings.

Good writing skills could only be sustained by writing. After writing, a good writer hands over the piece of writing to another fellow to proof-and edit constant writing with a good editor at hand makes a goof prolific writer. The Reading and Elocution Centre (RWEC) just established in Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU) has a central mandate of making better speakers and writers of students.

Elocution is the art of effective public speaking; in order to achieve eloquence, one should observe all the rules of effective speaking by saying the words in appropriateness and applying the meaning appropriately.

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