African American Critique of Whiteness and Blackness: A Theoretical Activism for Human Rights

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Abstract - This is a proceeding of the February 2022 "Black History Month" Seminar held by the *American Space* at Université Félix Houphouet-Boigny, in Abidjan. It postulates a theoretical, that is, a non-palpable and non-concrete but not least significant, contribution of African-Americans to the long struggle for the recognition of their overall rights over the centuries. It particularly surveys the conceptual evolution of the Blackness/Whiteness binary construct and upshots drawing on prominent African-American scholars of each epoch, spanning from the early years of slavery, through the Harlem Renaissance and Civil Rights Movements eras, down to modern days. It envisages the beginning of the twenty-first century as a counter-attack period with the racialization of whiteness, and the subsequent growing scholarship of whiteness studies. Ultimately, it unveils an interconnection between theoretical commitment and promotion of human rights.

Keywords: Whiteness/blackness, African-Americans, theory, human rights

Résumé - Cet article est issu d'une communication lors de la "Black History Month", séminaire organisé par le *American Space* de l'Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny d'Abidjan en février 2022. Il retrace l'historique de la contribution théorique des intellectuels Afro-Américains à la lutte pour la reconnaissance des droits civils des Noirs à travers les siècles aux USA. Il s'articule plus particulièrement sur l'évolution conceptuelle de la binarité « Blackness/Whiteness » et ses corollaires en s'appuyant sur les travaux d'éminents théoriciens Noirs-Américains depuis les temps de l'esclavage, en passant par les périodes du Harlem Renaissance et des Mouvements des Droits Civils jusqu'à nos jours. Il entrevoit le début du vingt-et-unième siècle comme une période de contre-attaque théorique contre le concept de « Whiteness » avec la floraison des études qui lui sont consacrées depuis. Enfin, il relève une interconnexion directe entre activisme théorique et promotion des droits humains.

Mots clés : « Whiteness/Blackness », Afro-Américains, théorie, droits humains

INTRODUCTION

Blackness and whiteness studies have gained an unprecedented scholarship in present-day criticism in literature and humanities especially (Japtok 2004; Stein 2019). Frantz Fanon reads othering in these two concepts when he posits the conceptualization of blackness as necessary for the being and valuing of whiteness. He states indeed that "the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man…," and that "the [white] other is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the not-self – that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable" (Comensoli 92).

Like most concepts blackness and whiteness have evolved through a long and strenuous process and disclosed contingent implications, especially in African-American criticism. Owing to their very nature and significance the study conducted here typically draws on a postcolonial perspective – including deconstructive patterns at times – in an attempt to trace the trajectory arc of whiteness and blackness, and their binary opposition in the construction of citizenships in the USA. Of course, this paper does not pretend to cover the total range of African-American critique of these concepts or their varying dualistic paradigms over the years.

Rather, it subjectively centers on some of the most prominent critical works which have impacted the different phases of the evolution of these race-based concepts and their dichotomous construction. In the pursuit of its evolutionary prospection this article analyzes their conceptual changes beginning with the institution of slavery, through the Reconstruction era, the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement periods, down to more contemporary times. To exemplify that theoretical trajectory, it successively focuses on the works of Phillis Wheatley, William Du Bois, Claude McKay/Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker. It accommodates the invaluable imports of non-African-Americans, as well.

The analysis is operated following a three-part structure. The first sets the theoretical backcloth which reveals the postcolonial characteristics in both approaches and objectives. The second explores the contingent theorizing of whiteness and blackness, unveiling a cautious critical momentum mostly centered on blackness at first (intended to reject its scientific and spiritual bases), followed later by a more vibrant revalorization of the black self. As for the last part it reviews the contemporary racialization of whiteness and its flourishing scholarship, and closes with highlighting the human and societal benefits of the theoretical contribution of African-American scholars.

1. The Theoretical Underpinnings

Although blackness and whiteness are not given equal prominence in Bill Ashcroft et al.'s seminal book in postcolonial criticism – *Post-colonial Theory: The Key Concepts* (2007) – these two concepts mostly capture the focus of cultural theories and studies. Ashcroft et al. have deliberately chosen to overlook blackness as a full concept, and rather conceptualized anything in its realm as "Black Atlantic" (21) or "Black Studies/Black Consciousness" (23). Doing so, they readily evade the embarrassing topic of Black objectivation, and they unconsciously (?) foster whiteness as their neglect – or deliberate denial – maintains the black cultural heritage out of mainstream "white-world" culture.

Ironically, Ashcroft et al. largely exemplify the "key concepts" to the postcolonial theory drawing mostly on black authors who critically approach blackness as a full concept of its own and in itself. Further, when one considers the in-depth examination of blackness in Homi Bhabha's articulation of liminality in *The Location of Culture* (1994*)*, particularly anchored in black and African-American narratives, overlooking blackness as a key concept of the postcolonial field proves suspicious. For while the like of Fanon, Du Bois, Morrison and the many African and African diasporic critics express their psychic traumas and the suffering of their peoples to constitute the black marginal response to the West's colonial discourse and imperial brutality they, painfully though, advocate for their blackness. Blackness therein engrains all their productions as a cultural and identity marker.

So that when John Lye (1) defines postcolonial theory as the "reading and writing of literature written in previously and currently colonized countries" – which is typical of the works of black authors around the world – he indirectly raises the issue of the black otherness and subsequent resistance against the supremacist claim of the white center.

How can you then define whiteness and blackness as racial constructs and analyze the subjectivity of their dualistic opposition in the light of postcolonial theory? Ashcroft et al. (19) inscribe the terms "black" and "white" in the "binary logic of (Western) imperialism", explaining that the "binary difference is the most extreme form of difference possible," with examples of colonizer/colonized; civilized/primitive; advanced/retarded; Good/evil; beautiful/ugly; human/bestial, and, naturally, white/black. These sets posit and associate qualities and values on the recto of the "racial bar" with whiteness, and conversely, assimilate their opposites to the images of blackness.

Yet, Winthrop D. Jordan (2000) and most critical race critics assert that discrimination has not always prevailed in the relationship between *white* and *black*. Jordan exemplifies his postulate basing on historical reports and chronicles of early Europeans who met Black people in Africa. He shows that curiosity and wonder for diversity were Europeans' first impressions on seeing people of black complexion. Here, he reports the wonder of "a Spanish chronicle translated into English in 1555":

> 'One of the marveylous thynges that god useth in the composition of man, is coloure: whiche doubtlesse cannot bee consydered withowte great admiration in beholding one to be white and another blacke, beinge coloures utterley contrary. Sum lykewyse to be yelowe whiche is between blacke and white: and other of other colours as it were of dyvers liveres.' (35)

Jordan's point is substantiated by the *National Museum of African American History and Culture* which states that racialization of both black and white peoples is

recent in history. In the first, the *Museum* article defines race as "a human-invented, shorthand term used to describe and categorize people into various social groups based on characteristics like skin color, physical features, and genetic heredity." It pursues that, "while [race is] not a valid biological concept, [it] is a real social construction that gives or denies benefits and privileges." It therefore posits modern-day race implications, especially that which debases black people and conversely praises white supremacy as an early seventeenth-century capitalist construction. The *Museum* paper explains indeed that "the concept of "race," as we understand it today, evolved alongside the formation of the United States and was deeply connected with the evolution of two other terms, "white" and "slave."

While slavery admittedly existed in ancient civilizations and cultures around the world, it gained a new connotation in the "New World" and came to target especially people of African descent who suffered the Trans-Atlantic slave Trade from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The use of the term slave in "the Hebrew Bible, ancient societies such as Greece, Rome, and Egypt, as well as during other eras of time", the article notes, is a case in point. Yet, in these areas and times, one was slave for one reason or another, but not for biological or physical differences. Besides, slavery was not for life and one could buy his/her freedom anytime.

But in colonial America slavery was applied only to people of black skin, and thus equates with being black, that is, Blackness. After the codification of chattel slavery, initiated on the basis of colonial Virginia's mother-child relation in 1662, Black people became entire properties of their masters like any other commodities. From then on, an anti-blackness feeling started to grow in the white community in American colonies.

Since then, the terms "black" and "blackness" which connoted negative counterparts to "white" and "whiteness" in the English language long before Great Britain's contact with Black Africa found a factual ground of application. As Jordan writes:

> long before they found that some men were black, Englishmen found in the idea of blackness a way of expressing some of their most ingrained values. No other color except white conveyed so much emotional impact. As described by the Oxford English Dictionary, the meaning of black before the sixteenth century included, "Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul. . . Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister. . . Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked. . . Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc." Black was an emotionally partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion. (35).

Obviously, if black and blackness connote evil by and large, white and whiteness should mean quite their opposites. These traditional meanings are also disclosed by Jordan who states that:

embedded in the concept of blackness was its direct opposite – whiteness. No other colors so clearly implied opposition, "beinge coloures utterlye contrary"; no others were so frequently used to denote polarization:

Everye white will have its blacke,

And everye sweete its sowre.

Jordan enlarges the binary oppositions supporting that:

White and black connoted purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil. Whiteness, moreover, carried a special significance for Elizabethan Englishmen: it was, particularly when complemented by red, the color of perfect human beauty, especially female beauty. This ideal was already centuries old in Elizabeth's time, and their fair Queen was its very embodiment: her cheeks were "roses in a bed of lillies." (Elizabeth was naturally pale but like many ladies then and since she freshened her "lillies" at the cosmetic table). (35-36).

Along with the racialization of slaves whose new status is determined by the "blackness" of their skin, "whiteness" which formerly applied only to labor-free rich English women for the purity of their skin (Jordan 36) – a term hitherto rejected by English men for connoting laziness – came to distinguish between people of European descent and the others. As Europeans classify humanity following their Manichean chromatic worldview, they racialize the others and hierarchize world peoples. Frederick Douglass' metaphor of "Color line" has never meant so appropriately, skin colors being the discriminating traits upon which the concepts of blackness, whiteness and their binary opposition drew in the first place, and have ever since evolved in African-American criticism especially.

2. The Rise of Blackness

This part addresses African-American scholars' theoretical examination of the concept of blackness over the ages. It shows how they gradually conceptualize their conditions and take advantage of their "blackness"– a pejorative term intended to debase and exploit them in the first place – for the promotion their selves and values.

2.1. Trailblazing with Phillis Wheatley

With her collection titled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), Phillis Wheatley appears as the first critic of the whiteness/blackness binary construct for her community. In "On Being Brought from Africa to America", for example, she pleads for forgiveness in her personal name and in the name of her community for being ''sable'', that is, ''black.'' Yet, her tone seems sarcastically

critical. Her aesthetics[1] can therefore be read as the inception of African-American critical approach to ''blackness'' especially.

The poem sets a racial contrast between the White and the Black. The Black is benighted and lives in a "*Pagan*" (mind the capitalization of pagan) land. By contrast, the White is Christian, worships God and is therefore redeemed. The White hates the Black on account of his "sable" or black skin which compares with Cain's, and thus denotes diabolic traits. The White is an angel/the Black is a demon. As such, her poem highlights and criticizes the binary opposition between blackness and whiteness – or in its supremacist order, "whiteness/blackness."

2.2. *Frederick Douglas, Carter Woodson and William du Bois: Rebutting the Spiritual and Scientific conceptualization of Blackness*

In the wake of Wheatley's verse criticism, Frederick Douglass, one of the most influential Black intellectual of his time, later took to investigating the dichotomous whiteness/blackness paradigm in an article titled "The Color Line" (1881), searching for its purported scientific and/or spiritual foundations. Finding none, he came to the conclusion that the hierarchization of the whiteness/blackness construct is a racial prejudice "created and sustained" by slave masters for money motive during slavery, and later pursued by the "love of power and dominion" (8) of Europeans during the Reconstruction era.

In an attempt to deconstruct that binary opposition, many Black scholars chose to focus their critiques on blackness, to invalidate its subjective negative implications and confer it power and positivity, in the first place. LaGarrett J. King (2017) reveals one of the pivotal conceptualization of blackness which led to the inclusion of the "Black History" in US school curricula. He writes that

> The year 2015 marked a century since Carter G. Woodson and his colleagues created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (originally ASNLH, now ASALH2), the first Black history organization that successfully 'promoted, researched, preserved, interpreted, and disseminated information about Black life, history, and culture to the global community.' (14).

While King views that initiative as being solely additive and superficial, he nevertheless pays a deserved tribute to Carter Godwin Woodson and his two close associates in the project, namely Martin Robison Delany and Paul Bustill Robeson.

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[1]For more on the critical move of her aesthetics, see Jules KOUAKOU (2019): "David Diop's "Africa, my Africa" and Wayne Visser's "I Am an African": Dirges for Unattainable Hope?"
[2]*Association for the Study of African American Life and History (June 5, 2015)*

Born in 1875, Carter G. Woodson is tributed with being the "father of black history" (Dagbovie ii). Together with his ASNLH co-workers, Woodson "promoted the study of African Americans' past and published a significant body of historical scholarship on Afro-diasporic and African American history" (ii). Woodson and his co-founders of ASNLH aimed especially to "[challenge] racism in U.S. popular culture and the ivory towers of the American academies," to lay "the foundations for the rigorous scientific study of African American history, and, equally important, [they] were committed to teaching and popularizing black history throughout black communities" (ii). As he did so, Woodson fought against the socio-cultural biases historicized to debase the Black and wall him up inside a racially-erected blackness.

Prominent among African American scholars who initiated a conceptual re-evaluation of "Blackness" is William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (W.E.B. Du Bois), hereafter Du Bois. His critical investigation of the concept of "blackness", as displayed notably in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), is all-encompassing and has long impacted the field.

In that collection, Du Bois draws on his sociological scholarliness to inspect what he terms the "spiritual strivings" (7) of the Black. He analyzes the existential struggle of his community and formulates it in terms of an ambivalent double-consciousness – that sensation of perceiving oneself through the eyes of white people. That double-being – which he calls "two-ness", that is, being both "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body…" – describes the psychological splits experienced by Black people living under the Jim Crow Laws (Thompson-Miller 2011) during the Reconstruction era.

Dubois contrasts Black adulthood predicaments with the boyhood carelessness wherein the Black boy exerts his full natural capabilities which supersede by far those of his white playmates. Drawing on his personal experience as a Black boy, he uses the metaphor of the *blueness* of the sky to stress his community's innate skills: "that sky was bluest when I could beat my mates at examination-time, or beat them at a foot-race, or even beat their stringy heads" (8).

Du Bois' commitment to valuing the Blacks, which espouses the ideals of most of his contemporary black scholars, nonetheless runs against the strategy envisaged by Booker T. Washington. A leading Black activist of the time, Washington cogently "preaches thrift, Patience, and industrial training for the masses;" but unfortunately, he also preaches obedience to the white rule which Du Bois reads as "[apologizing] for injustice" (44). Therefore, Du Bois openly calls to oppose Washington's proposal in his *Souls of the Black Folk* for being a strategy aiming only to perpetuate Black oppression (44).

Harriet Ann Jacob underpins Du Bois' concept of the "Black's two-ness" centering her works on the double plight of the Black woman: a slave and a sexual object. Her *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (1861) is an autobiographical narrative which denounces the sexual exploitation that further complexifies the slavery of black women. From a purely theoretical perspective, such difficulties ironically reinforce Blackness as they stress "black female strength in the face of adversity" (*History.com*).

On the whole, the pioneering rise against the purported biological and spiritual inferiority of blackness paved the way for a rather vibrant acclaim of black values through literary and artistic productions in the early nineteenth century.

2.3. *Harlem Renaissance and Black Arts Movements: Valuing the Black Self with Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Marvin X, Toni Morrison*

The 1920s Harlem Renaissance scholarship and art activism pursues the conceptual re-evaluation of blackness with a cosmetic approach. Among the many activists who impacted that blackness movement stood out "poet, novelist, and short story writer Claude McKay, Langston Hughes who worked in a great variety of genres, poet Countee Cullen, fiction writers Zora Neal Hurston, Nella Larsen, fiction writer and poet Jean Toomer" (Sahoo 22).

Sahoo comments on the works of Harlem Renaissance proponents noting that "they reconsidered black history and black identity, explored black folklore, the dialect forms of language and oral tradition." He explains the theoretical shift basing on the prevailing literary and artistic movement of the time, contending that the Harlem Renaissance critics "attempted to explore the theme of Black experience using a new – modernist experimental and novel-artistic form. (Modernism [being] a dominant trend in literature and the arts both in America and Europe in the first decades of 20TH C)" (22).

With the Great Depression putting a factual end to the Harlem Renaissance, there followed a group of Black scholars concerned with the search for the black self in their intellectual and critical productions. Most influential writers whose works nurtured the 1960s-1970s Black Arts Movement – "Black Aesthetic" – during the Civil Rights Era, are Marvin Ellis Jackmon (best known as Marvin X or El Muhajir), LeRoi Jones (pen-named Amiri Baraka), Richard Wright, James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison.

Two seminal anthologies of the time, namely *Black Power: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (1968) and *The Black Aesthetic* (1971) proved especially adamant in their claim for the re-evaluation and the valorization of the Black self. Accordingly, El Muhajir's poetic collection *Black Man Listen* (1969) and Amiri Baraka's poetic war-cry to his community – "Let Black people understand that/

They are the lovers and sons of lovers/And warriors and sons of warriors…Let the world be a Black Poem/And Let All Blacks Speak This Poem/ Silently" (105) – adopted a more radical tone for the affirmation of Blackness.

On the other hand, Richard Wright, James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison assumed a somewhat conciliatory aesthetics in their works within the Black Arts Movement, intended as the doctrinal back-up to radical mass activism. Of course, these authors criticize and reject the alienation, violence and humiliation inflicted on the Black by the White, as well. Nonetheless, they intend their literary works to go beyond racial boundaries and embrace universality.

Like their male contemporaries, female African-American authors distinguished themselves during the period spanning the Great Depression and the Black Arts Movement era. Subsequently, Ann Petry's *Street* (1946) chronicles the humiliating implications of blackness from a woman's experience. Like Petry, Gwendolyn E. Brooks exposes her critique of blackness through her poetic creation, a commitment which credited her with "the first African-American poet [to ever] win the Pulitzer Prize" with *Annie Allen* (1949) – her second poetry collection in 1950.

Undeniably, Toni Morrison imposes herself as the leading African-American woman critic of blackness from the 1970s onwards. Morison is indeed a prolific author whose central theme remains the black experience. She initiated her investigation of the concept of blackness with her first world-acclaimed novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970) (a blink at Du Bois' "blueness" metaphor?). All her numerous following works center on the search for a black identity, racial issues, class and gender paradigms. Such is notably the case with *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), Pulitzer Prize-winning *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2012), *God Help the Child* (2015), and the many numerous other children's books. Although Morrison's theoretical commitment to "positivizing" blackness is second to none, her intrusion into the "once-forbidden" 'whiteness vantage' will prove higher still.

3. "The Gospel of Whiteness"3

Martin Japtok's article could mislead the reader as for the beginning of African American investigation of the concept of whiteness if one sticked to its date of publication. Although it began timidly for various reasons, especially for safety, criticism of whiteness started as early as pioneers of

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3 This title is inspired by Martin Japtok's article, "'The Gospel of whiteness': Whiteness in African American Literature" 2004.

African American criticism took it to examining their own objectivation through blackness. From the logic of their binary opposition the critique of blackness at the time of slavery implicitly involved that of whiteness.

3.1. *"The Souls of White Folk": W. Du Bois' Groundbreaking Questioning of Whiteness*

Of all African-American theoreticians who actually sought to deconstruct the concept of whiteness at a time when doing so was surely perilous William Du Bois stands out. Du Bois is indeed one the very few Black critics of the first generations to ever overtly *attack* whiteness. In "The Souls of White Folk" (1920)[4], the critical counterpart to "The Souls of Black Folk", Du Bois submits whiteness to a microscopic investigation and he derides at its hollowness: "I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious" (497). Du Bois ironizes on whiteness as a recent social construct, claiming that "the discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing – a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed" (497).

Du Bois' critique covers all the aspects of whiteness, starting from its initial theorization as a racial and cultural marker to its nebulous modern and postmodern significance worldwide. He scoffs at the treacherous attitude of white scholars who feign sympathy as they interiorize and spread their supremacist doctrine. He senses fake compassion behind the equally fake spiritual foundation of white supremacy that reads as follows: "My poor, un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the curse of God lies heavy on you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that into Heaven above, where all is love, you may, one day, be born – white!" (498).

No wonder then that Du Bois should sarcastically erect whiteness to the vantage of sacrosanct realm: "…I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!" (498). Du Bois unwraps the racist package of whiteness and contrasts it with blackness especially as he states that "'everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is 'white'; everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating, and dishonorable is 'yellow'; a bad taste is 'brown', the devil is 'black'" (505).

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[4] The article is supposed to have been first published as a handwritten draft on 18 August, 2010 in *The Independent*, for more see "The Soul of the White Folk, W.E.D. Du Bois (1868-1963)": *Story of the Week: The Souls of White Folk (loa.org)*, consulted on February 10, 2022.

Du Bois' insight about the social construction of racist categories and hierarchies largely supports Reiland Rabaka's contention that in its material reification whiteness has spread out of colonial America, where it originated in the first place as a capitalist ideology, and reached up to places particularly inhabited by black communities (2006). Its effects on Africans and people of African descent are palpable and innumerable. They range from "African holocaust, enslavement and colonization; the 'failure' of reconstruction, the ritual of lynching and the rise of Jim Crow segregation in the United States…[to] white colonial and racial rule throughout Africa, and especially apartheid in South Africa" (1).

While these stark racist markers tend to diminish in present days, at least officially and legally, the challenge is yet to extract their imperceptible haze that permeates race relations, especially those which maintain African-Americans in subordination in the US society. Relatively recent critical whiteness studies have taken to investigating the depth and width of that rampant discrimination. Here, too, Toni Morrison's commitment proves invaluable.

3.2. *Toni Morrison and the "Literary Whiteness": Challenging the "Unspeakable"*

In the "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature" (1988), Toni Morrison openly denounces discrimination against African American cultural production and its subsequent exclusion from mainstream US cultural heritage.

She examines the literary dimension, that is, the intellectual aspect of white privilege crystalized in the pompously protected preserve called American literary canons. She discusses the term "'canon (*tube, cane,* or *cane-like, reed)*'" and associates it with its homophone "'cannon (r*od* becoming *body of law, body of rules, measuring rod)*'" to present American literature (in its present formulation) as an all-powerful standard against which other literary works are measured, but with which none can ever pair (123). She sees American literature as an enclosure which excludes peripheral sets of knowledges, no matter their qualities. She therefore questions its doctrinal basis and exposes it to public scrutiny in the following lines:

> There is something called American literature that, according to conventional wisdom, is certainly not Chicano literature, or Afro-American literature, or Asian literature, or Native American literature…it is somehow separate from them and they from it, and in spite of the efforts of recent literary histories, restructured curricula, and anthologies, this separate confinement, be it breached or endorsed, is the subject of a large part of the debates. (124)

Morrison links this intellectual exclusion with the ideology of whiteness itself. For she no more approaches whiteness only as a concept, but she also reads a supremacist doctrine in it. So now she can assert, drawing on Herman Melville's realization, that in America "whiteness [has become] ideology" (141). Assuming that whiteness retains "philosophical and metaphysical inconsistencies of an unprecedented idea", Morrison decries it as a cynical and shocking ideology which, according to Melville, "in its profoundest *idealized significance* […] calls up a peculiar apparition to the soul" (143). She endorses Melville's words: "I stress 'idealized significance' to emphasize and make clear (if such clarity needs stating) that Melville is not exploring white *people,* but whiteness idealized" (143). She expands Melville's thinking noting that "the necessity for whiteness as privileged 'natural' state, the invention of it, was indeed formed in fright" (145).

In rebutting whiteness as a "white savage racial ideology" (141), Morrison supports Melville's recommendations of subtlety, and admits with him that while "this visible [colored] world seems formed in love, the invisible [white] spheres were formed in fright" (141). Consequently, she appropriates Melville's cautious move and explains it:

> to question the very notion of white progress, the very idea of racial superiority, of whiteness as privileged place in the evolutionary ladder of humankind, and to meditate on the fraudulent, self-destroying philosophy of that superiority, to "pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges," to drag the "judge himself to the bar" – that was dangerous, solitary, radical work. Especially then. Especially now. To be "only a patriot to heaven" is no mean aspiration in Young America for a writer- or the captain of a whaling ship. (144)

In a further work entitled *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), Morrison questions the basis of both "literary whiteness" and "literary blackness" and the impact of such a construction in American literature (xii). She interrogates the assumption that "the traditional, canonical American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year presence of, first, Africans and then African-Americans in the United States" (4-5). She therefore accuses white literary criticism to strip and erase otherness, especially "Africanism", and suggests a close scrutiny of literary "blackness" if one is to understand literary whiteness (9). Her concern is to know "what parts do the invention and development of whiteness play in the construction of what is loosely described as 'American?'" (9)

That central question lies probably behind Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (1989), an article that appeals to investigate what Melissa Stein (2019) reads as "the generally unseen, and unearned, *advantages* white people carry with them in every aspect of life." McIntosh has had the merit to expose erstwhile camouflaged whiteness to public

audience, and has significantly contributed to pave the way for a range of scholarly fields and paradigms. So that the then stifled voice of the first generations of African-American critics of whiteness is now largely heard and pervades every sphere of the US society.

3.3. *Hunting for the Whiteness Nebula: Alice Walker and Modern-Day African-American Criticism of Whiteness*

The blooming of whiteness studies these days owes much to Peggy McIntosh, an "all-white" scholar whose groundbreaking article about the disguised privileges enjoyed by the "White folk" has revitalized African-Americans' critical interest. They now can openly face that once-scarecrow issue, and are able to elaborate on new approaches to examine it. McIntosh (1989) describes the nebulous content of whiteness as a "White privilege [which] is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks" (10). She supports her subversive insight with no less than 26 benefits which only whiteness can provide. Down are a few of the concealed privileges she enjoys as a white individual:

a. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
b. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
c. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
d. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
e. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
f. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
g. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
h. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
i. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me. (11)

As these are hardly detected by the racially blurred perception of non-Whites, the latter need to be attuned to them through a range of critical studies. That necessity mostly justifies the growth of whiteness studies in the USA and abroad. Melissa

Stein (2019) exposes the growing interest for whiteness studies focusing on its thriving academic publications:

> publication of a wide range of general overviews, textbooks, and edited anthologies has accompanied the rapid growth of critical whiteness studies as a scholarly field from the 1990s onward. Many of these volumes – a number of which developed from conference proceedings – summarize the state of the field for an academic audience or move the field in a new direction geographically, thematically, or theoretically, while others are designed specifically for classroom use.

As whiteness studies gain in higher scholarship so an ever-growing number of proponents from various academic fields emerge. Stein lists prominent contemporary whiteness critics to include "Toni Morrison, Eric Foner, Peggy McIntosh, Andrew Hacker, Ruth Frankenberg, John Howard Griffin, David Roediger, Kathleen Neal Cleaver, Noel Ignatiev, Cherríe Moraga, and Reginald Horsman". Basing on *Critical White Studies: Looking behind the Mirror* (Delgado & Stefancic 1997), Stein pinpoints some of the diverse issues addressed by contributing scholars through a number of questions:

a. How was whiteness invented, and why?
b. How has the category whiteness changed over time?
c. Why did some immigrant groups, such as the Irish and Jews, start out as nonwhite and later become white?
d. Can some individual people be both white and nonwhite at different times, and what does it mean to "pass for white"?
e. At what point does pride in being white cross the line into white power or white supremacy?
f. What can whites concerned over racial inequity or white privilege do about it?

These critics use "science and pseudoscience side by side" to demonstrate how whiteness often reflects preconception, not fact. They highlight the biological view that genes have less to do with race, and ensuing racism, on the ground that "genetic differences between races are insignificant compared to those within them." Stein insists on their realization that the issue of racial discrimination has taken long to come to an end because of its underlying power and privilege interplays. She identifies the different fields of investigation of whiteness in the book, namely, "sociology, law, history, cultural studies, and literature."

As per Alice Walker – a prominent African American novelist, poet and activist who criticizes white privilege and social inequity from a "womanist" perspective – the Whiteman has always oppressed and misunderstood the Black woman especially. In "The right to Life: What can the White Man Say to the Black Woman?" Walker (2002 12) suggests the Whiteman should say to the Black

woman: "I will tell you, Black woman, that I wish to be forgiven the sins I commit daily against you and your children".

Pursuing her critique Walker (2013) feels sarcastic and blames her late withdrawal from the list of guest speakers at the University of Michigan on account of her freedom of speech. Consequently, she urges Black "women to be in charge "of their own finances, so that the White man can't control your wants, needs, or desires in any capacity."

With *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983), Walker advocates for a conceptual separation from feminism which she sees as centering on white women only, and therefore coins "the term womanist to cater to the gifts and struggles of the Black woman." Walker's motive parallels the Combahee River Collective Statement which holds that "as Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face" (Taylor 15).

As whiteness studies thrive in the USA today and cause Martin Japtok (2004) to hear "The Gospel of whiteness" everywhere, Mike Hill warns against the counter effects of such a surge. Ashcroft et al. comment on Hill's concern arguing that "beyond these practical issues lie the more crucial epistemological issues which haunt all such *categories*," (221) whereby they actually mean "theories". They fear that "whiteness studies [should face] a problem similar to that which haunts many contemporary academic fields, […], that is that its existence as a field of study preserves the very concept (…) it seeks to dismantle" (222).

Still, one can hardly blame age-old sufferers of whiteness – conceptualized in a binary opposition separated by a "color line"– which erects and upholds the White on a vantage of *fixity*, *essentialism*, *purity*, *normativity*, *neutrality* and *positivity*, and conversely *curses*, *castigates*, *blames*, *persecutes*, *oppresses*, *lynches* and *excludes* the Black from humanness – to relish this long-aspired opportunity to assuage their fears and frustrations. In addition, these critical incursions into whiteness have had the merit to produce effective psychological and societal benefits for African-Americans to date.

4. Theory, Criticism and Human Rights

The incidence of African-Americans' theoretical activism on bridging the whiteness/blackness divides, and subsequently claiming the civil rights of their fellow community members in the USA is undeniable. As "the most prestigious and valued mode of [human] production" (Miller 7), theory obviously underlies the elaboration of civil rights policies. Therefore, African Americans' critical commitments must have surely prompted and energized bursting protests and

street demonstrations over the years against the racist whiteness/blackness binary construct.

In his world-appraised treatise on colonialism and blackness, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon reads the actions of the nationalist militants siding with their exploited native people as "the essence of the fight which explodes the colonial truths and reveals unexpected facets, which brings out new meanings and pinpoints the contradictions camouflaged by these facts" (146). A parallel can be made with the relentless critique of the hegemonic superposition of everything white over its debasing black counterpart. Where actions or politics lead an open battle for justice, underlying theories and ensuing critique poke the inside fire and turn it into an irresistible energy of which only a few "street activists" are aware.

The contention that theory underpins the struggle for human rights becomes more obvious when scholars and "street" demonstrators interact on the same ground. This is especially the case with the convergence of thoughts and actions between African American scholars and street activists after World War II. A Civil Rights activist like Martin Luther King imbeds his trade in the concept of *nonviolence* (King 1999; Bassey & Edwin 2020, etc.). His doctrine encompasses a conceptual package of "six principles" formulated from his *Stride to Freedom* as the fundamental tenets of his Nonviolence Philosophy by *The King Center*. King's nonviolent commitment had the same objectives and resonance as those of Mahatma Gandhi – who advocated for peaceful resistance to oppression and injustice.

Both Gandhi and King draw on their spiritual and religious backgrounds to conceptualize and implement their approaches to the nonviolent doctrine. Mary King (1999 xv) traces the metaphysical core of "nonviolent direct action" back to the "ancient Japanese martial art, a system of wrestling based on the knowledge of balance and how to use such understanding to overcome an opponent's sense of equilibrium." Martin L. King judiciously envelops his sociopolitical activism against racial oppression with his personal conceptualization of the metaphysical power that grounds nonviolent doctrine. Embedding his nonviolent approach in the Black Protestant Church creed and paving the numerous streets of the United States at the head of vibrant rallies, Luther King is exemplar of the combination of both theory and practice in the fight for human dignity.

Like Martin L. King, many African American scholars engage in both intellectual and practical activism intending to bring a positive change in their society, depending on prevailing contingencies. While the pioneers found it life-risking to openly voice and rise against white brutal domination, post Second-War generations took advantage of the newly observed fragility of whiteness and

white institutions to challenge them overtly both in words and actions. These no longer need to exile, like William Dubois, nor do they need pseudonyms in critiquing whiteness, like most of their predecessors. So that the successive generations of scholars could at once partake in street rallies and perform their theoretical deconstruction of the whiteness/blackness biases.

In this regard, Barack Obama, first and only African American president to date, initially operated a theoretical analysis of the pervasive poverty and stalemate in the USA from a racial perspective in his campaigning speech at the Constitution Center in Philadelphia on 18 March, 2008. Linking the country's overall crises to its "original sin of slavery", Obama theorizes on the need for all Americans to bridge the "color line" if they are to overcome their nation's challenges. For, as he says, "segregated school," for example, has provided "inferior education" and that "helps explain the pervasive achievement gap between today's black and white students" (Clack 67). He therefore blames "legalized discrimination" with its multifarious preventions for the big disparities between Whites and Blacks in their aspirations for the American Dream (67).

Obama's race survey helped shape his political vision for the USA as an endlessly perfectible racial "union". And although his social health policy barely survived his two-term presidency, Obama has shaken and awakened the heart of US politics on the issues of race and racial inequalities forever. In *Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995), Obama constructs his understanding of race basing on his personal experience as the son of a Black African student from Kenya and a White American mother. In a further address of the issue, and specifically reconceptualizing on-going worldwide 'Black-Lives-Matter' movement, President Obama declares:

> 'I know that there's [sic] some who have criticized even the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' as if the notion is as if other lives don't matter. We get 'All Lives Matter' or 'Blue Lives Matter.' I understand the point they're trying to make. I think it's also important for us to understand that the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' simply refers to the notion that there's a specific vulnerability for African-Americans that needs to be addressed…' (McDonald 2016)

Like all past and present African-American critics and theorists, Obama inscribes his race doctrine in a mainstream deconstructive momentum. The foremost concern of all these scholars is to make public the social, political, cultural and economic plights of the "Black folk" which blur the "American Dream" for all. Their intellectual commitments help debunk some of the hidden implications of official words and actions intended to eradicate ethnic, racial and cultural biases. Of course, racial equity proves hard to reach because of anchored prejudices. So that although the critique of whiteness and blackness have brought about invaluable social changes since its inception during slavery, it still tends to be at the initial deconstructive "reversal" phase. Yet, notable societal benefits advocate

for more future theoretical efforts in order to nullify the hegemonic whiteness/blackness construct, and set all US ethnic and cultural communities on the same equal basis.

Until then it is worth acknowledging at present the continuous amelioration of the image and status of the black community in the USA due partly to the relentless theoretical commitments of African American scholars since the early eighteenth century. While there is no evidence of any direct law enacted or any right conferred on the basis of a purely scholarly criticism to date, the theoretical rebuttal of the 'natural inferiority' of blackness has helped restore humanness for the people of African descent everywhere on Earth.

Most importantly, this intellectual activism has played a pivotal role in the effort of conceptualization and construction of a common identity. One such theoretical benefit is legible in the way the sons and daughters of people, who long suffered chattel slavery, identify themselves today. So much so that from objectifying racist labels like *Nigger* or *Negro*, they have evolved in such collective identifications as *Black* and *African-American* today (Quander & Froneberger 2020). Likewise, the once-debasing connotation of "race" is gradually operating a conceptual change as a more neutral and more acceptable word as "ethnic."

CONCLUSION

African-American critique of the concepts of whiteness and blackness and their endless dualistic implications have followed a contingent trajectory arc through time and space. From a timid investigation intended to refute its biological and spiritual justifications at its inception, it went through a "race pride" phase after World War I. It then reached up to a period of radical identity claim after World War II through Arts and Literature alongside factual Civil Rights activism performed on political and legal grounds. It has now forced its way to racializing the white community, conceptualizing whiteness as "white privilege". Ensuing Whiteness studies, once a scarecrow taboo, are thriving and gaining high scholarships in a deconstructive move intending to eradicate racial prejudice. And although it is still on the reversal phase of that deconstructive momentum, the critique of whiteness and its binary opposition with blackness has so far largely contributed to redeem humanness to African-Americans especially, and to the black people around the world by and large. With its now-flourishing and continuing probe into the core of whiteness, African-American critique of race relations bears the promise of equal citizenship and privileges for all Americans. On a larger scale, it foreshadows the advent of a humankind free of diverse forms of discrimination and marginalization based on phenotypes or cultural

differences. For this and for much more influence, African-American theoretical contribution to human rights and dignity must be acknowledged and celebrated.

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La Mujer y el Poder en *el Señor Presidente* de Miguel Ángel Asturias

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Resumen - Iniciamos este estudio sobre la mujer y el poder en *El señor presidente* de Miguel Ángel Asturias con motivo de mostrar la necesidad de restablecer una justicia natural en pro de la mujer por su empoderamiento, para que el pueblo guatemalteco aproveche los varios dones y las diversas competencias de la gente femenina, en breve, demostrar la pertinencia de las luchas feministas encaminadas al desarrollo sostenible y una cualidad de vida entre las comunidades guatemaltecas. Llevamos a cabo este trabajo utilizando el enfoque de sociología de la literatura. Lo que nos posibilita los resultados según los cuales Miguel Ángel Asturias, a través de su obra *El señor presidente*, pone de relieve el profundo impacto enajenador de la discriminación de la identidad femenina inducido por el despotismo político ambientado en la obra.

Palabras clave: Mujer, poder, feminicidio, despotismo, empoderamiento.

Resumé - Nous avons entrepris cette étude sur la femme et le pouvoir dans l'œuvre *El señor presidente* de Miguel Ángel Asturias dans l'objectif de montrer la nécessité de rendre une justice naturelle en faveur de la femme à travers son autonomisation, afin que le peuple guatémaltèque puisse profiter des différents dons et compétences de la gent féminine. Bref, démontrer la pertinence des luttes féministes en vue d'un développement durable et une qualité de vie chez les communautés guatémaltèques. Nous avons mené cette étude en utilisant la sociologie de la littérature comme approche méthodologique. Ce qui a produit les résultats selon lesquels Miguel Ángel Asturias, à travers son œuvre *El señor presidente*, met en évidence l'impact aliénant de la discrimination de l'identité féminine, aliénation produite par le despotisme politique peint en littérature par l'auteur dans cette œuvre.

Mots-clés : femme, pouvoir, féminicide, despotisme, autonomisation.

Abstract - We initiated this study on women and power in *El señor presidente* of Miguel Ángel Asturias in order to show the need to reestablish a natural justice in favor of women for their empowerment, so that the Guatemalan people could take advantage of the various gifts and the different competencies of women's people. In short, to demonstrate the relevance of feminist struggles for sustainable development and a quality of life among Guatemalan communities. We carried it

out by sociology of literature approach. This turns us out the results according to which Miguel Ángel Asturias, through his work *El señor presidente,* throw into relief the profound alienating impact of the discrimination of women's identity caused by the political despotism set in this work.

Keywords: Women, power, feminicide, despotism, empowerment.

INTRODUCCIÓN

La discriminación sigue siendo uno de los temas de la literatura, dado que todas las sociedades, en distintos periodos de la historia de la humanidad, están marcadas por «una práctica liminal, una conducta sistemáticamente injusta contra una persona o grupo determinado, basada en la no aceptación de la diferencia, el miedo, la ignorancia, o la lucha por intereses ideológicos, económicos, etc.» (Rodríguez Reyes, 2009). En la sociedad sedentaria, la división de trabajo fue determinante en la construcción de roles de género, ya que normalmente, las mujeres eran asignadas al cuidado del hogar, la procreación, la recolección y otras tareas de bajo impacto. La corrupción moral no sólo se manifiesta en la injusticia, sino también en el relajamiento de las costumbres, en la promiscuidad con que los hombres del régimen viven con la prostitución. Lo que hace resaltar aún más la falta de sentimientos humanos, por lo que Asturias atribuye a la clase dominante, cerrada de piedad, ávida solamente de riqueza, dedicada solo al atropello y la violencia. Así que un comportamiento social mal apreciado en Occidente, puede ser bien compartido en África. *El Señor presidente* de Miguel Ángel Asturias suscita varias apreciaciones humillantes sobre la mujer y el poder en esta obra. Los hechos descritos en dicha novela pueden adaptarse a la propia patria de Asturias, Guatemala o a cualquier otro país de Hispanoamérica. Por eso, en este trabajo, nos comprometemos en estudiar el tema: "La mujer y el poder en *El señor presidente* de Miguel Ángel Asturias", con motivo de mostrar la necesidad de restablecer una justicia natural en pro de la mujer por su empoderamiento, para que la sociedad moderna aproveche los varios dones y las diversas competencias de la gente femenina. Para llevar a cabo nuestro estudio, nos valemos de la sociología de la literatura como método de trabajo y lo organizaremos en torno a seis (6) puntos esenciales: marco teórico del estudio, a revisión de literatura, la presentación del autor y su obra, forma y lenguaje, mujer y poder *en El señor presidente* y por fin, mujer y poder en contexto africano y beninés.

1. Marco teórico del estudio
1.1. Aclaración conceptual

- *La mujer*

La mujer podría definirse como "una clase doblemente silenciada", puesto que además de sufrir los mismos abusos de los grupos más débiles, se encuentra en un estado de subordinación física
y espiritual al sexo masculino.[1] Su contribución positiva, su poderoso instinto femenino, se ponen a flote cuando se necesita que desempeñen sus deberes tradicionales, en este caso el cuidado de los niños, de los enfermos y de los muertos: son prioridades a las cuales no se oponen porque saben que forman parte de sus tareas. De este modo, mujeres aparentemente entre las más degradadas, consiguen restituir valores humanos muy fuertes. Asturias, con tanta diversidad de paradigmas afirma su riqueza: los valores que ellas expresan pueden ser positivos o negativos, según su personalidad, pero todas, a pesar de técnica ingeniosa y poco manifiesta, ejercen un fuerte poder sobre una sociedad masculina débil, corrupta, vulgar, interiormente pobre, machista.

- *El poder*

El término "poder" recubre diversas apreciaciones. Es el "control que se ejerce sobre un grupo humano; posición fuerte que permite influir sobre la sociedad". Tocante a una acción, el poder es "tener la capacidad, la facultad o la posibilidad de llevarla a cabo" según M. González, H. Hernández y al., 2006:1531. El poder es también "capacidad o facultad para hacer algo; dominio, mando, influencia o autoridad para mandar; gobierno de un país; cada uno de los tipos de funciones en que se divide el gobierno de un Estado".

- *El feminicidio*

El término "feminicidio" es una forma de homicidio específico donde un varón asesino a una mujer, chica o niña por ser de sexo femenino. Los feminicidios tienen la costumbre de ocurrir en el hogar como consecuencia de violencia de género. Hay muchos autores entre ellos Asturias afirma que incluye cualquier asesinato cuya víctima sea una mujer, independientemente del género de quien lo cometa. Este término es la manifestación más extrema del abuso y la violencia de hombres hacia mujeres. Se produce como consecuencia de cualquier tipo de violencia de género, como pueden ser las agresiones físicas, la violación, la maternidad forzada o la mutilación genital.

- *La dictadura*

La dictadura es un régimen militar, autoritario, corrupto, fuertemente personalizado, se apoya en la represión, la violencia y el temor, atenta contra las libertades públicas, violenta los derechos humanos. Así pues, no estamos lejos

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[1] González Álvaro, 2018: 605).

del drama humano pintado en *El Señor presidente*: la violencia, el temor, la arbitrariedad se ven en todas partes. Basta con mencionar

este ejemplo, que ilustra en palabras sencillas qué es un estado de no derecho, en donde se encarcela a la gente por simple capricho de la autoridad policiaca: "...cuando no tenía armas por sospechoso, vago, conspirador, o, como decía el jefe, porque me cae mal."

- *La libertad*

Es la "facultad natural de las personas para obrar o no obrar o para elegir la forma de hacerlo. Es la condición o situación del que no es esclavo, no está peso o no está sometido. El permiso para realizar algo. El derecho para ejercer una actividad sin intervención de la autoridad." (M. González, H. Hernández y al., 2006:1205) Pero Asturias tenía la oportunidad de basar su propio líder ficticio "el presidente" en observaciones históricas del dictador guatemalteco, caído en desgracia. En las palabras de Asturias:

> "En la cárcel le miraba casi todos los días. Y me di cuenta de que, sin duda, estos señores ejercen un gran poder en las personas. Tanto es así que, cuando estuve en la cárcel, la gente comentaba: No, no es Estrada Cabrera. El auténtico Estrada Cabrera se evadió. Es un viejo pobre al que encerraron adentro".

- *El despotismo*

El despotismo es "abuso de superioridad, de poder o de fuerza en el corto periodo con los demás. Es autoridad absoluto no limitada por la ley." (González, H. Heméndez y al., 2006:663). Es la "manera de gobernar del déspota. Cualquier tipo de autoridad absoluta, opresiva y tiranía que uno se arrebata y ejerce". La trama histórica de Asturias es muy escueta es decir que el homicidio del coronel José Parrales Sonriente constituye el fundamento de la acción y pone en marcha todo un mecanismo cuyo fin es culpar a dos personajes caídos en desgracia ante el dictador; al mismo tiempo, permite desarrollar historias paralelas, como la de la relación entre Camila y Cara de Ángel. Pero, sobre todo, el autor nos restituye un fresco inolvidable de la condición humana bajo los gobiernos totalitarios.

1.2. Problemática, hipótesis, metodología y objetivos

- *Problemática*

Las sociedades son machistas en su mayoría, hasta actualidad, a pesar de que, muchas mujeres sobresalen en talentos y en el buen gobierno. La cuestión núcleo de la problemática de nuestro estudio es la pertinencia o no del empoderamiento de la mujer y de la ginecocracia. Esta cuestión central se fragmenta en otras: ¿se equivocaría la humanidad empoderando a la gente femenina? ¿No dan hoy las mujeres suficientes muestras de competencia y de buen gobierno

para que las sociedades machistas se convenzan de que son oportunos el empoderamiento de la mujer y la ginecocracia? ¿Es el poder del gobernante superior al del pueblo? ¿Cómo se manifiesta la privación de la libertad de la mujer en *El señor presidente?* Estas preguntas heurísticas surgen de algunas hipótesis que han fundado nuestro interés por el estudio.

- *Hipótesis*

Para llevar a cabo nuestro estudio, partimos de las hipótesis siguientes:

- las sociedades son machistas hasta actualidad, aunque muchas mujeres sobresalen en talentos;
- si el ser humano restaura la segregación de la mujer que es una justicia natural, el mundo podrá aprovechar los tantos regalos y las tantas competencias de la gente femenina;
- la libertad femenina es esencial;
- no existe poder sin límite, es el pueblo el que da el poder y el que se lo excluye.
- Existe une moraleja para la sociedad dicha moderna en el corpus de nuestro estudio

- *Objetivos*

El objetivo general de nuestro estudio es mostrar la necesidad de restablecer una justicia natural en pro de la mujer por su empoderamiento con fin de exponer los varios dones y las diversas competencias de la gente femenina en la sociedad. De manera específica, queremos mostrar como las temáticas de mujer y de poder fueron utilizados por Miguel de Asturias, por un lado, y, por otro lado, contextualizar y actualizar dichas temáticas en las sociedades actuales.

1.3. Metodología

- *La sociología de la literatura*

«La sociología de la literatura es un método de estudio de las obras literarias de los llamados *trascendentes*, es decir, aquellos que analizan las obras en virtud de una clave interpretativa que está más allá de la configuración lingüística del texto» (Sapiro : 2016, pág. 20). La sociología de la literatura, en concreto, establece conclusiones que parten de la consideración de la literatura como realidad, fenómeno o institución social, en tanto que relaciona las obras literarias y sus creadores, la sociedad y el momento histórico en que nacen, y la orientación política que las inspira. La sociología de la literatura considera a la literatura como una tarea social, la cual depende de las condiciones de producción y de circulación, asociada a valores, a una visión del mundo. Por lo que requiere un

estudio de las relaciones entre el texto y el contexto que plantee, en el plano metodológico, el problema de la tensión entre análisis interno (la estructura de la obra) y análisis externo (función social). Las intenciones de superar esta división se han centrado en las mediaciones entre la obra y sus condiciones de producción. Un ejemplo notable es *Las reglas del arte: Génesis y estructuras del campo literario (1992)* de Pierre Bourdieu. Isidore Marie Auguste François Xavier Comte o Auguste Comte, filósofo, escritor y matemático francés, es considerado el "Padre de la Sociología de la literatura".

2. Revisión de literatura

La iniciativa de investigación sobre la mujer y poder en una obra nos es surgida luego de nuestro trabajo de estudio y de investigación sobre Política y dictadura en *Fuenteovejuna* y en *El señor presidente* para la obtención de master. Durante estas investigaciones, constatamos que el género feminista sufre en frente del ejercicio de poder en ambas obras y en particular en América Latina. Por consiguiente, el corpus de nuestra investigación documental consta de una obra fundamental: la novela *El señor presidente* de Miguel Ángel Asturias. Además de esa obra de primera mano, consultamos muchas obras críticas, documentos de metodología y documentos de erudición que mencionamos en nuestra rúbrica Bibliografía.

De acuerdo con Durán (2015), en un movimiento feminista realizan acciones para favorecer el empoderamiento de la mujer a través de la creatividad. Él muestra su desacuerdo a través de sus obras al sistema patriarcal donde viven defendiendo la soberanía sobre el propio cuerpo que ven en la educación sexual como fundamental para atajar la cantidad de violaciones abortos clandestinos que ocurren para que, para siempre, deje de considerarse como un tema tabú que a la vez legitima las relaciones violentas y machistas. También, focalizando su labor artística en la política, el feminismo y las injusticias y desigualdades sociales, Regina José Galindo ha intentado expresar su rechazo absoluto contra el régimen de Montt y sobre todo la violencia que trae consigo la política en una de sus obras.

3. Presentación del autor y su obra
- *El autor y sus obras*

Miguel Ángel Asturias nació en Ciudad de Guatemala en 1899. Su familia se vio obligada a trasladarse a la ciudad de Salamá, Baja Verapaz, donde Asturias vivió en la granja de sus abuelos. Obtuvo su bachillerato en Ciencias y Letras en el Instituto Nacional Central para Varones. Cuando era estudiante comenzó a escribir y realizó el primer borrador de una historia que más tarde se convertiría en la novela *El señor presidente*. Asturias se involucró en la política trabajando

como representante de la Asociación General de Estudiantes Universitarios y viajó a El Salvador y Honduras para su nuevo empleo. Por ello, comienza la carrera de Medicina, pero no tardará en abandonar los estudios e ingresar en la Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales para cursar Derecho licenciándose en 1923. En 1924 viaja a Europa en donde realizará estudios de Antropología, aquí conoce a los grandes escritores del momento: Breton, Unamuno y Joyce entre otros. Su primera obra fue *Leyendas de Guatemala* (1930) y está considerada como una de las mejores obras de la Literatura Hispanoamericana del siglo XX; *El señor presidente* (1946) se considera su obra maestra y estuvo trabajando en ella desde su estancia en París, allá por 1932.

Cuando Asturias regresó a su país en 1933, tuvo su primer encuentro con Jorge Ubico, gobernante que cerró la Universidad Popular. Así, fue elegido diputado al Congreso Nacional, después de la caída del régimen de Jorge Ubico. En 1953 es nombrado embajador en El Salvador y compagina sus labores diplomáticas con la literatura. Dado que sus competencias literarias, Asturias fue galardonado con el Premio Nobel de Literatura "por sus logros literarios vivos, fuertemente arraigados en los rasgos nacionales y las tradiciones de los pueblos indígenas de América Latina" en 1967. El dramaturgo, Asturias tuvo una rica biblioteca con libros contemporáneos y clásicos. Entre sus lecturas favoritas figuraban algunas obras cuya influencia es patente en pasajes de la tragicomedia: *El señor presidente.* Sin embargo, Asturias pasó sus últimos años en Madrid, donde murió de cáncer en 1974. Está enterrado en el cementerio de Pére Lachaise, en París.

Con respecto a sus obras durante su currículo, Asturias escribió *Leyendas de Guatemala* (1930), obra en que recogió una colección de cuentos y leyendas mayas. En 1946 publicó la novela *El señor presidente*, que le dio a conocer internacionalmente, y en 1949 publicó *Hombres de maíz*, donde combinó lo mítico con la realidad cotidiana del indígena. Destacaron igualmente la trilogía formada por *Viento fuerte* (1950), *El Papa verde* (1954) y *Los ojos de los enterrados* (1960), así como *Mulata de tal* (1963), *Malandrón* (1969) y *Viernes de Dolores* (1972). Dentro de su obra dramática, menos conocida, publicaó, entre otros, *Soluna* (1955), *Chantaje* y *Dique seco*, ambas de 1964 y dedicadas a la mitología indígena. Al género del cuento dedicó varios títulos, como *Week-end* en Guatemala, (1955), *El espejo de Lida Sal* (1967) y *Tres de cuatro soles* (1971). A la poesía: *Anoche,* 10 de marzo de 1543 (1943), *Sien de alondra* (1948), *Ejercicios poéticos en forma de soneto sobre temas de Horacio* (1951), *Alto en el sur* (1952), *Bolívar, Canto al libertador* (1955); y al ensayo: *El problema social del indio* (1923), *Arquitectura de la vida nueva* (1928), *Carta aérea a mis amigos de América* (1952) y *Latinoamérica y otros ensayos* (1968)

- *Resumen de la obra*

La descripción de un mecanismo político que siembra el terror en el pueblo usando las injusticias y de las tiranías de su presidente resulta notar como tema de la dictadura en la obra *El señor presidente.* De luego, esta obra consta temas secundarios de donde "el amor" entre dos personas el romance que vivieron Camila y Miguel entre todas las injusticias que tuvieron de un lado, y de otro lado, podemos darnos cuenta de que la crueldad que sufren los habitantes de un país latinoamericano en una dictadura autoritaria, el abuso de poder, la violencia y el desprecio por las clases más desprotegidas constituye el argumento del romance. Por lo tanto, se cuenta la historia de amor entre Miguel Cara de Ángel, hombre de confianza del presidente, y Camila, hija del general Eusebio Canales, a quien se considera traidor al presidente. Con esta historia de amor se logra apenas suavizar el tema principal del libro que es describir la dictadura en un país lleno de miseria donde las mujeres son consideradas de la misma manera despreciable en que se trata a las personas, totalmente desprovistas de dignidad. Dicha miseria lo vemos por ejemplo en las citas del capítulo 1: "Los Domingos caía en medio de aquella sociedad extraña

un borracho…", "Contado por los mendigos, se regó entre la gente del pueblo…", "Los pordioseros que iban capturando…", lleno de pobreza, como observamos en el capítulo 9 por ejemplo: "La impresión de los barrios pobres a estas horas de la noche…" Pobreza, miseria, falta de dignidad, todos temas partir del cual derivan todas las clases de abusos de autoridad que trae aparejado un gobierno de dictadura. Es así como vemos que la relación del Señor Presidente con las mujeres es de absoluto poder. Permanentemente se fragmenta el cuerpo humano, sobre todo en lo que respecta a la figura femenina y concretamente a las imágenes eróticas. Vemos en el capítulo 14 "Casa de mujeres malas", como se describen a las mujeres en una relación denigrante, por ejemplo "¿Me podré ir con aquella mujer que está allá? Sí, hombre, si para eso son…"

A continuación, es claro que los sufrimientos de la muerte de las mujeres inocentes sirven para intensificar el ambiente de horror que muestra otro aspecto de la destrucción de la dignidad humana. Por ejemplo, la muerte horrible de La Chabelona, vieja sirviente de Camila aumenta el sentimiento de destrucción sin razón. También Fedina Rodas y la esposa de Carvajal personifican otros aspectos de triunfo del amor sobre la muerte. Así pues, Fedina es torturada por haber visitado la casa de Canales después de la fuga, como constatamos en el Capítulo 16: "Cuando se detenía a implorar, por su hijo más que por su dolor, la golpeaban." Asimismo, Fedina hace que alguien pierda el juicio o la razón como lo vemos en el capítulo 22: "Lloró hasta desfallecer…" y se niega a abandonar a su hijo muerto: "…que arrullaba todavía como un niño dormido." Cuando en el burdel las prostitutas se dan cuenta de que lo que lleva entre los brazos Niña Fedina es su hijo muerto, comienzan todas a organizar un improvisado ritual

mortuorio. No es su hijo, sino un hijo, como si en medio de la soledad de Fedina, ellas se identificaran con algo muy personal, pero al mismo tiempo en un ambiente de unidad y comprensión mientras tanto la esposa de Carvajal en el capítulo 21 como implora por su marido, vemos como la maltratan: "A troche y moche la habían arrancado de donde tal vez estaba el presidente", "Le negaban el paso…". Pero a pesar de esto las dos mujeres nos representan como el amor triunfa sobre la fuerza del dictador. Terminamos la obra con la desolación de la dictadura del presidente que está afectando a diferentes personas cada vez. Esta novela termina entonces con la voz de una mujer, recitando el rosario, y la respuesta de Kyrie Eleison, que concluye pidiendo al Señor que tenga misericordia, en un juego de palabras, que señalan simultáneamente a Dios y al presidente, quien parece el dueño de vidas que destruye constantemente.

- *Estudio de los personajes de la obra*

En esta novela iremos conociendo a los protagonistas, donde tienen rasgos que los distinguen a todos, pero donde, de distintas y diversas maneras, se relacionan entre sí para integrar esta interesante narración.

- El Pelele: El tonto, que no aguantó oír la palabra "madre" pronunciada por la maestra al coronel José Parrales, fue el responsable de la decisión de la que falleció Lucio porque creyó que estaba enfermo de cólera.
- General de la Guerra: era la persona encargada de luchar contra las injusticias del país, fue el verdugo del mosco por no comentar acerca del homicidio de José Parrales el cual fue Abel Carvajal terminando con la vida de Ángel.
- Benemetrio de la Patria: fue el presidente de la nación al que no le preocupa la claridad de su gestión del poder, sino únicamente su eventual reelección.
- Miguel Cara de Ángel: era el hombre de confianza del presiente, falleció como resultado de su constante apoyo al presidente.
- Viuda: negro indigente que molestó al cobarde con la palabra madre.
- Pata-hueca: es el único amigo de Pelele que se encuentra el Portal del Señor.
- Mosco: un deficiente visual que murió por no decir que Abel Carvajal era el asesino de José Parrales.
- José Parrales: Fue abatido por El Pelélé cuando pronunció el nombre de su difunta mamá.
- Luis Barreño: experto en atentados, declarado culpable del asesinato a muerte fría de numerosos combatientes a los que había colocado sustancias tóxicas.
- Camila: hija del general Canales.
- General Eusebio Canales: Su seudónimo era Chamarrita, que fue injustamente indagado y sentenciado por las matanzas de los parroquianos.

4. Forma y lenguaje

- ### *Estructuración de la obra*

Escrita en 1946, la novela *El señor presidente* consta de cuarenta y un capítulos repartidos en tres partes en las cuales podemos encontrar tres historias que se entrelazan entre sí a lo largo del libro y un epílogo:

◊ el planteamiento del descubrimiento de la historia de un mendigo llamado Pelele quién está harto de ser perseguido por el fantasma de su madre. Y por eso, mata al Coronel Parrales Sonriente por culpa de una broma suya a propósito de este hecho.

◊ la investigación sobre el asesinato de José Parrales Sonriente. Al mismo tiempo, la evolución de la historia de amor entre Camila y Miguel Cara de Ángel.

◊ el desenlace cubre el homicidio que el presidente se sirve como pretexto para justificar la falta de libertades y los abusos del poder al modo de una dictadura muy autoritaria y violenta.

El punto central del drama es formado por esta tercera compuesta de catorce capítulos e incluido el epilogo, precedidos cada uno de ellos de un breve argumento.

- ### *Temas*

El *Carpe diem* (Goza el tiempo presente). Exhortación a aprovechar el presente ante la constancia de la fugacidad del tiempo

Según este tópico, se invita a gozar intensamente de la juventud, pues es un bien efímero. A título de ejemplos, podemos mentar a este respecto haciendo alusión a la metáfora Heráclito del río que fluye. Heráclito, *Elogio de la sombra* (1969); en *Obres completas*, vol. II, p. 357.En tanto que de rosa y azucena de Garcilaso de la Vega., y mientras por competir con tu cabello de Luis de Góngora.

- El *Collige virgo rosas* (Coge, doncella, las rosas). Este tópico es casi idéntico al Carpe diem, con el matiz que el *Collige virgo rosas* se dirige particularmente a las jóvenes muchachas y no a los muchachos.
- El *Vita-flumen* (La vida como un río). Aquí se compara la vida con un río, un camino, que conduce a la muerte. Es lo que notamos, por ejemplo, en los versos del filósofo Heráclito, y en el Maestre don Rodrigo de Jorge Manrique.

Afuera de los temas "mujer y poder" del corpus de nuestro artículo, podemos subrayar la mezcla de realidad y ficción, de mentira y verdad, que domina toda la novela como nos ilustra el capítulo IX de *El Señor Presidente* titulado "Ojo de

vidrio" donde Genaro Rodas se encuentra en la alcoba con su mujer Fedina. Había asistido el asesinato del Pelele y conocía la orden de aprehensión contra Canales y Carvajal: "Un ojo se le paseaba por los dedos de la mano derecha como una luz de lamparita eléctrica", Asturias, p.62.

También, la animalización se halla dentro de un sistema simbólico que forma parte del proceso de mitificación de las entidades reales en esta novela donde la tiranía es exhibida en su forma más grotesca y maligna, nacen elementos como lo muestra este capítulo IV en que Pelele sueña

de un pájaro y dice: "¡Soy la Manzana-Rosa del Ave del Paraíso!, ¡soy la vida!, ¡la mitad de mi cuerpo es mentira y la mitad es verdad!" Ibíd., p. 27

- *Lenguaje y estilo*

En esta obra maestra de la literatura, se encuentran a la vez los dos tipos de expresión: la expresión culta (latinismos, frases largas, enumeraciones y paralelismos) y la expresión coloquial popular (refranes, exclamaciones y tacos).

Los diálogos dan consistencia dramática precisa a todos los acontecimientos y vivifican la personalidad de cada uno de los personajes. Los diálogos están construidos con un lenguaje que tanto se amolda a la condición social de los personajes como a las diferentes situaciones de la acción dramática.

En el desarrollo de los diversos parlamentos, aparecen monólogos y apartes. El estilo de los monólogos difiere del resto del texto. Están formados por frases largas con frecuentes antítesis, paralelismos, apóstrofes, máximas e interrogaciones retóricas. Su complejidad estilística se relaciona con la naturaleza semántica de los mismos. No suelen ser descriptivos sino introspectivos.

Los apartes, que tienen una extensa tradición que se remonta hasta el teatro romano, son utilizados también en *El señor presidente*. Se trataba de que un personaje, cuando la ocasión lo exigiese, pudiese opinar sin ser advertido por su interlocutor, pero sí por los demás personajes de la escena. De este modo, se consiguen los distintos matices de los diferentes estados de ánimo.

En *El señor presidente,* es necesario distinguir dos partes perfectamente diferenciadas: los parlamentos y las acotaciones.

Los parlamentos se componen del diálogo de los diversos personajes de la obra. Las acotaciones que podemos repartir en tres acepciones (enunciativas, descriptivas y mixtas), son las notas del autor que explican todo lo relativo a las acciones o a la entrada o salida de los personajes de la escena. También pueden indicarnos otros elementos escénicos, como el diseño de los decorados, los diferentes tipos de traje, el retrato físico de los personajes, los diferentes efectos

de luz, etc., que están al servicio de lo puramente escénico. Así como en el teatro moderno, las acotaciones están claramente diferenciadas de los parlamentos de los personajes. En *El señor*

presidente, por lo contrario, están incorporadas a los diálogos en la línea de lo que será práctica usual en el teatro del Siglo de Oro.

En las acotaciones enunciativas, se explica la presencia o actuación de los personajes. Estas acotaciones están casi siempre diversificadas para indicar a la vez la intención, el deseo, el temor, la esperanza del personaje que las formula. Es lo que se alude en toda clase de gente que vive diariamente el terror que Asturias comenta en el fragmento siguiente:

> "De miedo, de frío y de hambre lloraban los mendigos apañuscados en la sombra. No se veían ni las manos. A veces quedaban se aletargados y corría entre ellos, como buscando salida, la respiración de la sordomuda encinta." *Asturias, p. 15*

En las acotaciones descriptivas que varían y abundan en la obra, se revelan la atención, el aspecto y la mímica de los personajes. En ellas, también se señalan los aspectos físicos del Señor presidente y de Camilla que enmarcan su retrato físico, como se muestra en este trozo de la obra:

> *"El Presidente vestía como siempre de luto riguroso: negros los zapatos, negro el traje, negra la corbata, negro el sombrero que nunca se quitaba; en los bigotes canos, peinados sobre las comisuras de los labios, disimulaba las encías sin dientes, tenía los carrillos pellejudos y los parpados como pellizcados". Idem., pp.42*
>
> *"Camila habría querido pasar sin que la vieran. Pero imposible. Su belleza exótica, sus ojos verdes, descampados, sin alma, su cuerpo fino, copiado en el traje de seda blanco, sus senos de media libra, sus movimientos graciosos, y, sobre todo, su origen: hija del general Canales." Ibídem, p.311*

En las acotaciones mixtas, los hechos se deducen del diálogo en lugar de estar dados explícitamente. Así, en el siguiente fragmento, las exclamaciones del presidente que ordena como castigo al secretario doscientos palos cuando una sirvienta le informa durante su comida que el secretario murió por su castigo:

> *"…- ¿Cómo por qué? ¡Por que se murió!*
>
> *Y siempre con el plato, volvió al comedor.*
>
> *- ¡Señor -dijo casi llorando al Presidente, que comía tranquilo-, dice que no aguantó porque se murió!*
>
> *- ¿Y qué? ¡Traiga lo que sigue!" Ibid, p.41*

Muchos recursos estilísticos están utilizados en la novela *El señor presidente* de ellos destacamos como estilos:

- la anáfora: "… ¡Alumbra, lumbre de alumbre, Luzbel de piedra lumbre!"
- la comparación: "La señorita perdida como un perfume." "Se acostaban separados, sin desvestirse, y dormían como ladrones, con la cabeza en el costal de sus riquezas: desperdicios de carne, zapatos rotos, cabos de

candela, puños de arroz cocido envueltos en periódicos viejos, naranjas y guineos pasados"

- la hipérbole: "Cara de Ángel se arrancó el cuello y la corbata frenético" "En cada lágrima un sistema planetario…"
- la personificación: "Le deben doler las hojas de Árbol de la noche triste" "El viento corría ligero por la planicie…"

El estilo de *El señor presidente* nos ofrece un lenguaje lleno de pliegues, torceduras y deslices semánticos, que emplea y desestabiliza los elementos de la novela histórica. De este modo, combina cabalmente estética y política en la creación de un mundo esperpéntico e hiperbólico, pero de un realismo turbulento para el lector por la teoría ficcional del poder que presenta.

5. Mujer y poder en El señor presidente de Miguel Ángel Asturias
5.1. La mujer

La categoría de las mujeres podría definirse como "una clase doblemente silenciada", puesto que además de sufrir los mismos abusos de los grupos más débiles, se encuentra en un estado de subordinación física y espiritual al sexo masculino[2], lejos de la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres reconocida por la DUDH. La supuesta inferioridad biológica de las mujeres se percibe como rasgo dominante en casi todas las situaciones en que están implicadas, por la capacidad del autor de explotar el lenguaje. El rol de la mujer en la obra *El señor presidente* de Miguel Ángel Asturias es relevante para entender la opresión y la violencia que se vive en la sociedad retratada en la novela. A lo largo de la historia, las mujeres son representadas como víctimas de un sistema patriarcal y autoritario, donde son sometidas a abusos y maltratos por parte de los hombres en el poder. Efectivamente, son muchos los casos en que, insistiendo en el campo semántico de la agresión física, Asturias consigue transmitirnos la sensación de una violencia sufrida con pasividad. Uno de los protagonistas femeninos más destacados es Camila, la amante del presidente. Mediante de su historia, Asturias muestra cómo las mujeres son utilizadas como

objetos sexuales y cómo su dignidad y libertad son humilladas en desvalorización de satisfacer los deseos del hombre en el poder. Camila es una mujer vulnerable y frágil, que se ve atrapada en una relación abusiva y sin salida. Además, los militares, por ejemplo, dejan a la Chibolona «con las mejillas bañadas en sangre, los cabellos en desorden, las ropas hecha pedazos» (Asturias, p.199) y ella, víctima de la desesperación, reacciona auto infringiéndose otras penas hasta perder la vista. La madre de Miguel Angelito representa el sufrimiento y la impotencia de las mujeres ante la violencia y la injusticia. Su

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[2] González Álvaro, 2018, p.605

dolor y su lucha por encontrar justicia para su hijo reflejan la lucha de todas las mujeres que han perdido a sus seres queridos debido a la opresión y la corrupción. Según Asturias, las mujeres parecen también figuras de resistencia y valentía ante la adversidad. Pese a vivir en un medio ambiente hostil y peligroso, unas mujeres se deciden a afrontar al presidente y luchar por sus derechos. Estas mujeres representan la esperanza y la fuerza de un cambio social, mostrando que la lucha por la igualdad y la justicia no es exclusiva de los hombres.

5.2. El poder

En la obra de Miguel Ángel Asturias, *El señor presidente,* abordamos el ejercicio del poder en un contexto político opresivo. A través de una narrativa cruel y desoladora, el autor nos sumerge en un mundo donde el poder absoluto del presidente se impone sobre los derechos y la dignidad de los ciudadanos. Asturias describe de manera vívida la forma en la que este personaje manipula y controla a su antojo a la sociedad, utilizando el miedo y la represión como herramientas para mantener su dominio. El presidente se rodea de una red de funcionarios corruptos y sádicos, dispuestos a hacer cualquier cosa para mantener su estatus y privilegios. Como se ha visto, en la obra surgen varios trozos donde se percibe que el gobierno no cuida de los pordioseros; se anula toda una serie de derechos hasta causar la pérdida del "acento humano" (Asturias, p.116) en los más débiles. Sin embargo, cuando le conviene, el poder cuenta con ellos, por ejemplo, los erige en testigos en el proceso contra el licenciado Carvajal, enemigo del Presidente. En este régimen de tipo militar, los opositores y los presos políticos se ven negado el derecho a la integridad y seguridad personales. Asturias nos presenta una sociedad sumida en la pobreza y la desesperanza, donde los más vulnerables son los más afectados por las prácticas corruptas del gobierno. Unos prisioneros sufren injusticias peores. Por ejemplo, al sacristán y al estudiante, mientras hombres de cultura, se les niega la libertad de pensamiento y de expresión y hasta quedan incomunicados, porque se les acusa de ser revolucionarios. Asimismo, Miguel Cara de Ángel, el "favorito-decaído" del Presidente, está condenado a morir

en un calabozo subterráneo por voluntad del jefe de estado en persona. Esto explica cómo a cada preso se le infligen torturas distintas según las circunstancias específicas del crimen y del sujeto, lo que puede conducir incluso a la pérdida de la vida de manera completamente antidemocrática e irrespetuosa de los derechos humanos. Además, dentro del texto analizado, no faltan referencias a torturas físicas contra los soldados incómodos, cuya muerte se debe a los efectos del «sulfato de soda que les daban de purgante» (Ibid, p. 138).

Ahora, es necesario considerar el papel que desempeñan las referencias textuales a las torturas físicas impartidas por orden del Presidente a las víctimas, poniendo

de relieve el poder manipulador del lenguaje que la autoridad utiliza de manera coherente con respecto a los objetivos que se propone, como si fuera un hilo que conecta "hechos" lingüísticos y acciones; por ejemplo: «¡General, que le den doscientos palos a éste, ya!» (Ibid, p.143). Sin embargo, la suerte del general Canales ya estaba echada, independientemente de aquella afirmación. Como le señala Miguel Cara de Ángel: «¡no se pregunte, general, si es culpable o inocente: ¡pregúntese si cuenta o no con el favor del amo, que un inocente a mal con el gobierno, es peor que si fuera culpable!» (Ibídem, p. 173), anulando cualquier esfuerzo de defender el derecho a la presunción de inocencia o a una pena justa. En un mecanismo donde todo lo decide el Presidente reina la absoluta arbitrariedad, cada persona se reduce a «favorecido o desgraciado» (Ibid, p. 128), los problemas se solucionan solicitándole audiencia al jefe de estado, gozando de su amistad, haciendo lo que le conviene al gobierno. Es propio de todo dictador manejar el poder según su voluntad y no según la ley. En este tipo de sistema, se lleva gente a la cárcel por razones inexistentes, simplemente «como decía el jefe, porque me cae mal…» (Ibid, p. 165); el líder ejerce su control por todos lados: colaboradores y ciudadanos-espías insospechados redactan informes donde se describe de manera cuidadosa y pormenorizada todo lo que pasa, como si esta gente fuera los ojos y las orejas del régimen.

Asturias nos invita a cuestionar el abuso de poder, la falta de justicia y la opresión que siguen persistiendo en nuestras sociedades. A través de su obra, nos confronta con nuestra propia responsabilidad como ciudadanos y nos aprieta a luchar por un mundo más justo y equitativo

6. Las realidades de El señor presidente en contexto africano y beninés

Nos focalizamos nuestras encuestas en Benín con las parejas que continúan viviendo juntas de que hemos interrogado a cuarenta esposos y cuarenta esposas, pues cinco Grupos de mujeres. De allí veinte de cada parte de hogares y los cinco Grupos en el municipio Dogbo del departamento Couffo son interrogados y los demás veinte en el mismo departamento donde trabajamos. Entre esos cuarenta hogares, treinta nos confesaron que la discriminación de género femenino es consecuencia de la cultura androcéntrica que define las identidades y los roles de hombres y mujeres. Esta construcción socio-cultural establece la desigualdad como un factor limitante y de control para las mujeres. Por consiguiente, surgen el poder y dominación, que se puede observar en los diferentes roles determinados no solo para mujeres y hombres sino también para niñas y niños, en los trabajos y ocupaciones. Respecto a los diez hogares como los restos, declararon que una economía poseyendo un desarrollo sostenible descansó en una sociedad igualitaria y inclusiva. Es decir, el empoderamiento económico de la mujer es un buen negocio. Las compañías donde tres o más mujeres ejercen

funciones ejecutivas superiores registran un desempeño más alto en todos los aspectos de la eficacia organizacional. Tocante a los cinco grupos de mujeres, tres de ellos del municipio de Dogbo (Benín) nos declararon que son apoyados por el Ayuntamiento en colaboración con el Proyecto de Economía Local y Acceso al Empleo para jóvenes y mujeres realizan actividades generadoras de ingresos como nueces de palma en aceite rojo; el procesamiento de la yuca en tapioca, en harina, en pan, en rosquillas, en panqueques…; la venta de productos agrícolas de temporada; la cría de animales, etc. Los demás dos grupos de mujeres barrenderas se encargan de limpiar las calles de la localidad. La integración profesional de estas artesanas ha tenido un impacto significativo en Couffo y en Benín, reduciendo así el éxodo rural de las jóvenes, casamiento precoz y forzado de éstas, y la tasa de suicidios baja tanto en hombres y mujeres.

La literatura africana nos ofrece también muchos ejemplos de liberación de la condición servil e intermediación sentimental. En efecto, en *Les bouts de Dieu* de Ousmane Sembène, los personajes individuales son menos importantes que los diversos grupos que se enfrentan entre sí. Los obreros en huelga de Régie forman un grupo homogéneo consolidado por otros trabajadores y sobre todo las mujeres africanas (Marie Koré, una de las líderes de la marcha) declarando una marcha de mujeres desde Abidjan hasta Grand-Bassam. Cada mujer participó según su competencia en la lucha contra la injusticia bajo diferentes formas. Se conviene notar que el género feminista desempeñó un papel importante para sostener los huelguistas ferroviarios. De luego en *Sous l'orage* de Seydou Badian, Kany (la chica) y Samou (el chico), dos africanos cuyo amor mutuo es frustrado e impedido por Benfa quien, según su costumbre, decidió entregar a su hija Kany en matrimonio forzado a un viejo rico comerciante, Famagan. Etc.

No obstante, al analizar e interpretar los resultados de las encuestas, comprobamos que en África en general, y en nuestro país, Benín, en particular, la violencia de género es un problema multifactorial, lo que lo convierte en un asunto muy complejo y, en consecuencia, frenar su agravamiento requiere de un compromiso social y Estatal que pasa por comprenderlo más y mejor. Los crímenes que se comenten contra mujer engloban todos los perjuicios que afectan negativamente la libertad de género feminista, su integridad física, mental o sexual. En efecto, el matrimonio forzado constituye uno de los destinos de las víctimas en diferentes partes del mundo. Se trata de una transacción donde los padres, la familia, tutores o cónyuges reciben una remuneración económica, por prometer a una persona (principalmente a una mujer, aunque en la mayoría de los casos se trata de jóvenes menores de edad) en matrimonio sin opción a oposición por parte de ésta. Además, el uso constante del lenguaje abusivo autoritario provoca una agresividad emocional en el hogar. Así la pareja degrada la autoestima de la víctima criticando constantemente su inteligencia, su

apariencia, sus habilidades como madre, insultándola, diciéndole que está loca, que nadie la quiere, burlándose de ella frente a los demás. Comprobamos también que hay una fuerza estructural ejercida desde las estructuras, instituciones y costumbres vigentes en la sociedad. En este caso las mujeres son víctimas de una estructura basada en la distribución desigual del poder y, por consiguiente, disponen de oportunidades distintas al momento de ejercer su rol en la sociedad. Esta fuerza se caracterizó por la desigualdad en el acceso a la propiedad, la brecha salarial, las diferencias en el acceso a posiciones de poder y la feminización de la pobreza. Todas responden a fallos en el sistema que afectan desproporcionadamente a las mujeres solo por el hecho de serlo. En Venezuela existe una feminización de la pobreza, lo que se manifiesta a través de la migración, y el aumento de viviendas donde se ha feminizado la jefatura familiar, colocando a las mujeres en una situación de vulnerabilidad que les dificulta el acceso a empleos estables y las obliga a caer en la informalidad. A lo largo de la historia de la novela, Asturias reconoce a las mujeres en su novela y ayuda a especificar el tipo de poder que cierta sociedad les permite ejercer. Totalmente ausentes de las jerarquías oficiales, tampoco se les tributa ninguna forma de respeto por los colaboradores del dictador: mientras una de ellas sale del silencio y de las sombras domésticas, se convierte en blanco de vejaciones, violencias, torturas físicas y mentales o en presa sexual. Parece una condena para quienes se atreven a salir del rol tradicional, casero, familiar, dejando lo seguro por lo desconocido. Ahora bien, según uno de los principios y reglas que rigen las relaciones humanas en toda sociedad civil nos declaró que los hombres nacieron y se quedaron

libres e iguales en derechos y que las distinciones sociales no pudieron ser fondadas sino sobre la utilidad comuna

CONCLUSIÓN

Conforme con nuestras hipótesis heurísticas de inicio, la desigualdad que afecta a las mujeres, en comparación con los hombres, perjudica su autonomía en diferentes dimensiones cuanto más en Guatemala menos en África en general, y en Benín en particular. En primer lugar, su autonomía política presenta deficiencias por su rezago en la toma de decisiones sociales en público y en privado. En segundo lugar, su autonomía económica a que las mujeres han tenido mayores dificultades para ser parte de la vida económica-laboral del país que los hombres y, cuando logran hacerlo, han enfrentado mayores problemas de acceso y calidad. En tercer lugar, su autonomía física se ve afectada por las fisuras aún existentes en el pleno disfrute de los derechos de salud sexual y reproductiva, prolongación de la cantidad de años que viven de forma no saludable y su exposición a diferentes formas de violencia.

En este contexto, se vuelve necesario promover principalmente políticas educativo-culturales para una mayor igualdad de género en la toma de decisiones públicas y privadas que vayan más allá de la adopción de cuotas paritarias, políticas productivas dirigidas al empoderamiento de la mujer como titular de ingresos, activos financieros, bienes inmuebles y un empleo de calidad; y políticas de salud diferenciadas por género a lo largo de la vida y garantizar el pleno ejercicio de los derechos de salud sexual y reproductiva de una población femenina en edad fértil.

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Survey of the US-Africa Relations: From Inception to the Present

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Abstract - The US-Africa relations have a sinusoidal dynamic. They have sometimes lacked coherence, and reflected changes in the priorities of US administrations, as well as world geopolitical and economic changes. As a military power, the US tends to control and impose itself upon Africa. Disappointed by that policy, some African countries have started an anti-imperialist leadership free of inferiority complex and political alienation, to assert their sovereignty. The presence of US bases in Africa is highly criticized. The protests of some countries resulted in the expulsion of those bases from their territories. Looking into this atmosphere, through realism, liberalism, and constructivism, three theories of international relations, this article intends to bring the US-Africa relations to the attention of the world, by revealing their features, evolution, achievements, failures, Africans' perception of these relations, and suggests what both parties could do to take a balanced profit from their relations.

Keywords: USA, Africa, Relations, Economy, Military.

Résumé - Les relations entre les Etats-Unis et l'Afrique ont une dynamique sinusoidale. Leur enjeu varie dans le temps, reflétant les changements de priorités des présidents Américains, aussi bien que des changements géopolitiques et économiques. En tant que puissance militaire, les Etats-Unis ont tendance à s'imposer à l'Afrique pour la contrôler. Déçus par cette politique, des pays Africains ont adopté une politique anti-impérialiste débarrassée de tout complexe d'infériorité et de toute aliénation politique, pour affirmer leur souveraineté. La présence des bases militaires Américaines en Afrique suscite beaucoup de critiques. Ces oppositions ont causé l'expulsion de ces bases du sol de ces pays protestataires. Examinant cette situation, à travers le réalisme, le libéralisme et le constructivism, des théories des relations internationales, cet article vise à porter les relations entre les Etats-Unis et l'Afrique à la connaissance du monde en en révélant les traits, l'évolution, les acquis et échecs, la perception Africaine de ces relations, et propose ce que les deux parties pourraient faire pour tirer des bénéfices équitables de leurs relations.

Mots clés : Etats-Unis, Afrique, Relations, Economie, Militaire.

INTRODUCTION

This last decade, the presence of Western forces in Africa is highly criticized. Like the French army that has been expelled from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the US' military cooperation with Niger, Chad and Ghana is questioned. The populations and officials of these countries rose against US bases on their soils. In Niger and Chad, those protests resulted in the expulsion of US troops. Tensions against the latter arose also in Ghana. Such a situation

needs to be looked into. This article's main objective is to bring the US-Africa relations to the attention of the world. This requires specific objectives which reveal the features and evolution of these relations, attainments, failures, the current state of these relations, and suggests what both parties could do to take a balanced profit from their relations. The methodology adopted involve realism, liberalism, and constructivism; three theories of international relations.[1] Data were collected through a review of literature—books, journal articles and online sources. The dialectic approach also fits this work. It implies contradictions of interests and the resolution of the latter. The first part of this paper is an overview of the evolution of the US-Africa relations. Part II provides their contour: features and analysis. Part III shows Africans' Perception of the US-Africa Relations, and makes suggestions.

1. Evolution of the US-Africa relations
1.1. Background of the US-Africa Relations

The background of the US-Africa relations refers to the circumstances that explain how and why these relations occurred and are what they look like today. After the US emerged as the world's superpower after World War II, it expanded its military reach across the globe. Given the deep-rooted colonial history between Europe and Africa, the US delegated leadership of the continent's exploitation to its former European colonisers. But as African independence movements and anti-imperial sentiments materialized, it made moves to ensure its own vision was salient in Africa. In compliance with its *manifest destiny* paradigm[2], it linked its destiny to that of colonized nations.

Historically, in the US-Africa relations, there have been periods of intense collaboration and moments of neglect. That policy has sometimes lacked coherence; reflecting the changing priorities of US administrations and the world geopolitic dynamics. During the Cold War, when Africa was a ground of ideological rivalry, the US ran its Africa policy through the prism of the fight against the Soviet influence; intervening sporadically. The end of the Cold War

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[1] Realism, liberalism, and constructivism are three major theories of internaional relations. They provide different frameworks for understanding international politics by emphasizing distinct factors. Realism focuses on states, power, and self-interest in an anarchic world. Liberalism highlights international institutions, cooperation, and the promotion of democracy and trade. Constructivism emphasizes the role of ideas, identity, and social norms in shaping state behavior and the international system.

[2] Manifest Destiny was a 19th-century belief that the United States was destined to expand its dominion and spread democracy and capitalism across the North American continent. This idea fueled westward expansion, often at the expense of indigenous populations and other nations. It conveys the idea of American exceptionalism, that is, the belief that America occupies a special place among the countries of the world

marked a period of relative US disinterest in Africa (B. Driss Alaoui, 2024, p. 4). However, the attacks on the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya (1998), and the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US catalysed a change of paradigm. They placed Africa at the heart of the US' national security.

Until the 1980s, the US-Africa policy focused on the Cold War; trying to prevent the spread of the Soviet influence in Africa. The collapse of the Soviet Union led to that of the US' interest in Africa. Ever since, Africa was no longer considered by Washington but for a punctual humanitarianism (B. Driss Alaoui, 2024, p. 4). The trauma the US underwent following its Battle of Mogadishu (1993) and the attacks against its embassies completed its marginalization of Africa. Then, its commitment in Africa became pluridimensional; including military, economic, social and development areas. Each US President favored one lever at the expense of others, according to the strategic interests of the moment; causing an incoherence in its Africa policy.

The first contacts of US troops with Africa dated from the first years following the independence of the US. In 1794, the US made an expedition to the North African coasts to make wars to secure its vessels in the Mediterranean. Its wavering interest in Africa did not permit a constant presence of US troops in Africa. It favored indirect actions. Since Mogadishu, it tried to avoid a direct commitment of its soldiers in Africa. During the post-Cold War period which was marked by the destruction of the Soviet arsenal, Africa no longer attracted the attention of the US. It "imposed itself" to the US only after the attacks on the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, in keeping with the terrorist attacks of 2001. At the break of the US' "anti-terrorist" war decreed by George W. Bush, Africa was seen as a place of that war (George W. Bush Presidential Library, 2002, p. 1).

1.2. Evolution of the US-Africa Relations

This part retraces the evolution of the US-Africa relations from President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) to President Donald J. Trump (2025-).

1.2.1. The US-Africa Relations from Administration to Administration

A capital moment of the US-Africa relations during President Eisenhower's administration (1953-61) was in the 1957s, during Vice President Nixon's Africa tour. On his return, he recommended the creation of an Africa Bureau in the State Department, due to the US' concerns about the vulnerability of Africa which was emerging from colonial rule to the spread of communism (ACBF & IDEG, July 2014, p. 6). Sub-Saharan Africa gained prominence in the US foreign policy agenda when in 1958, Eisenhower created the Bureau of African Affairs. The

Congo crisis of 1960 presented the US with its first African crisis. Concerned that the Soviets would exploit that crisis to their advantage, the US supported the deployment of a UN force. The concern with the communist threat intensified under the Kennedy administration (1961-63). That resulted in monitoring activities rather than the offer of any material or military assistance (Ibid). In 1960, addressing students at the University of Michigan, Senator J. F. Kennedy asked: "How many of you, (…) are willing to spend your days to work in the Foreign Service and spend your lives traveling around the world?" (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum, 2024, p.1) That speech resulted in the creation of the US Peace Corps whose first batch arrived in Ghana in 1961, where President Kennedy approved funds for the Akosombo Dam the Ghanaian President had planned to build.

The US-Africa policy under President Johnson (1963-69) focused on Zaire (DRC) where the US gave extensive covert aid to suppress rebellions thought to be communist-inspired or of potential benefit to the Soviet Union (P. Schraeder J., 1994, pp. 74-80). That period saw Mobutu, Zaire's president, with US backing. In the ensuing Nixon (1969-74) and Ford (1974-77) administrations, the focus of the US policy shifted to Southern Africa and to the violent conflicts in Angola, Mozambique and Rhodesia. This was accompanied by considerable controversy as critics accused the US of being sympathetic to the White minority regimes. President Carter's administration (1977-81) introduced human rights as a new dimension to the US foreign policy. That led to a strong push for majority rule in Zimbabwe, and to a heavy criticism of apartheid in South Africa. The US' policy however continued to be constrained by Cold War considerations.

Pursuing a policy of containment with regards to communist regimes, Ronald Reagan's administration (1981-89) supported anti-communist groups, helped the South African apartheid government and President Hissène Habré's regime in Chad, as well as the guerrilla movements opposing the Soviet Union-linked regimes like the UNITA in Angola. It supported Habré against Gaddafi. Reagan saw Gaddafi as a pro-Soviets, and kept him on the watch list. Tensions exploded into military action in April 1986 when a bomb exploded in a Berlin discothèque, injuring 63 US military personnel, killing a serviceman. Accusing Gaddafi, Reagan authorized air strikes on targets in Libya (B. Victor, 1996, p. 267). During the Cold War, the Angolan Jonas Savimbi was a key Reagan doctrine ally against the communist government in Angola (M. Michael, 1989, p. 99). The Reagan administration offered covert aid to Savimbi's UNITA, an anti-communist group. In 1986, pretending that the communists were attacking villagers in Angola, Reagan sent missiles there to shoot Soviet aircraft down. Savimbi was also promised assistance by George H. W. Bush. His killing by the Angolan military led to the decline of UNITA's influence. Mobutu, the Zairian President, enjoyed

a warm relationship with Reagan, and the criticism of Zaire's human rights record by the US was muted. Reagan also supported the South African apartheid regime by granting it economic and military aid. Seeing it as an anti-communist ally, he did not pressure it to change. Desmund Tutu, a Nobel Prize winner, called that policy "an abomination" (J. Derrick Z., Jan. 24, 2025). Contrarily to Reagan's administration, George H. W. Bush (1989-93) took Africa seriously. Focusing on conflict resolution through negotiation, he brought peace in 1992 to Ethiopia and Angola. He urged F.W. De Klerk, the South African president, to begin an anti-apartheid fight in South Africa to end the discriminatory system (C. Herman J., 12/6/2018, p.1).

A steady flow of African visitors marked his time in the White House. Even, after his defeat in the 1992 election, Bush continued his focus on Africa. Through Operation Restore Hope (C. T. Evans, 2001), he tried to get the violence and humanitarian crisis in Somalia under control; saving lives, long enough for UN forces to take over. The Clinton administration (1993-2001) focused on democracy, peacemaking and trade. The Rwandan genocide (1994) led it to deal with crises in Africa. His organization of the first White House Conference on Africa (1994) was followed in 1998 by his visit to Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana and Senegal to assist their fledgling democracy and increase US trade and investment (S. Peter J., 1994, p. 11).

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in the US led President George W. Bush's administration (2001-2009) to decree the US' anti-terrorist war. Thus, in 2002, the US established its first permanent base in Africa, in Camp Lemonnier (Djibouti), to counter threats in Somalia and Kenya. It launched the Pan Sahel Initiative to reinforce its control in the Sahel. In 2005, it launched the Enduring Freedom TransSahara Operation and the TransSaharan Counter-terrorism Initiative. Its creation of USAFRICOM to manage its military operations aroused the scepticism of many Africans; fearing a militarization of the US-Africa policy. In Africa, the US saw an opportunity to reduce its dependence on its hydrocarbon import from the Middle East. In July 2002, Walter Kansteiner declared in Abuja: "African oil represents a national strategic interest for us" (V. Daniel, 2003, p. 573). It was militarily present in Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. Its military presence in Africa involved theaters of operations, three of which were in the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya), North Africa (Libya) and the Sahel (Cameroon, Tchad and Niger). It financially supported African institutions, trained and equiped African soldiers for UN operations. Bush initiated the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and launched the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in Ivory Coast, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda (D. Mark R., 2008, pp.1-2).

The Obama administration (2009-2016) focused on democracy and the reinforcement of African institutions (O. Barack, 2009, p. 1). Obama committed to build strong democratic institutions in Africa by launching the Open Government Partnership in 2011; pretending to advance government transparency and accountability. It must however be pointed out that under his administration, a U.S. Predator drone was involved in the airstrike on Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan president's convoy, which preceded his killing. The U.S. actively participated in the NATO-led intervention that ultimately led to Gaddafi's death. Obama's administration described its approach as "leading from behind," which involved providing support and intelligence rather than direct ground involvement. The disaster caused by that intervention made Doug Bandow, senior fellow at Cato Institute, publish, in The American Conservative on January 10, 2020, an article titled: "The Obama Administration Wrecked Libya for a Generation". The consequences of that "wreckage of Libya" were not limited to Libya. They are noticeable today in the Sahel; causing chaos, impoverishment, death and humanitarian crises in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Although his election had been euphorically celebrated by Africans, Obama did not take Africa seriously. His policy is seen as disastrous for most Africans scholars.

Under Donald Trump's administration (2016-20), some US officials visited several African countries to do business, counter China's influence and make sure that the US' commitment to Africa was unmatched. The US was also involved in promoting "democracy" and empowering women through its Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative. That allowed many women to enter some African institutions. The US also supported the Ethiopian National Election Board, helped to build the capacity of the Attorney General's Office, and provided financial means to help fight a massive locust outbreak. It helped to combat the spread of Ebola in the DRC. Its Prosper Africa Initiative sought to increase trade and investment.[3]

President Biden's administration (2021-Jan. 20, 2025) shaped his Africa policy on the US' so-called anti-terrorist war. While Trump saw African nations as "shithole countries", Biden focused on its geostrategic competition with China and Russia. The state visit of William Ruto, the Kenyan President, to the US in 2024, showed the US' interest in Africa, while the US-Africa relations are under strain as strategic rivals are challenging traditional areas of Western influence. At one time, Ruto would have been an unlikely visitor to be feted at the White House with the pomp granted to a handful of close allies. Though the International Criminal Court charged him with crimes against humanity for Kenya's 2007 elections's violence,

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[3] https://www.usafricatrade.org

Biden ignored that, viewed Ruto as a partner, and sent Kenyan police to Haiti (U. Barbara Plett, 2024). Under Biden, the US-Africa relations deteriorated deeply.

For years, Niger had been home to US troops on two bases from where they pretended to fight terrorists. But in 2023, the US-Niger relations shifted. Their security cooperation broke down in March 2024 as Niger reproached the US with failure, condescension and dictatorship, and demanded US troops to leave its soil. Despite that eviction, the US maintained its diplomatic partnership. What happened in Niger was echoed in Chad where the presence of US troops was questioned. Seeing Africa as a strategic area, the Biden administration invested in the Lobito Corridor, a rail line snaking through Angola, the DRC and Zambia, to transport critical raw materials. It invited Africans to align with its position on Israel's war in Gaza, the US-led NATO's proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, and to impose its LGBT practice on Africans. During his second term (Jan. 20, 2025-), President Donald J. Trump closed tens of US embassies and consulates in Africa, made a ban on countries like Chad, Libya, and Somalia, and put other countries under visa restrictions. As bridges between nations, embassies maintain relations between people. Closing them is like cutting the bridges between Africa and the US. That arises feelings of frustration and contempt. Trump likes and wants Africa's minerals, not Africans.

1.2.2. A Focus on the US-Africa Relations in Recent Years

Comparing Africans' consent about the presence of China and the US in Africa, a polling in 29 countries showed that more than 8 in 10 respondents see China's presence in their country more positive than that of the US. Separate data reveal that since 2015, the number of anglophone African students who gained admission to Chinese universities surpassed those in the US (W. JoeL, 2022, p. 1). This implies a shift in Africans' perception of the US. An anti-US Africa policy feeling is emerging in Africa. After Niger, Chad expressed its dissatisfaction with the presence of US troops on its soil. In April 2024, it demanded them to justify their activities and presence on their base in N'djamena. They were unable to provide any bilateral agreement. One month earlier, breaking its military agreement with the US, Niger estimated that agreement as illegal, anticonstitutional, undemocratic and opposed to Nigeriens' aspirations and interests. The dissatisfaction of Nigeriens and Chadians about US troops on their soils are alike:

> There is no publicly known proof of the efficiency of the American military presence in Niger. The security situation did nothing but to deteriorate as years go by. The question that arises is why are they here? The US pursues its own objectives — the control of the region. The security of our fellow citizens is not among their interests. The same situation is occuring in Chad. Our colleagues realized that and have started to react (B. Driss Alaoui, 2024, p. 4).

A reason for the deterioration of the US-Africa relations is the US' habit to carry out relations with condescension, intimidation, ultimatum and coercion. At the head of a US delegation in March 2023, Molly Phee tried to impose her will on Nigerien officials, without showing any respect to their longing for sovereignty. After decades of US military presence in Africa, the security situation keeps deteriorating. It is then logical if one asserts that US bases in Africa have a hidden agenda. In March 2024, Nigeriens denounced the US-Niger military cooperation as follows:

> It is by a simple verbal note n°174 on 6 July 2012 that the American party unilaterally imposed to Niger an agreement about the status of the US military personnel and of the civil employees of the US Department of Defence in Niger. (…) [That agreement] constrains Niger to pay for the bills linked to American military aircraft taxes which should normally be paid by the US. Nigerien authorities do not have information about the US military activities in Niger (…), neither about the number of American civilians and military nor the equipment deployed on the Nigerien soil. Almoustapha, 2024, p. 1)

According to Nigeriens, though US troops pretended to be in Niger to fight terrorism, they did not feel concerned with that. Niger then asked the US to close its base in Agadez and repatriate its staff.

On March 28, 2024, in Accra (Ghana), there was a demonstration against a controversial defence agreement "concluded" by the US and Ghana. That agreement that was approved by Akufo Ado, the Ghanaian president, was strongly criticized by demonstrators, among whom former President John Mahama, who denounced a blow to Ghana's sovereignty. Both countries contradicted the rumors. Did Akufo Ado secretly sign it? One would never know, due to the cacophonous communication on the matter.

2. Contour of the US-Africa relations

The commitment of the US to Africa is multidimensional. It covers the strategic and political areas as well as the socio-economic and development fields.

2.1. Strategic and Political Focus of the US-Africa Relations

The strategic and political focus of the US in Africa implies its means and conduct of operations. In August 1998, bombs that detonated in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) destroyed the US embassy buildings, made victims and brought *Al-Qaeda,* a radical extremist group, to the attention of the world. The US saw Africa as a breeding ground for extremists, and created the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) to manage its operations. Since 2001, it has been establishing bases in Africa; in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa; its central base

being Camp Lemonnier (Djibouti). In January 2020, 5,100 US army personnel and 1,000 Pentagon-employed civilians were stationed in Africa; contradicting the narrative that US forces have a light footprint in Africa where their misconduct frustrated several countries (H. Thomas F., 2021, p. 19). Niger which sheltered two large US bases protested against that useless, if not noxious presence, for once settled, US forces became indifferent to their declared mission. After the US-led NATO's attack on Libya, terrorists got weapons and got over more than half the Malian territory. Ever since, the number of terrorist attacks multiplied despite the presence of US bases with their sophisticated equipments.

AFRICOM, the US' operational military command to oversee Africa, contributed to kill Gaddafi in Libya, backed up the Libyan junta, and fueled terrorism in Africa. Though Libyan civilians were being killed, there was no US humanitarian intervention. Despite reports of Black Africans being targeted and mistreated for allegations which labeled them as Pro-Gaddafi, there was no US call for humanitarian military actions. The US' secret aim being the elimination of Gaddafi, and not the protection of Libyans' lives, US officials hailed the killing of Gaddafi. This illustrates when US' claims of humanitarianism and securitization intersect to result in chaos.

To carry out its hidden projects and minimize its military footprint in Africa, the US makes use of private military contractors, covert special operations forces and secret facilities (Moore, A., & Walker, J., 2016).[4] It relies on facilities like Camp Lemonnier, drone bases and a network of cooperative security locations and logistics nodes. This approach is less visible than a full-frontal military force. Because the face of these operations is oftentimes African, the US can skirt claims of its interference. AFRICOM is a lucrative business for military contractors like Haliburton, Kellog, Root and Brown, Dyncorp, Triple Canopy, Erinys ArmorGroup, and Blackwater (O. Alexis, 2022, p. 2). The presence of private entities implies mercenaries, the weaponry and surveillance mechanisms to collect intelligence, surveil and conduct missions. Having failed to limit terrorism in Africa, that extensive military presence raises questions about its aims and effectiveness.

Since the creation of AFRICOM, as the US military presence in Africa increases, so do terrorist attacks (Nick Turse, 2019, p. 1). That presence has neither deterred nor limited terrorism despite the surveillance infrastructure and aerial technology in the US security apparatus. The US might even have contributed to the growth of terrorism. This expansion of US military footprint on pretext of

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[4] Moore, A., & Walker, J. (2016). Tracing the US Military's Prsence in Africa. *Geopolitics*, 21(3), 686-716. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2016.1160060

security occurs at a time when US influence in Africa is on the decline, and Africa's geostrategic importance is on the rise, due to its large population, mineral and gas reserves, oil, arable land, and renewable fresh-water sources. The US' reliance on its bases to have access to African resources is decried. Because of its imperialism, enslavement of Blacks and anti-Black contempt, Africans are suspicious of its presence; arguing that it compromises their sovereignty. They see the US as a threat to development, peace and stability. The US uses the term "partnership" to veil its imperialistic inclination. Because it is wary of the cost associated with the deployment of its troops to the front lines, the US uses Africans to assume that burden. This shows how much damage the US can do to Africa. It fuels violence, disrupts lives, and focuses on its interests. "Our war on terror (…) will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated", President George W. Bush told his people (T. Elie, 2021, p. 2). The US then engaged in the training of many African officers, set up outposts, dispatched commandos on mission, and created proxy forces.

Its network of outposts included drone bases—from Camp Lemonier and its satellite outpost Chabelley Airfield (Djibouti) to Air Base 201 in Agadez (Niger), and tiny facilities with contingents of US troops in nations ranging from Libya and Niger to the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Camp Lemonnier, its permanent base in Africa, and a key outpost for surveillance and operations is followed by Niger, Somalia and Cameroon. Despite a huge US presence in several other African nations, terrorism thrives. AFRICOM enables the US to influence Africa through proxy control of various countries' armies. The training it gives to Africans serves a purpose other than securing Africa where "the legacy of the US war on terror is death and chaos" (T. Nick, 2023, p. 1).

After the US-led NATO killed Gaddafi, Libyan weapon caches were looted. Extremists got weapons and took over the northern part of Mali; killing, traumatizing and causing humanitarian crises. Have they been given weapons by those who planned the attack on Libya? Terrorism expanded into Burkina Faso and Niger. Since then, Sahel nations are plagued by bloodthirsty groups. Anger against the elect Presidents' failure of these countries to tame the terrorists resulted in military coups in West Africa—Burkina Faso (2014, 2015 and twice in 2022), Chad (2021), Gambia (2014), Guinea (2021), Mali (2012, 2020 and 2021) and Niger (2023). The failure of the US to destroy terrorism in the region led Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to break their military cooperation with the US.

In Somalia, US troops' activities also resulted in stalemate. "The US is not simply contributing to conflict in Somalia, but has rather become integral to the

continuation of conflict in Somalia […]. US counterterrorism policies are ensuring that the conflict continues in perpetuity", reported Ẹniọlá Ànúolúwapọ̀ Ṣóyẹmí (T. Nick, 2023, p. 3). US General Michael Langley, hence declared: "Africa is now the epicenter of international terrorism." Eileen Whitehead sees US troops' presence in Africa as suspect and pernicious as she writes: "What US imperialism is up to in Africa while no one's watching" (2021, p. 1). The US condescendingly interferes in African nations' affairs. Its contribution to the killing of Gaddafi and decimation of Libya were legitimized under the guise of protecting "pro-democracy" activists from a supposed massacre by the Libyan President who was a threat to US imperialistic projects in Africa. As it did against Libya, it is used to spreading misinformation to create pretexts for its incursions and operations. Nick Turse points out the noxiousness of US bases as follows: "The US War on Terror in West Africa Is a Continuing Disaster" (Nick Turse, 2024, p. 1). That suspect policy led the government of Niger to kick US bases out in March 2024, on the ground that the US security pact violated Niger's Constitution. That came in the wake of a visit to Niger by a US delegation including Molly Phee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and General Michael Langley, chief of AFRICOM.

Stalemates typify the US' "war on terror". From its stalemate in Somalia to its destabilization of Libya, the US contributed to insecurity, misery and chaos. Though its troops were driven from Niger, they did not go back home. They settled in other countries. Despite the US' outposts and military facilities throughout Africa, terrorism is thriving. The populations and leaders in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger accused the US and its allies of dealing with terrorists to maintain Westerners' presence, control and looting of Africa. To regain control of their territories, Malians, Burkinabes and Nigeriens took assistance from other partners. Frustration and disillusionment about US bases then resulted in their expulsion.

The presence of US forces in Africa is also to counter the advance of China and Russia whose policies are highly appreciated. Hence, the US urges Africans to cut their ties with them. It wants to control Africa's resources, as General Stephen J. Townsend, US Army Commander and Head of US Africa Command, states before the Senate Armed Forces Committee:

> Beyond its geostrategic location, Africa possesses vast untapped energy deposits, including one third of the world's mineral reserves and rare earth metals. These resources are the key supplies that America relies on to produce 21st century technologies and transition to clean energy, including mobile phones, jet engines, electric-hybrid vehicles, and missile guidance systems (O. Alexi, 2022, p. 6).

The US is used to putting forward the notion of humanitarianism to legitimize its imperialistic projects in Africa. It justified its contribution to the attack on

Libya by the idea of saving Libyans' lives in Benghazy. It put an arms embargo and assets freeze against Libya. Without having any evidence of Gaddafi committing genocide on his people, on March 17, 2011, the US-led UN passed its Responsibility to Protect Security Council Resolution 1973. Two days later, Libya was attacked. Despite calls for a ceasefire by the President of South Africa to solve the crisis by negotiation, attackers refused any dialogue. Western leaders, from Barack Obama (USA), David Cameron (UK) to Nicola Sarkozy (France), refused any ceasefire, despite their claims of humanitarianism and protection of civilians. This refusal to negotiate led to the killing of Gaddafi. Even if Gaddafi's detractors said that he was using violence against "rebels", it is important to point out that the magnitude of that violence had not been proved to be "genocidal" as Western media claimed (F. Maximilian, 2012, p. 2).

To legitimize the militarization of its Africa policy, the US creates an ideology. Government entities, media, scholars and NGOs set the social and political scene for the US to establish its military presence in Africa in the name of humanitarianism. The US used its "war on terror" as the banner by which it made its military intrusion. It identifies anti-imperialist African leaders as dictators to be deposed. Due to the power of definition it awards itself, the US can legitimize and justify any disaster it causes in the name of counter-terrorism, trade, humanitarianism and democracy. The discourse of the US' "war on terrorism" in Africa is to be called into question. The US advances the idea of lack of security; hiding the effects of its practice imperialism and terroristic activities in Africa. Over years, Africa helped to develop the US in the same proportion the latter helped to destabilize, loot and impoverish it. The US-led International Monetary Fund and World Bank are used to imposing constraints on African nations, making and leaving them indebted, and preventing them from adequately investing in development sectors. Under the guise of giving out development aid in the form of structural adjustment programs, those institutions imposed neoliberal polices of privatization, deregulation and liberalization of trade upon Africans. It then uses its influence and institutions to ensure Africans' alignment with its policy.

The relations the US advocates are between consent and coercion. Any forms of US-Africa relations should be seen through the lenses of neocolonialism, imperialism and paternalism. US institutions—government, corporations, media, etc—are subjective in their assessments of Africa. Through propaganda, they craft and push forth the idea of the US as the bearer of security, democracy and development, though facts indicate otherwise. AFRICOM's tactics in Libya were used decades earlier against the Pan-Africanist movement of colonized Africans. In Zaire (DRC), the US was opposed to Patrice Lumumba, a leading Pan-Africanist figure. It sabotaged many of the African independence

movements during the Cold War. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, the US could no longer use the supposed threat of communism to justify its interventions in Africa. Its new brainwave was its "war on terror". Its Operation Enduring Freedom-Horn of Africa placed US troops in Kenya, Liberia, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Tanzania, Somalia, Uganda and Rwanda. Its Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara deployed troops to Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. US military personnel and civilian contractors were deployed to Niger, most of them at Air Base 201. That outpost was the cornerstone of an archipelago of US military bases in the region, and the key to the US' military power projection and surveillance in North and West Africa.

Despite decades of US troops' presence in the Sahel, terrorism keeps spreading. In 2023, terrorist attacks there resulted in 11,643 deaths; an increase by more than 50,000 % (T. Nick, 2024, p. 3). Hence, Niger's new leaders demanded the US to end its "war on terror" in Niger. That meant the closing of US Air Base 201 and withdrawal of its military personnel and contractors. "USAFRICOM needs to stay in West Africa to limit the spread of terrorism across the region and beyond," US General Langley told the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2023. But Niger's leaders wanted it to leave since it has failed. "This security cooperation did not live up to the expectations of Nigeriens — all the massacres committed by the terrorists were carried out while US troops were here", said a Nigerien security analyst (T. Nick, 2024, p. 4).

2.2. Socio-economic and Development Areas

In Africa, the US' intervention in the socio-economic and development areas has most often been aid-driven. President George W. Bush initiated the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to provide antiretroviral treatment to millions of HIV-infected people. With Biden's administration, a clash occured between most African countries and the US on the latter's attempt to impose its LGBT practices on Africans. That led Nigeria to pass the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act to criminalize that practice with penalties of up to 14 years of jail. The Ugandan parliament passed an anti-gay bill to impose harsh punishments, including life prison. Countries that did not ban homosexuality verbally outlawed it (ACBF & IDEG, 2014, p. 55-56).

The US' development aid to Africa is tied to its strategic interests. From Clinton to Biden, the US focused on commerce and investments, multiplying initiatives, targeting economic, political, sanitary, and security development. Each US presidency favored an aspect of cooperation reflecting the political priorities and challenges of its administration. In 1998, the Clinton administration launched the African Initiative for Democracy and Sustainable Development, and adopted the

AGOA for commercial cooperation in 2000. George W. Bush created the PEPFAR to fight HIV/AIDS in 2003, and AFRICOM (2007) for military cooperation. The US linked its humanitarian assistance to USAID, covering areas from Disaster Relief to COVID-19. The Obama administration launched the Power Africa Initiative in 2013, the US-Africa Leader Summit on Energy Cooperation in 2014, and the Young African Leaders Initiative. Trump launched the Prosper Africa Initiative in 2018. In 2022, Biden launched the second US-Africa Leaders Summit, and the Digital Transformation for Africa Initiative (B. Driss A., 2024, p. 17).

US companies in oil production, agribusiness, mining, power generation and telecommunications are some of the US interests in Africa. Its two largest African trading partners, Nigeria and South Africa, together, account for more than half of all the US-Africa trade. This shows that its overall trade with Africa is very small compared to the total US foreign trade. While Africans sell natural resources, crude oil alone accounts for about 1/3 of total exports. This smallness of US trade with Africa has favored the rapid growth of the China-Africa trade.

In 2014, the US passed the Electrify Africa Act intended to double access to electricity in Sub-Saharan Africa and increase Africa's ability to attract private investments. Already supplying 16% of the US' oil imports, Africa would overtake the Persian Gulf as a leading supplier of oil to the US within decades (R. Susan Rice, 1999, p. 3). President Bush's administration doubled the US development assistance to Africa, and contributed to the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative which provided 100% debt relief from the major international financial institutions to the "poorest" and heavily indebted countries, most of which are Sub-Saharan. Bush amended the AGOA in 2006 by the Africa Investment Incentive Act to further help African nations that are exporting textiles, yarns and apparel to the US. In 2010, only Nigeria, South Africa, Chad, Angola and the Republic of Congo accounted for 90% of AGOA exports to the US.[5] Though Africa could have benefitted from its agriculture, its farmers cannot compete with US farmers, due to tariff quotas. Hardly can they export their goods to the US.

Meeting Africa's needs with US goods and services strengthens US economy, helps US businesses grow and creates jobs. The AGOA supports the expansion of US trade and investment, and helps US companies to win market shares in Africa. With it, US' imports from Africa increased as regards oil, natural resources, agricultural and textile products. It has also stimulated and increased the flux of foreign indirect investments in Africa. Its impact on economic development is however mitigated. The structural challenges like political instability and the insufficiency of infrastructures continue to hinder the

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[5] African-growth-and-opportunity-act-agoa.htm [6/2/2024].

potential of investments in Africa. The AGOA does not provide an even profit to all eligible countries. Not all African countries benefit from it. Many of its beneficiaries have been foreign companies that used Africa to gain access to the US market. Being unilateral, its eligibility criteria belong to the US. Its limitation in time limits investments and the confidence of investors. African companies face barriers in accessing the US market concerning the standards of quality. Besides, the complex process of granting visas slows down the access of Africans to that market.

To counter China's influence, the US intends to engage Africa economically and geopolitically. Its trade relations are on a dynamic continuum with Clinton's AGOA, Bush's African Global Competitiveness Initiative, Obama's Trade Africa, Trump's Prosper Africa Initiative and Biden's Prosper Africa Build Together Campaign to energise its trade and investment in Africa. The Millenium Challenge Corporation, a US foreign aid agency, grants agreements in investments with some African countries. Apart from the natural resources sector and some recent investments by companies like Wal-Mart, Microsoft and Proctor & Gamble, only 1% of US foreign direct investment worldwide was in Africa in 2012, and half of this was in extractive industries. At the same time, the US' exports to Africa were about 2% (J. Vivian C., 2012, p. 2).

Since the 1940s, controlling global indebtedness, the US managed the domestic policies of African countries. When it could not impose its will through its institutions, it withheld its "aids", imposed sanctions, or used other forms of power. In the 1990s, the World Bank ordered structural adjustment programs, consolidated massive monopoly landholdings and large-scale capital through privatization; deepening inequality, proletarianization, and internal social upheavals. During his first term, President Trump attempted to reduce the US aid to Africa for the reason that it is ineffective and prone to corruption. He wanted to reduce the budget of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). He launched the Prosper Africa Initiative. A particular focus of the US cooperation lies in the fight against diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and childhood diseases. Of particular importance were George W. Bush's PEPFAR (2003) and President's Malaria Initiative (2005) (H. Thomas F., 2020, p. 14).

Despite the long and massive presence of US troops in Djibouti, Djibouti has neither economically emerged nor become a safe country. Neither did Niger, another US base. The US is criticised for making and supporting African dictators or vassals for its interests. It is used to demand unconditional obedience from African leaders, to intimidate, punish and coerce them into signing iniquitous 'agreements' at the expense of their countries. Its so called war against *Jihadism* is deceitful. The word "Jihad" meaning "war on behalf of God", it is a nonsense

for *Jihadists* to force, for example, Niger which is already practising Islam to convert to Islam. The gods on behalf of whom terrorists are killing are undoubtedly their sponsors who use them to destabilize Africa. Many African countries being forbidden to buy weapons to counter terrorism, one may wonder how poor and illiterate Africans can afford mass killing weapons to commit terroristic activities. Terrorists in Africa have godfathers. According to President Trump, through the Obama administration, the US was the creator of the Islamic State (ISIS), a terrorist group (CBS Evening News, 2024). Hence, the US is a godfather of terrorists. Practising military, economic, financial, social, psychological and communicative terrorism, it manipulates and formats the minds of Africans. It makes hybrid wars to create an insecurity favorable to its looting of Africa; caring little for Africans' welfare. "Every nation determines its policies in terms of its own interest". President Kennedy said (US-Africa Relations, 2014, p. 22).

3. Africans' perception of the US-Africa policy
3.1. *Africans' Perception of the US-Africa Relations*

More and more, African nations tend to say "No" to the US despite the latter's status of superpower and proposals of military cooperation and trade agreements. Many among them are no longer complexed, and dare to respond to the US with firmness. One by one, they turn away from the US, affirming that they will no longer trade their sovereignty for "favors". This is not a simple diplomatic friction. It is a decisive turn. The US' old political craftiness of overseeing, control and coertion is collapsing. Africans henceforth want to trace their own way. They have decided to choose independence rather than accepting US' interference in their affairs. Why such an attitude? The fact is that, Africans have decided not to conceal their disagreements and frustrations any more. The US-Africa relations have so far been associated with worrying conditions unilaterally set by the US and have been noxious to Africa. Brutal demands are hidden behind the proposals of partnership made by the US; conditions like: cutting ties with China, evicting Chinese companies like Huawei and ZTE for the benefit of American companies; giving the exclusivity of the exploitation of those countries' strategic resources to the US, and aligning on the US' foreign policy.

It is this disguised political and economic imperialism that the US calls partnership. Africans who no longer want the US to interfere in their affairs perceive the latter's attempts as pressure and condescention; a new form of imperialism to reaffirm the influence of the US in Africa. African populations disagree with the US' financial support to African elections; arguing that such a support is intended to promote pro-US or pro-Western candidates. They are opposed to the vassals or tyrans the US makes and supports in Africa. Many

governments have decided to evict the NGOs that are financed by the US to interfere in African affairs. Here and there some words of protest such as the following are frequently heard: "Our sovereignty is not negotiable", "Our principles are not for sale. We will not barter our dignity for dollars"; "We are not pawns in a game", etc.

Ever since, to face Westerners' disguised attempts of neocolonization of Africa, Africans afford to sign agreements with countries like China and Russia. Though the US demanded South Africa to isolate these countries, and to quit the strategic alliance composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), South Africa maintained its position. As a result, the US, under Donald Trump, increased the customs tariffs on the South African steel and goods, and cancelled visas for several officials. More and more, many African countries hope, and are even trying to integrate the BRICS alliance rather than suffering the US' injustice and imperialism. They want alliances that are grounded on mutual respect, and not on coertion. US strategic operations centers and bases are imposed on Africans without the least African supervision of those structures. Most often, unbelievable clauses are dissimulated in the "agreements" the US imposes on Africans. Henceforth, for the latter, dignity and consent must take the first place over any partnership. As for the US' threat to freeze or cut US' aids to Africa, as some Africans believe that aids should not be assorted with economic and political conditions, others think that aids are not salutary, for they are a means to maintain Africans in political and economic slavery.

3.2. Suggestions

The US could learn from China whose presence is much more appreciated than that of the US which is highly condescending, coercive, imperialistic and exploitative. China earns high praise for delivering loans and grants with few political strings, low-interest rates and generous repayment conditions. Many African countries have established strong links with China through loans and grants for seaport construction or expansion, hydroelectric dams, railways, highways, bridges, technical training facilities, medical support, agricultural projects, etc. Its investments in infrastructure, energy, mining, and its material aid in the form of medical and educational missions are premised on mutual benefit. Trade provides each side with various products, labor resources and earnings. China creates opportunities for technical development and the transfer of modernized agricultural and industrial capacity from China to Africa.

In contrast to the method of the US in Africa, China neither seizes assets nor forces privatization. It generously offers occasional cancellation of debts and negotiates loan restructuring and refinancing. This approach allows borrowing countries to retain ownership of resources and enterprises, and to complete

needed infrastructure projects. Many African countries have taken advantage of Chinese-originated loans which are accompanied by a hands-off policy, generous repayment schemes and restructuring processes. China helped build hundreds of roads, bridges and other structures that promote economic connectivity. In the China-Africa paradigm, countries have room to be sovereign, and to secure their interests. China is in favor of a people-centered policy premised on developmental pillars: a solid agricultural base, an expanding infrastructure, the transfer of modern agricultural and industrial capacity, and an attention to the technical capacity of the workforce.

Unlike the unilateral AGOA, trade relations could recognise Africans as equal partners and give them the opportunity to properly engage in trade negotiations. A beneficial pact for Africa could be designed to boost the US-Africa trade and investments while increasing the capacity of Africans to compete in the production of non-traditional high-value products. They could get good trade pacts if they negotiate for them. Africans can invest in training and capacity building for their trade negotiators. Socially, in the area of peace and security, it would be profitable if the US could involve itself in conflict resolution through non-military actions, that is to say diplomacy instead of war and inhumane sanctions like asset freeze, embargoes on medicine or food. The US could politically avoid making or supporting tyrans, and let Africans be sovereign. Economically, the AGOA could be reviewed to address the bottlenecks that hinder most African countries from exporting to the US market.

To better the US-Africa relations, confidence ought to be restored by eliminating the causes of the rejection of the US today. This could be salutary if the US renounces the wrongs it has been doing to Africa for centuries through its enslavement of Africans, impoverishment of Africa through its political, military and financial institutions. Because African enslaved laborers contributed to develop the US, the US could invest in humanitarianism, infrastructures, or let Africans be sovereign. It could win their esteem by seeing them not in the lenses of racism, but of humanity. It could use its influence to negotiate peace, and not kindle or feed conflicts. Instead of trying to impose its LGBT practice on Africans, it could let them be faithful to their values. It could also realize that since it has never allowed any African country to create its military bases in the US, it is unfair to impose US bases on Africans. The management of security in Africa must rest on Africans. It is shameful for the latter to create armies and ask the US to come, train and finance those armies, while the fact for Africa to have strong armies does no good to the US. The US is in Africa for a secrete project not profitable to Africans.

CONCLUSION

The US-Africa relations have got a sinusoidal dynamic. Their stakes vary as decades go by; reflecting changes in the priorities of the US' foreign policy and world geopolitical and economic changes. Each US president launched his own initiative for Africa. Trade, security and anti-terrorism are officially set as the major axes of their commitment, from the end of the Cold War, and more intensely after the September 11, 2001 attacks. As a military power, the US tends to impose itself and control Africa by sutbtle activities. Its creation of AFRICOM is a significative step in the consolidation of its military presence in Africa, and raises questions on the militarization of the US-Africa policy. Though the commercial dimension somewhat "increased" with the AGOA, challenges persist. Disappointed by the US' "anti-terrorist war", Africans have started an anti-imperialist leadership rid of inferiority complex or political alienation to assert their sovereignty and assure their security. They tend to reject the old foundation of Western political, economic, cultural and military domination. A new geopolitical paradigm is then being defined in Africa. The construction of mutually profitable relations demands an integrated approach taking the aspirations and challenges of Africa into account. The US could comply if it is really democratic as it pretends to be.

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Using English as a Strategy for Tourism Sector's Development in Cote d'Ivoire: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract - This paper aims at conducting a sociolinguistic analysis to present English as a relevant language to be connected to the tourism industry's management in Côte d'Ivoire. The English competence promotion as a strategy in the tourism sector may favour its development in Côte d'Ivoire like in Pakistan and Indonesia […]. However, can English proficiency's promotion contribute to the tourism sector's development in Côte d'Ivoire? By following the quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis, this investigation is mainly based on the economics of language theory. From the results, one can retain that the English language addition to the tourism project implementation may be essential for the tourism industry's development in this developing country. Accordingly, the French-English bilingual status of the tourism managers in Côte d'Ivoire may allow them to provide efficient services for attracting and receiving more foreign tourists in the country. The global language connection to the project planning can not only contribute to the development of the tourism sector, but also favour the socio-economic development of Côte d'Ivoire.

Keywords: English, contribution, Côte d'Ivoire, development, language, tourism.

Résumé - Cette étude vise à mener une analyse sociolinguistique en vue de présenter l'Anglais comme une importante langue à associer à la gestion de l'industrie du tourisme en Côte d'Ivoire. L'ajout de la promotion de la compétence en langue Anglaise à la gestion de l'industrie du tourisme pourrait favoriser son développement comme ce fut au Pakistan et en Indonésie (…). Cependant, la promotion de la valorisation du niveau d'Anglais serait-elle susceptible de contribuer au développement du secteur du tourisme en Côte d'Ivoire ? En recourant aux méthodes d'analyse des données quantitative et qualitative, cette recherche est basée sur la théorie de l'économie du langage. Il ressort des résultats de notre étude que la langue anglaise apparait comme un élément de valeur dont l'ajout à la promotion de ce secteur d'activité serait bénéfique pour le développement du tourisme dans le pays. En conséquence, le statut de bilingue franco-anglophone des acteurs et de la main d'œuvre de ce secteur d'activité leur permettrait de faire preuve de collaboration intense avec les touristes étrangers. Elle permettra aux gestionnaires des sites touristiques de proposer des services efficaces pour attirer et recevoir plus de touristes étrangers. L'ajout de cette langue mondiale à la gestion du tourisme permettra de valoriser ce secteur en Côte d'Ivoire.

Mots clés : Anglais, contribution, Côte d'Ivoire, développement, langue, tourisme.

INTRODUCTION

Currently in the world, the tourism industry is known as a vital resource for many countries economic development (UNWTO[1], 2023). That is why, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation sensitises the nations wishing to reach the level of sustainable economic development to manage not to remain on the fringes as far as the promotion of the tourism sector is concerned. In that respect, Côte d'Ivoire's authorities have decided to develop the country's tourism industry through the implementation of a tourism barycenter in order to be in touch with the world economic marketplace. This project achievement aims at developing tourism industry in the country. Accordingly, the current global language competence connection to this project planning is pointed out as valuable because English is endowed with essential assets that may favour the tourism industry's sustainable development in Côte d'Ivoire. In the world, the tourism industry's destination is underscored as valuable, while it is awarded with relevant services for not only interacting with foreign tourists, but also taking care of them with managers proficient in English global language. However, how can English proficiency contribute to the tourism industry's development in Côte d'Ivoire?

The main purpose of this study is to show how English competence connection to the tourism sector's management can contribute to the sustainable development of the tourism industry in Côte d'Ivoire. To what extent does English language proficiency addition to this activity sector can favour this country's development?

To reach that aim, this study is divided into four main points. The first part makes a review of literature about the relationship between English and tourism development. As for the second part, it deals with the methodology of data collection and analysis. The next part, points out the results and interpretes the findings. The last step of this study discusses the findings of this investigation.

1. Review of the Nexus between English and Tourism Development.

In the world, tourism is a beneficial resource for countries sustainable development. The tourism industry's importance is underscored by Onur et al. (2024, p.1) who mentioned that: "10% of all jobs worldwide are estimated to be in the tourism industry." The tourism sector has succeeded in reaching that level of value in the world because of its management with the world common language English. This current global language competence is pointed out by

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[1] UNWTO : United Nations World Tourism Organisation

numerous scholars as one of the significant assets favouring the tourism sector's development in a country. That is why, this resourceful activity contributing to several countries' economic growth is underlined as a socio-economic industry to be well-conducted through advertisement in order to promote tourism in any country. Its advertisement may allow to attract more foreign tourists and favour any country's development.

For its better planning, this activity should be adapted to the current global realities which is closely linked to modernity in order to be 'authentic' (Muhamad et al. (2012). In fact, Muhammad et al. (2012, p.2), considering the tourism activities value in the world, emphasised that tourism needs to be well planned: "For future tourism development to accommodate the nexus between tourism and environmental, economic, social, cultural and technological change under the support of modernity.'' Accordingly, countries or destinations wishing to advertise tourism industry are required to improve their tourism destinations by making their tourism operators proficient in English. Given that, the main aim of advertisement in tourism is to persuade visitors about choosing their destination, English is the essential language to be used for leading the tourism industry's advertisement in the world.

Besides, as hospitality is essential in tourism destinations, English proficiency is required as an essential means of interaction with foreign tourists. The current global language, that is English, is known as vital for tourism sector evolution in nations because it is the current world lingua franca. Actually, according to UNESCO (1953): "A lingua franca is a language which is used by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them." That is the reason why, English enables the tourism managers from various native languages to exchange or interact with other foreign tourists. Tourism managers from the world are required to be proficient in English for harmoniously succeeding in presenting their destinations and well-receiving all tourist visitors. The English language importance in the world business and tourism industry makes Onur et al. (2024, p.1) mention that because of the globalisation era, English is the suitable lingua franca in which all the tourism operators should be proficient because it: "has become crucial for businesses, destinations and tourists."

In addition, the English language proficiency may allow tourism operators of all destinations to succeed in transcending their tourist linguistic diversities and interact with them. Their standpoint is corroborated by Yasmin et al. (2016) who underline that English proficiency is a significant source of the tourism industry's success in Pakistan. As a consequence, they show the importance of the global

language for Pakistan's tourism development, by requiring most of the tourism service providers to be fluent in English.

Moreover, the link of the English language competence with the tourism sector development is proved by the economics of language theory. The forerunner of this theory is Jacob Marschak in the mid-1960s. For him, all the languages in the world have not the same value. A specific language may have more impacts for individuals or a whole society. By the same token, for Grin (2001, p.4), English skills proficiency may allow to increase a country's workers' productivity. In fact, the tourism sector development through the English language may permit any worker to benefit from job opportunities not only in his own country, but also apply for better-paid job opportunities in the world. Consequently, English proficiency may be relevant for countries' labor market because these language skills may satisfy the requirements for human capital in the countries (Chiswick, 2008, p.4).

In short items, the English language skill competence insertion into activities like the tourism industry can play a key role in this sector development in many countries. That is the reason why, it seems worth examining whether English use as a valuable means of communication can be relevant for the tourism sector progression in Côte d'Ivoire.

2. Research Methodology
2.1. Data Collection Procedure

This sociolinguistic study was achieved through survey in order to examine the current value of English in the tourism sector of Côte d'Ivoire. To reach that aim, the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection have been resorted to through questionnaires, interviews and documents review. Indeed, the questionnaires allowed to check the tourism site managers and guides of the region of 'Gbêkê' which is pointed as the barycenter of the tourism in Côte d'Ivoire.

To reach that aim, the guides and managers of hotels, accommodation, villages, and handworks activities places in Bouake, Botro and Beoumi have been consulted. Basically, this study organised by the national school of statistics and applied economics (ENSEA)[2]. As an associate of research and also sociolinguists taking part in this survey of ENSEA, this survey allowed to have their contribution about English language value in the tourism sector in this region to know whether English is used or required in the tourism activity's management.

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[2] ENSEA : Ecole Nationale de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquée

Such a survey was conducted to evaluate the English proficiency level. Indeed, the questionnaire allowed to have details about their English competence in order to design the suitable strategy to improve the tourism sector in Côte d'Ivoire. In that respect, a convenient sample consisting of thirty-five tourism site managers participated in.

Likewise, interviews with some of the country's tourism site managers allowed to show the English global language proficiency importance in the development of the tourism sector. All the informants of that survey were Ivorian citizens from Gbêkê region tourism sites. As far as the document review is concerned, they permitted to have information about how the tourism sector is managed in Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere. These documents were found in libraries and online to have more details about the relevance of English competence value in the development of tourism in the world.

2.2. Data Analysis

This step allows to evaluate the tourism sites managers English proficiency in order to examine whether their English competence level is valuable for the tourism sector's development in Côte d'Ivoire or not.

Table 1. Tourism sites Managers English Competence

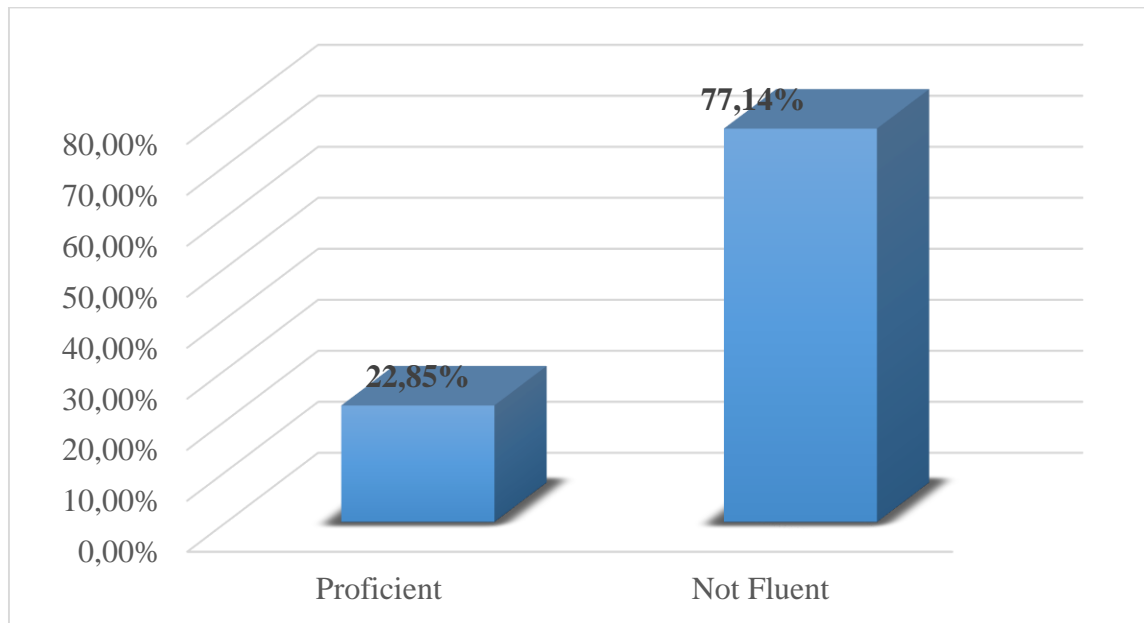| ENGLISH LEVEL	RESULTS	PERCENTAGE
Proficient	08	22.85%
Not fluent	27	77.14%
Total	35	100%

Source: Personal Project

Figure 1. Tourism Managers English competence
Source: Personal Project

This chart underscores that the overwhelming majority of the tourism site managers are not proficient in English, since only 22.85% of all the tourism sites' managers taking part of the survey are proficient in English. Moreover, 77.14% of these tourism sites managers are not fluent in English. This result attests that most of the tourism sites operators participating in this survey are not proficient in English. That is the reason why, this country's tourism managers English competence strategy implementation may be valuable for the tourism sector's development in Côte d'Ivoire.

3. Results and Interpretation of Findings
3.1. English and Tourism Development in Côte d'Ivoire

The current trends towards the tourism promotion in the world is considered as beneficial. In that respect, taking into account the current cultural, religious, ecological and natural assets that Côte d'Ivoire is endowed with, this country's authorities realised the economic resources of the tourism industry. Accordingly, they decided to launch a project for planning the barycenter for the tourism industry's development in the country (on July 2024). According to the country's authorities who are responsible for this barycenter project planning, its main goal is to attract more foreign tourist visitors in the whole country. That is why, numerous activities that are closely related to the country's tourism like cultural,

handwork and gastronomy (…) should be vulgarised and promoted in order to improve and connect the whole country's tourism industry to the global one.

For scholars like Meunchong (2023), any project in the tourism sector should be perceived as an essential asset for any country's sustainable development. Consequently, it may be successfully achieved with English language connection to this activity's management. In fact, for him, English language competence addition to the tourism promotion can be relevant because English is the neutral language that may allow countries' tourism managers to persuade and easily exchange with many foreign tourists. Thitivesa and Siraphattada (2020) corroborate this language competence link with the tourism industry's development by underlining that a specific relationship exists between the English language competence of a country's tourism managers and the foreign tourists at the level of their satisfaction and attraction. As a proof, Thitivesa and Siraphattada (2020, p.4) elaborated a figure pointing out the link between English proficiency and the tourism sector evolution in Thailand.
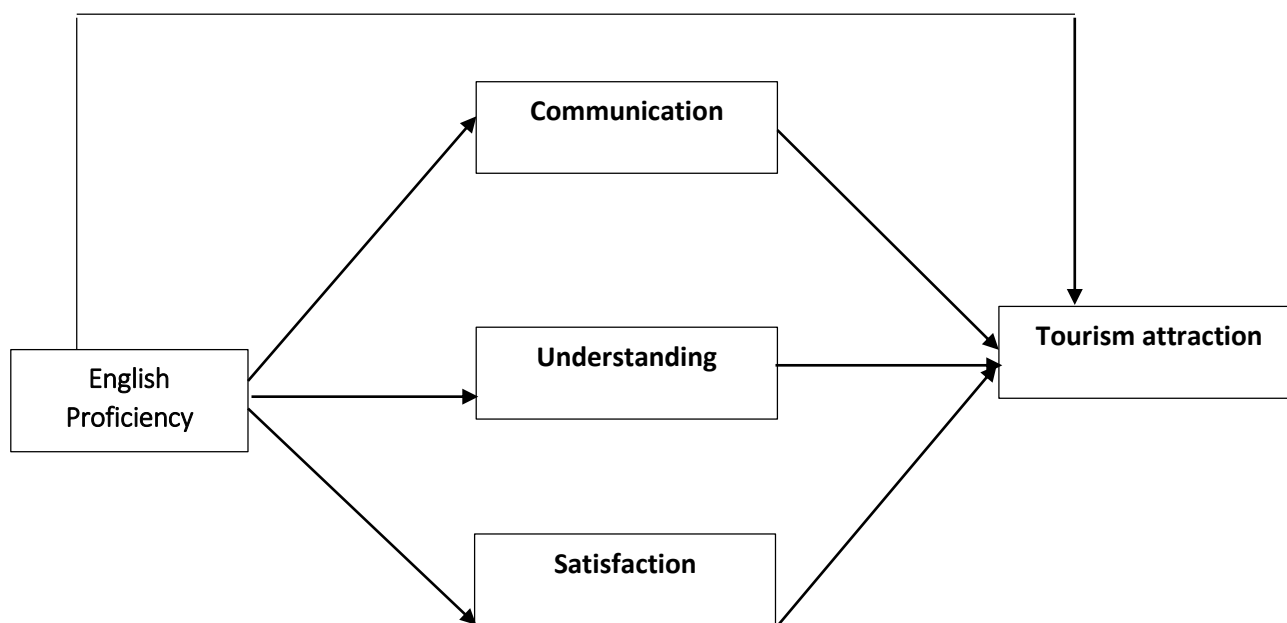

Figure 2. Relationship between English language proficiency and tourism attraction
Source: Thitivesa and Siraphattada (2020, p.4)

From this figure, one can retain that, given that foreign tourists require to exchange with tourism operators for convincing them about selecting their specific tourism destination. They also need to be in touch with the guides to lead their visits in any tourism destination like Côte d'Ivoire. The English competence

of this country's tourism operators appears as a relevant support that may enable most of those country's tourism stakeholders to easily interact and understand all the concerns of their foreign tourists. Their English proficiency may be useful for understanding and satisfying all the problems of the foreign visitors.

Moreover, because of the current world digital realities, an online digital tourism advertisement is essential for attracting more foreign tourists in a country. It is advantageous because it may permit to promote Côte d'Ivoire tourism assets in the world. Thus, English proficiency is a necessary skill that may favour to interact and convince more foreign tourists to come and discover Côte d'Ivoire tourism destination's assets. The tourism assets' advertisement through English language may allow to sensitise and persuade more foreign tourists to visit the country's tourism destination.

English language through websites and social media marketing may contribute to develop the tourism industry in Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, for Morgan and Annette (1998) most of tourism destination operators resort to images and media such as websites, brochures, and posters to advertise their tourism destinations and persuade foreign tourists about visiting their destinations. They succeed in convincing and persuading them by means of English language. Through their English proficiency and these marketing tool of interaction, Côte d'Ivoire tourism operators may succeed in persuading more foreign tourists all over the world to come and discover these country's tourism assets. Their English proficiency may also allow them to provide more effective services to the foreign tourist visitors in order to promote the tourism industry of Côte d'Ivoire business marketplace at the international level.

From this analysis, one may retain that the English proficiency's competence of the tourism operators is an essential asset that may allow Côte d'Ivoire's tourism destination to face the current global competition at the tourism level. It may allow these tourism operators to succeed in overcoming the human resource challenge. The raise of the English proficiency requirement may permit the tourist guides to convince and efficiently receive foreign tourists in Côte d'Ivoire. This country's tourism operators will no more be exposed to the negative impact of failing in attracting the foreign tourists because of their inability to interact with their visitors and efficiently satisfy their concerns.

The foreign tourists' successful visits in Côte d'Ivoire may motivate them to appreciate benefiting from another visit in this country with other foreign visitors. This regular visit of the country's tourism industry by foreign tourists will be source of socio-cultural advantages.

3.2. Socio-Cultural Assets of English Link to Tourism Industry

The tourism sector is closely linked to a country's hospitality policy to receive foreign tourists in a country. Foreign tourists can be well-received in a French-speaking country like Côte d'Ivoire if this country's tourism operators are fluent in the global language English. This language proficiency may allow this tourism destination to benefit from several foreign visitors from the world. It may also permit numerous jobless people to acquire job opportunities as tourist operators when the foreign tourists will visit the tourism sites in Côte d'Ivoire. These advantages that a global language connection to such an industry may favour in a country led Vaillancourt (2009) to conclude that, a specific valuable language competence may involve a diversity of skills at the level of job opportunities and foreign direct investments that may contribute to transform a country's graduates into a 'human capital'. In this context, English proficiency may allow a specific country's tourism destination operators to be endowed with the global language services for playing the role of foreign tourist guides.

Thus, English connection to the tourism industry's promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may allow to decrease the high rate of young people jobless in this country given that these young graduates proficient in English may allow them to solve the crucial problem of language barriers and succeed in making effective interaction with the foreign tourists. By doing so, the English proficiency may contribute to this country's tourism industry promotion in the world. The English competence of this country's tourism managers can allow to attract a broader range of foreign tourists and be source of more employment prospects for some unemployed young people of Côte d'Ivoire.

At cultural level, English proficiency's link to the tourism industry in Côte d'Ivoire may have positive impacts concerning attracting more foreign tourists in the country. This global language connection to tourism has already contributed to promote numerous communities' culture and their tradition in the world (Yehia, 2019). Generally speaking, the foreign tourists do not visit a tourism destination only for discovering new places or sites. During their visits in a country, they also exchange with people so as to discover new specific local and cultural backgrounds. Through English language, their interaction and exchanges with their guides can contribute to make them discover this tourism destination's specific cultural values.

This language competence could also enable these tourist guides to better accounting for any local traditional and cultural festivals they will discover. It may also allow them to succeed in providing more details about most of these destinations' natural potentials such as beaches, mountains, river, lakes (…). Such an English proficiency of Côte d'Ivoire tourist operators may permit the foreign tourists visiting this destination to feel comfortable while discovering this

tourism destination's assets. As a consequence, the foreign visitors will be satisfied to succeed in interacting with their fellow guides and may appreciate returning in this tourism destination.

The English proficiency of Côte d'Ivoire's tourism operators may contribute to make them efficiently communicate with tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds and provide them more details about everything they discover. In that respect, the tourism activity's development in Côte d'Ivoire may be useful for this country's national identity. At this level, the tourism industry is pointed out by Palmer (1999) as an essential asset for promoting a country's national identity. By doing so, English is a valuable means of communication that may allow to develop the tourism industry in Côte d'Ivoire through making foreign tourists to discover the cultural values through interaction and exchange with the country's tourist managers. It may also favour a cross-cultural interaction leading them to hope revisiting this country's tourism destination with other tourists for presenting them the cultural wealth of this country.

Beyond the socio-cultural assets that English connection to the tourism sector may favour in Côte d'Ivoire is at economic level.

3.3. Economic Assets of English Link to Tourism Industry's Development

The tourism industry is one of the main elements of a country's 'circular economy'. The economists Schroeder et al. (2019, P.3) testified this standpoint by stating that this kind of activity can be endowed with important assets for a country's economic development. As a proof, they sustained that a country's tourism industry can be source of "benefits of costs saving, job creation, innovation, productivity and resource efficiency in both developed and developing countries". That is the reason why, they sensitise all the countries with tourism assets to make relevant efforts to undertake the tourism industry for sustainably succeeding in reaching the goals of economic development.

Given that English is currently determined as the global language for the tourism domain improvement in some countries like Indonesia, this language should be connected to this activity's promotion in Côte d'Ivoire. This language is so essential at the international level, it is pointed as a key element for tourism sector development in Indonesia (Widiastuti et al, 2021). It is so valuable at the level of tourism, Widiastuti et al (2021) mentioned that the global market and competition contexts make that most of the human resources managing the tourism industry in Pakistan are proficient in English. This language connection to tourism allowed them to succeed in communicating with all the tourists visiting their country. This situation underscores that the connection of the English language competence with tourism sector can be essential for enhancing

the tourism industry in Côte d'Ivoire. Thus, this country's tourism domain authorities should manage so that the tourism operators managing this domain be proficient in English. This language association to the tourist guides' competence may essentially have a positive impact on more foreign tourists attraction in this tourism destination.

This goal can be reached through the tourism managers specific training in English competence related to the tourism industry's marketing in Côte d'Ivoire. Such a policy implementation may allow the country's tourism stakeholders to acquire the training of bilingual English-French speakers. This bilingual tourist managers guides may contribute to satisfy the management of a broader range of tourist sites in the country and attract more foreign tourists originating from various developed countries.

Accordingly, this global language link with the tourism sector promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may attract more foreign tourists in the country and generate more economic incomes. The value of English connection to the tourism activity is proved by Widiastuti et al (2021, p.3) who sensitise all the countries aiming at reaching an economic development thanks to the tourism industry to keep on increasing their resilience for promoting the tourism sector in their country by insisting on the advertisement of their country's tourism sector resources by means of English. This competence achievement may contribute to the development of the tourism industry and favour their country's socio-economic development.

The relevant link between English and the tourism industry led Thitiversa and Siraphatthada (2020, p.2) to underline that the tourism industry's development in Thailand permitted this country to benefit from "billions of dollars." From their investigation dealing with the value of English affiliation with the tourism sector, it results that English connection to the tourism sector promotion allowed Thailand to receive more visits of 'seven top nations in 2019'. These foreign visitors mainly came from foreign countries like China, Malaysia, South Korea, Laos, Japan, India and Russia.

Taking into account the valuable role that English language connection to the tourism industry promotion provided in Thailand, Thitiversa and Siraphatthada (2020, p.2) mentioned that the tourism sector is regarded as one of the most important industry in this country. In that respect, one can retain that the well-implementation of a tourism industry's promotion in Côte d'Ivoire with English global language may be beneficial like in Thailand. It may be advantageous because it can allow the country to receive more foreign tourists. These tourist visitors may contribute to enhance this country's hotels and tourism sites

revenues. That is the reason why, English proficiency should be required in the training of all this country's tourism operators.

In a nutshell, the English language competence may motivate more foreign tourists from the world to visit Côte d'Ivoire for discovering this country's tourism industry resources. This language may enable the tourism managers to motivate more foreign tourists to visit this country's tourism destination. As a result, the tourism industry will be developed in Côte d'Ivoire. The tourism industry's growth can be source of benefits in the welfare of individuals and the whole country. This language connection to this country's tourism industry development may contribute to improve this country's gross domestic products (GDP) and favour its development. This industry's development may favour the socio-economic development of the country because it may be source of numerous financial resources. That is the main reason why, the use of English for tourism purposes strategy needs to be better promoted and acquired in the country so that all the tourist operators be proficient in English.

4. Perspectives for Tourism Development in Côte d'Ivoire

The tourism industry is an activity that can play a key role in the development of a country. Considering the current global market and competition context, the human resource managers of the tourism industry in Côte d'Ivoire are required to be proficient in English. Such a goal can be reached in this country by enabling the Ivorian tourism managers to be proficient in English. This language value in the world business and for the development of India led Graddol (2010, p.110) to state: "Improving education is seen as a key ingredient in human and economic development". From this statement, Graddol (2010) underscores that English is among the current global requirement on which all the countries' education should emphasise so that their graduates be well-trained and succeed in contributing to their country's development.

English proficiency is so relevant, Coleman (2010, p.7) sensitised most of the world countries about promoting this language in order to be in touch with the current global economic realities. In that respect, he revealed that: "Countries pursuing an economic strategy based on […] the attraction of foreign capital should adapt their language education policies to the requirements of that economic strategy." From this assertion, Coleman (2010) attests that the English language competence acquisition through education for reaching the tourism development purpose may be beneficial in any country like Côte d'Ivoire if this country's tourism operators are proficient in English. Indeed, because of globalisation, English is the vital language that should be connected to any country's economic activities. English may be essential for Côte d'Ivoire's

tourism destination advancement, given that this global language contributed to the foreign tourism development in several countries.

By the same token, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2023), English language connection to the tourism industry in any developing country like Côte d'Ivoire may favour the sustainable tourism development. This sustainable tourism policy may allow to eliminate poverty in this developing country. That is why, this global tourism organisation suggests English connection to any tourism destination industry's planning for its sustainable development. Accordingly, this world organisation through the concept of 'the Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP), implemented a programme for helping the developing countries to develop their tourism industry. Through this programme, an assistance is provided for allowing them developing the tourism industry in poor, rural and marginalised communities. One example of such a project, is the one including English language training for the staff of tourist lodges and the staff for a complex of caves in Laos (Coleman 2010, p. 8).

Similarly, English proficiency inclusion in the training of the tourist lodge staffs in Côte d'Ivoire may be essential for this tourism destination sustainable tourism policy's implementation. It may help these tourism staff members to be fluent in English. This language proficiency's skill can allow them to acquire the ability to interact and exchange with most of foreign tourists visiting them. The following statement of Saptiany and Putriningsih (2023, p.6) corroborate this standpoint, as they mentioned:

> Tourism English is required for all tourism communication activities, including tour guides' explanations of customs, culture and other intangible cultural heritages, and tour operators' management of all aspects of transportation lodging and other travel related industries.

This assertion proves that English is the suitable global language endowed with several assets in the world tourism sector. It is pointed out as relevant because it is known in the world as the significant language allowing to overcome the linguistic barriers and easily interact with foreign tourists from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This language proficiency is presented as a crucial challenge that all the tourism operators in Côte d'Ivoire dealing with tourism management should overcome in order to attract more foreign tourists in their tourism destination. That is the main reason why, English language proficiency should be connected to the tourism barycenter project of Côte d'Ivoire planning. English connection to this tourism promotion may allow the country's tourism staff lodges to be in touch with the current world economic marketplace. Their connection to the current global language competence to this project planning may favour this country's stakeholders to be endowed with more resources in

order to provide more efficient services for interacting and taking care of foreign tourists that will appreciate to return and visit this country.

In short items, the English proficiency's education perspectives should be connected to the tourism industry's project planning in Côte d'Ivoire for enabling all this country's tourism managers to be proficient in English. This global language training connection to the tourism operators' training in Côte d'Ivoire may be beneficial for this industry's development. This language association to the tourism business development may allow this country to attract more foreign tourists because they will benefit from exchange and feel comfortable while visiting this tourism destination. English proficiency may help them to offer more efficient services at the international level to face the current global economic competition and contribute to develop the tourism sector in Côte d'Ivoire.

5. Discussion of the Findings

This research investigation underscores that the English global language competence connection to the tourism sector's management can be valuable in a French-speaking developing country like Côte d'Ivoire. This global language may be relevant because it can serve as a source for persuading and convincing numerous foreign tourists to discover this country's tourism assets. The regular visits of foreign tourists from developed countries to developing one can favour the socio-economic development of this country.

Unfortunately, in the search of solutions to the issues of socio-economic development, only economic indicators such as GDP (Gross Domestic Product), GNP (Gross National Product), income per capita, natural resources and social infrastructures realities are taken into account. Likewise, for some scholars like Brenzinger (2009, p.37), any suitable socio-economic development strategy should not be based on an international foreign language. On contrary, it is any country's local language that should be promoted. For him, numerous African countries are underdeveloped because their local languages are neglected. That is why, he rejected the use of an international language like English as a means to implement a relevant socio-economic project in any activity.

However, as all the languages have not the same value in the world, Plonski (2013) encourages developing countries towards promoting or selecting a valuable international language that could contribute to their communities' socio-economic development. In that respect, this study's results pinpoints that the current global language English is endowed with significant assets that can be used as relevant indicators to develop Côte d'Ivoire's tourism sector

sustainable development. Actually, this language competence used by this country's tourism managers is important because it may be source of this country's development.

English language proficiency may allow this country's tourism managers to persuade numerous foreign tourists to discover their cultural background assets and provide job opportunities to young people. This situation may allow to decrease the high rate of jobless in this country, given that they will work in this country's tourism sites. Considering the result of this investigation, the use of English as a strategy to promote the tourism industry's development in Côte d'Ivoire can be beneficial in this country because this activity's progression can allow this country to benefit from numerous foreign tourist visits and favour this country's development at social and economic levels.

CONCLUSION

The present study has conducted a sociolinguistic analysis to explore the value of English use as a strategy to favour the tourism industry's development in Côte d'Ivoire. From this investigation, it can be retained that the use of English competence to the tourism promotion in this country may be relevant for the tourism sector's development in this country.

This research findings underscored that the English language connection as a strategy to the tourism sector project development of this country may be valuable because this global language may tremendously allow to improve this country's tourism managers' lodge service for efficiently persuading foreign tourists from the world to visit their tourism destination. These tourists will be so well-received in the country, they can motivate other tourists all over the world to visit this country tourism destination. In addition, English use as a strategy to promote the tourism industry in Côte d'Ivoire may favour some advantages at social, cultural and economic levels. Thus, considering the low level of this country's tourism managers staff, the English language proficiency should be added to this country's tourism operators staff training, so that they become proficient in English and develop the tourism sector in Côte d'Ivoire.

The tentative outcome of this study may eventually contribute to understand why the use of English as a strategy for tourism sector development project may be beneficial. Hence, we hope that this study aiming at investigating English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire for tourism purpose may serve as an invaluable reference for further research about language and tourism development.

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APPENDIX

> *QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNANT LE NIVEAU EN ANGLAIS DES GESTIONNAIRES DES SITES TOURISTIQUES DANS LA REGION DU GBËKË EN COTE D'IVOIRE*

(Les informations proférées sur ce document resteront confidentielles)

I. Identification of participants

Nom ……………………………………………………..……………………………………

Ville: …………………….. …………………………………………...………………………

Nom du site touristique : ……………………………………………..……... .

II. Vérification du niveau de la langue anglaise

2.1. Aimez- vous l'Anglais ?

Oui : ☐   Non : ☐

Pourquoi ?

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2.2. Pouvez-vous vous exprimer en Anglais ?

Oui : ☐   Non : ☐

2.3. Pensez-vous que la maitrise de la langue Anglaise pourrait vous être utile durant votre travail de gestionnaire de site touristique ?

Oui : ☐   Non : ☐

Pourquoi ?

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III. Opinions sur l'utilisation de l'anglais comme un important moyen pour développer le secteur touristique en Côte d'Ivoire.

3.1. Seriez-vous d'accord que l'Anglais acquiert plus d'importance dans la gestion des sites touristiques en Côte d'Ivoire ?

Oui : ☐   Non : ☐

Pourquoi ?

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3.2. Pensez-vous que la maitrise de la langue Anglaise par les diplômés pourrait faciliter leur insertion professionnelle et contribuer au développement du pays ?

Oui : ☐   Non : ☐

Pourquoi ?

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Fortifying EFL Reading Potentials: A Driving-Belt towards Building Language Literacy

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Abstract - Reading has a big say in developing spoken and scriptural competencies in a foreign environment. This research shows the core functions reading materials play for they offer learners a large spectrum of opportunities of language exposure and literacy. It concludes that it is not enough to make reading resources available rather, they should be diversified and densified. The paper proves that diversification and densification pave the way for balanced and fortified reading that enables the attainment of spoken and scriptural skill development expectations. The study hence recommends a shift of paradigm from the ongoing secular and acute deficit of relevant, qualitative and quantitative reading resources limited to one textbook per grade that hinders real language immersion. The survey embeds qualitative and quantitative data gathered via library investigation and questionnaire over a sample of 380 participants of which 350 learners and 30 teachers from Benin's administrative regions of Zou and Atlantic.

Keywords: acute vocabulary deficit, fortifying reading opportunities, diversifying and densifying reading resources, English language immersion, developing spoken and scriptural skills

Résumé - La lecture joue un grand rôle dans le développement des compétences orales et écrites dans un contexte étranger. Cette recherche montre les fonctions fondamentales que jouent les manuels de lecture car ils offrent aux apprenants, de grandes opportunités d'exposition et d'instruction linguistiques. Elle en conclut qu'il ne suffit pas de rendre les ressources en lecture disponibles, mais qu'il faut plutôt les diversifier et les densifier. L'article démontre que la diversification et la densification servent à équilibrer et à fortifier la lecture qui favorise l'atteinte des objectifs de développement des compétences orales et écrites. L'étude recommande conséquemment un changement de paradigme du déficit séculaire prononcé de ressources pertinentes, qualitatives et quantitatives en lecture, limitées à un manuel par niveau d'études lequel empêche une vraie immersion linguistique. La recherche intègre des données qualitatives et quantitatives recueillies via une documentation bibliothécaire et un questionnaire sur un échantillon de 380 participants dont 350 apprenants et 30 enseignants d'anglais issus des départements du Zou et de l'Atlantique au Bénin.

Mots-clés : déficit lexical chronique, fortification des opportunités de lecture, diversification et densification des ressources de lecture, immersion de la langue anglaise, développement des compétences orales et écrites

INTRODUCTION

Language literacy is the first step towards learning and competence development. Known as soft skills, communication is transversal to every field of life and profession. In language classroom, the interest for reading, listening,

hearing, comprehending and writing is a must. However, attaining such objectives is highly challenged in English as a foreign language context by a series of obstacles. Indeed, learning English in such a hostile setting is mostly limited to classroom activities inasmuch as teaching should activate all the necessary language approaches, strategies and techniques to foster reading activities as a major step in conquering language literacy. English literacy means developing the two productive skills and the two receptive abilities while integrating vocabulary, grammar and phonology sub-skills. Simply put, an outgoing learner of English language should have developed both oral and scriptural communication skills through a good blend of reading activities. The current research intends to show all the added-value lying behind reading activities that needs diversification, densification and balance. Textbooks play an important role in foreign language learning and teaching for in many instructional contexts, they stand for the syllabus teachers follow with exams often based on their contents (Harwood 2013: 2). Yet, reading materials should not be limited to textbooks in the process of developing true language literacy in EFL setting. This role is devoted to literature books carefully designed for different levels of study (Kurtz, 2014). For the efficacy of the research, this paper will be organized around context justification, literature reviewing, population targeting, target sampling, target sizing, instrumenting, collecting data, finding presentation and analysis, discussions and suggestions not to mention research hypothesizing and questioning.

1. Context Justification

In a way of clarifying the context, the study depicted the current situation and addressed the expected context for reading and reading materials in Benin's secondary school education. Reading is a fundamental skill for it plays a central role in every educated human being's life, be it personal, academic or professional. Reading is the provider of information, knowledge and new ideas. However, as for today, the situation of reading and reading materials is critical in Benin's EFL case in that the reading material is limited to only one textbook from Secondary 1 to 7. The contents of the existing materials are short extracts on various topics or themes spread over the textbooks. To give it a clue, the maximum length of the extracts in the textbooks is about two pages depending on the level of the grades except in Secondary 6 where the last two texts go beyond this size. These extracts are followed by questions. In other words, the reading is based on comprehension. In a smaller proportion come assignments linked to writing. The other sections are made-up of assignments largely dedicated to vocabulary, grammar and sometimes moderately to pronunciation

items. English instruction in secondary schools is not conducive for English exposure and immersion, two vital conditions for learners to develop both receptive and productive skills. Something must therefore be done to change this trend like upgrading learning contact time with reading. Notably, reading capacity should be boosted via additional reading type supports, a way of diversifying, densifying and balancing reading activities and making them effective and productive. Putting it short, the current context appears not conducive for speaking and writing nor for listening and reading because English is taught, learnt and evaluated away from language constant contact governed by literature. Equipping EFL classrooms with appropriate diversified and densified reading resources to balance reading activities is key to closing such a gap.

2. Literature Review

Reading is the process of looking at written symbols and letters and understanding the meaning of them. It is one of the four main language skills along with listening, speaking and writing. Learners typically have access to books as their primary reading materials in the classroom which give them wide access to different reading levels, stories and genres. Typology of reading materials may include magazines, comic books, newspapers, play scripts, poetry, mystery/detective fiction, science fiction, fantasy, adventure stories, etc. (Google retrieved on July10th, 2025). Reading nourishes writing but it goes beyond this role in EFL setting. Indeed, the importance of reading in EFL environment has as well many other benefits like developing listening and speaking skills. The process of reading continuously helps develop some lexical empowerment and autonomy that favor words reinvestment when writing, listening and speaking. This position is fully shared by Routman (1994) who strongly stated that there are many reasons to have literature in EFL classroom. The first reason is to read for fun, the second is to encourage learners to exchange their thoughts, feelings and interests with one another in a meaningful way, the third is to encourage learners to think about concepts and ideas and to develop attitudes towards them and the fourth is to develop learners' linguistic knowledge and skills within a clear context. In short, literature can be an important factor in promoting the study of English literature, developing learners' academic, cultural, linguistic and intellectual learning. Skela (2014) put it that back to the 1980s, literature was recognized as a conduit for improved critical thinking skills.

Though integrating literature into the EFL syllabus is beneficial to the learners' linguistic, (inter) cultural, and intellectual development, there is however need to select an approach which best serves the interests of the beneficiaries. For

Ahmad, EFL reading materials can be manifold. Traditional reading materials tend to emphasize the forms or patterns of language (the grammar) more than the communicative functions of language. In fact, they tend to focus on reading and writing activities, rather than listening and speaking activities. In opposition, communicative reading materials create opportunities for the students to use the language in both classroom and real life as they emphasize the communicative functions of language, not just the forms but also reflect the students' needs and interests in terms of language skills development. Communicative reading materials usually have a good balance among the four language skills, while emphasizing listening and speaking more than traditional reading materials do. It goes without saying that EFL reading materials, whether they are paper-based, electronic, audio or audiovisual, they play a crucial role for being the main teaching and learning aids be they textbooks, novels, novellas, storybooks, playbooks, songbooks or poem books, etc. Spending a lot of time reading has proven to have significant changes on learners' skill development.

To enlarge the depth of the study, two research hypotheses and three research questions were formulated as follows:

- Densifying reading serves as a nourishing vein towards developing all EFL disciplinary skills.
- Extensive reading is a mega-source of language immersion and lexicalization.
- Do English curriculums allow learners to read abundantly?
- Are English curriculums conducive for independent reading?
- Do English curriculums offer any reading options to learners?

3. Research Methodology

The methodology implemented in the course of this study has targeted the population of Zou and Atlantic Regions in Benin. It sampled learners and teachers all of English subject from public secondary schools. Sizing the two cohorts of participants resulted in 350 for the first and 30 for the second. This section is comprised of research instrumentation, data collection, findings presentation, discussions and recommendations. As a whole, 10 public secondary schools were impacted as summarized in the following table.

Table. Distribution of the Respondent Cohorts

REGION	SECONDARY SCHOOLS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	REGION	SECONDARY SCHOOLS	TEACHERS	STUDENTS
ZOU	CEG[1] BOHICON	3	35	ATLANTIC	CEG SÈHOUÈ	3	35
	CEG DOME	3	35		CEG HOUÈGBO	3	35
	CEG[2] ABOMEY	3	35		CEG[1] ALLADA	3	35
	CEG[1] ZOGBODOMEY	3	35		CEG[1] ABOMEY-CALAVI	3	35
	CEG MASSI	3	35		CEG[1] GODOMEY	3	35
TOTAL		15	175	TOTAL		15	175
GRAND TOTAL				380			

3.1. Research Instrumentation

Two instruments were designed to gather data in the framework of this paper. They are documentary investigation and questionnaire addressed to learners and teachers. The questionnaire of 15 entries was initiated with closed-ended questions to learners and teachers.

3.2. Collecting Data

This section presents the method deployed to collect the various data herein. In order to reduce the cost related to this research, it was chosen the cheapest and easiest way of administering the instruments. Firstly, the teacher-advisors received and sent by WhatsApp the questionnaire to the teachers that they chose purposely and the teachers to their learners. But as cellphone is banned at school in Benin and given that the data collection was digital, each of the 30 teachers organized their respondent-students into a whole class extra activity where participants were asked to answer by 'yes' or 'no' the questions put across to them by the survey guide. The teachers proceeded like in voting system, mentioning on the board, the statistics of 'yes' and 'no' for each of the 15 questions and recapping all together. This strategy allowed to have hundred per cent of feedbacks that is with null loss. It also permits to have a summary of all the collected data, facilitating finding compilation for the researcher. As for the questionnaire designed for teachers, it was filled out individually. It took fifteen days to complete the administration of these different instruments. Both filled out electronic instruments were forwarded to the researcher.

4. Presenting Findings

Two clusters of findings resulting from documentary investigation and questionnaire are presented here.

4.1. Library Survey

After cross-checking a variety of articles and books either physical or digital, it appears that reading in EFL classroom is a major activity not to look down upon. As such, it needs to be extremely valued by and large for the multifunctional and multidimensional roles it plays in the development of all other skills be it speaking, writing or listening and sub-skills like vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation. This is made possible by the exposure to the language resulting in language immersion. To attain this goal, different literatures claim for the promotion of diversifying, densifying and balancing reading.

4.2. Field Survey

4.2.1. From the Respondent Learners

To the question if the 350 learners benefit from many categories of English reading books for study, 100% percent of the respondents replied by the negative answer and that only one textbook is in use across the different grade levels. To the question if they have the textbook in use, 63.7% gave a positive answer. As they were asked if the English books in use allow them to read excessively like texts of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more pages, 100% of the participants responded negatively. When asked if they naturally read outside the classroom their English textbooks in study even though there is no exercise assigned to them by the teacher, 94.1% of the participants confessed they do not read. Asked if they like reading any English documents they come across, 98.3% recognized not to be readers. As for their impression if they read enough in English, 100% agreed not to read in actual fact. 93.7% of the participants of this cohort reported not to have enough words and expressions to understand the texts they read from their textbooks in the curriculums. 96.7% of the respondents declared not to be in capacity of speaking English according to their level of study. Asked if they can write English texts according to their level of study, 96.4% responded by the negative. When the participants are asked if they largely understand the reading extracts, they are given during their examinations, 77.3% responded by "no" while 78.5% of them said not to perform on their English reading

comprehension tests according to their level of study against 97.8% who fail to perform on their English writing (composition) tests according to their level of study. In the meantime, 100% of the respondents said to have many categories of French reading books in study in their class comprised of both textbooks and literature books. To the question if these categories of French reading books in use allow them to read more like texts of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more pages, 100% of the participants were positive. 92.9% of the respondents said not to understand words and phrases to decode the message contained in the English texts they are assigned and consequently unable to provide suitable answers for the questions.

4.2.2. From the Respondent Teachers

This section is constituted of the 30 EFL teachers feedbacks. To the question, how many categories of English reading books are in use in secondary education, 100% of the respondents declared that only one is available. As they are asked if learners have the English textbooks in use in their classes, 100% said that not all of them do but a proportion 45.2% do among which 29.8% have just the Xeroxed version. When asked if English books in use allow their learners to read excessively like texts of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more pages, 100% of teachers' answer was negative. To the question if their learners naturally read outside the classroom English textbooks in use even if there is no exercise assigned to them by teachers, 78.2% said not to know for sure, yet, it is implausible. Also, when asked if their students like reading any English documents they come across, 79.8% confessed though they are not certain, just a few might be reading friendly for 100% who have the impression that their students do not read enough in English. They all said that their students do not have enough words and expressions to understand the texts they read from their textbooks in study in their curricula. 89.9% of teachers are straight in their shoes that their students are not in capacity of speaking English in accordance with their level of study for 87.8% who believed that their learners are not able to write English texts according to their level of study. Unanimously, the respondents disagreed that most students understand the reading extracts they are submitted during their examinations whereas 88.7% recognized that their students do not perform on their English reading comprehension tests according to their level of study against 83.7% who stated that their learners fail to perform on their English writing (composition) tests according to their level of study. When teachers are asked if French programs of study are regulated by only one category of reading book for each class, 100% responded by "no". 100% of the respondents agreed that the existence of more than one category of French reading book in use, allows students to read more like texts of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more pages.

79.7% of the respondents noted that learners do not have the opportunity to read enough and made the suggestion to empower the reading capacities of their learners in English.

5. Discussions

The discussion section is organized around library findings and field discoveries. The discussions about the library findings resulted from both physical and digital reading materials whereas the one about field discoveries derived from feedbacks from grassroots actors namely respondent EFL teachers and learners.

5.1. About the Library Findings

Diversifying, densifying and balancing reading appear as highly crucial in EFL instruction as they create language exposure and immersion for learners. Contrary to the context of Benin however, only one textbook is used which is detrimental in terms of language skill development. There is therefore a necessity of supplementing to the existing unique reading material in terms of genre and depth to ensure extensive reading. The major position and goal of this paper is fully in line with the documentary findings that the ongoing situation in Benin's setting is an obstacle to the English language to flourish due to an acute deficit of reading materials. As a matter of fact, EFL classroom should be full of various reading activities both extensive and intensive. Effective reading is a core activity leading to the development of listening, speaking, writing, reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. As it appears, reading is a super powerful crossroad activity towards developing all other competences in EFL environment for it gives learners a unique opportunity to be connected and glued to English at school and outside school. From the above, it is extremely necessary to rethink English teaching in terms of provision of reading materials in Benin.

5.2. About the Field Findings

The discussions in the current subsection are twofold: respondent learner-centered and respondent teacher-oriented.

5.2.1. About the Respondent Learners

In unanimity, the learners declared not to benefit from many categories of English reading books for study, which confirms that reading material is unique

from Secondary 1 to 7. The reading material is a textbook divided into learning situations made up of grammar, vocabulary points and some reading extracts accompanied by comprehension questions. From this description, one can easily notice the deficit of reading activities for not being full, abundant and immersive. Despite this, many respondents confessed not to have the sole reading material and for the few, they just photo start the pages in study. The reading activities they are assigned never reach ten pages all through the seven grades of secondary education which constitutes a serious threat to language skill development. Only 5.9% read outside the classroom scope and one can infer that reading is not a habit for the great deal of learners. Nearly all the respondents read any other English documents apart from the textbook. No single respondent reads enough in seven-year time and has enough words and expressions to understand the texts they read from their textbooks. Only 3.3% of the respondent learners are in capacity of speaking English according to their level of study against 3.6% in capacity of producing written English texts of their levels. The respondents largely fail to understand the reading extracts they are submitted during their examinations. All the respondents have many categories of French reading books in study in their class comprised of both textbooks and literature books. The categories of French reading books in use allow them to read more like texts of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more pages.

5.2.2. *About the Respondent Teachers*

All the respondent teachers recognized that English books are limited to a single textbook per grade in secondary education but even available or affordable to the majority of learners and that they prefer to photo start the pages in study confirming the position of respondent students. All the teacher respondents clearly put across that English books in use do not allow their learners to read abundantly like texts of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more pages. Teachers involved in the survey declared that their learners naturally fail to read outside the classroom and it is unlikely that they read other English materials. The teachers also strongly agreed that their learners lack words and expressions to understand the texts they read from their textbooks in study and that they are not in capacity of speaking English in accordance with their level of study. They are not able to write English texts according to their level of study either. Unanimously, the teacher respondents believed that most of their students fail to understand the reading extracts they are submitted during their examinations. The teachers said their students fail to perform on their English reading comprehension tests according to their level of study as well as on their English writing tests of their levels. The English teachers involved in the survey back up the position of the study that French reading books in use are in manifold and

allow students to read more like texts of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more pages. Given that learners do not have the opportunity to read enough English books, they expressed their need to get their reading capacities empowered.

6. Testing the Research Hypotheses

Testing the research hypotheses are of two orders: research hypothesis verification 1 and research hypothesis verification 2.

6.1. Research Hypothesis Test ≠ 1

The position of the current research work is definitely in line with the literature review and mainly the one of Day and Bamford that the more EFLLs read the more they develop literacy in the language. This is also the position from different grassroots actors of EFL in Zou and Atlantic regions. And this is obvious that reading, reading and reading again and again always represents a strong and powerful opportunity of exposing EFL learners to the language both in class and out of it. Being reading addict is a crucial step resulting from densification of reading materials. Densifying reading is the key for unlocking English skills and sub-skills doors. Densification develops firstly and prominently vocabulary capacity and therefore reading and writing, listening and speaking and even deductive grammar. In order to attain this objective in EFL environment, literature comes as a pillar for beyond language skill development, it offers learners assets like cultural awareness, entertainment, and many more. So, densification in EFL setting is a piece of riches to promote by all means. One can infer that Benin's learners fail to listen, speak and write English because they are actually denied access to reading. In other words, densifying reading is the crossroad avenue when it comes to developing any other disciplinary skills in English as a foreign language. From the above arguments, it goes without saying that the first hypothesis: ***Densifying reading serves as a nourishing vein towards developing all EFL disciplinary skills***, is tested positive.

6.2. Research Hypothesis Test ≠ 2

There is no densification away from reading extensively as both go hand in hand. Extensive reading in opposition to intensive reading favors diversification and densification. Learners are offered many opportunities of reading materials. It gives learners, occasions to choose from a list of reading materials. Varying materials is a main criterion in extensive reading context. Among the materials to read are various literature books in various forms, hard, electronic, phonic, visual, etc. While reading extensively, readers have a unique opportunity to be exposed to the language on a long period of time that permits the discovery and

learning of new words and phrases to be reinvested while writing, speaking and listening. Given the hostile environment of EFL, extensive reading activities in the curriculums are non-negotiable. Exposure creates immersion and immersion creates high rate of lexicalization. The different literature reviews back up this correlation between extensive reading and language immersion and lexicalization. Unfortunately, feedbacks from EFL actors confessed the inexistence of extensive reading in use at school every reading activity being limited to intensive reading from a unique textbook. Therefore, the second hypothesis test is positive in that: *Extensive reading is a mega-source of language immersion and lexicalization*.

7. Providing Answers to the Research Questions

This segment is framed into three parts: research question answer 1, research question answer 2 and research question answer 3.

7.1. Research Question Answer ≠ 1

No! From the analysis in hypothesis test 2, it is crystal clear that learners are offered only one textbook per grade in secondary education studies. The reading material is made up of extracts on various topics. A textbook being an important element of curricula documents, it is evidence that *EFL written curriculums fail to offer learners opportunities to read abundantly*.

7.2. Research Question Answer ≠ 2

No! A unique textbook with extracts from various topics does not and cannot promote independent reading for the only occasion for learners to be in contact with the book is when they are assigned exercises. So, they just read to fulfill the teachers' requirements mostly in class. From the researcher's position as a former EFL teacher at secondary education level, and from the feedbacks issued by current grassroots actors, the reading material remains unique textbook of intensive reading that many learners do not afford. Many will just photo start the required pages to be in conformity with the requirements of their teachers. So, leaners are not prepared for reading independence. And this results from the *EFL curriculums non-conduciveness for independent reading* as students will read like a robot when they are asked to and never read when there is no order to do so.

7.3. Research Question Answer ≠ 3

No! Feedbacks from grassroots actors and respondents and from the researcher's experiment and knowledge as a major member of the education system when it comes to curriculum work, teacher development and instruction at secondary level, teachers and learners are compelled to use a unique and single textbook

per grade level. As mentioned above, the book is intense reading oriented. Even in the private sector of the educational system where other textbooks are in use, having more than one book to choose from is not far from being a reality. Therefore, both EFL teachers and learners are locked up in the same textbook where reading is not a flourishing activity. This occurs just because *English curriculums do not offer any reading options to learners*.

From the findings and the discussions above, there is need to act out. The study addressed a series of core measures and actions to take to face reading challenges in EFL environment.

8. Suggestions and Recommendations

Reading in the context of Benin deserves a profound reform like renovating the existing reading resources, diversifying and densifying reading materials so as to balance reading. To do this, reshuffling EFL curriculums appears a non-negotiable option. The renovated curricula should therefore consider reviewing the existing reading materials and aligning them with the other curricular documents like the instruction guides and the textbooks. In fact, being supportive of the written study programs is key to attaining the expected educational goals. Then, diversifying reading materials will enable learners to navigate through various options of reading resources they choose. In fact, limiting reading resources to a specific choice is largely demotivating and detrimental to learning. In addition, there is need to densify reading resources inasmuch it makes language instruction immersive. At this point, there is need to develop a Benin made English literature that integrates the socioeconomic realities of the country. A homemade literature is to ensure the promotion of extensive reading in English language class. Indeed, there is a full compatibility between language skill development and literature study. Literature enables the mastery of the language in context via the culture and the civilization of the native speakers of the medium. This process is made possible through the immersion into the being learnt language. Developing local English literature books should conform to the requirements of text accessibility in EFL context and book availability. As this occurs, training EFL teachers to face the innovation challenges is crucial. Teacher capacity building will take learners from non-readers to readers and from readers to addicted readers via relevant initiatives that promote pleasurable readings. Another key element to consider is ensuring the balance of the reading activities. Of course, in the process of a language study, it is unfruitful to stick to a single type of reading all along for it leads to boredom, demotivation and skill deficiency. The best option ever is to swing between intensive reading and extensive reading. But what are the deepest benefits of an extensive reading?

Extensive reading (ER) is an approach to the teaching and learning of a non-native language reading in which learners read large quantities of books and other materials that are well within their linguistic competence (Day and Bamford, 1998). In opposition, intensive reading (IR) refers to reading short texts thoroughly and with clear goals, such as to answer reading comprehension questions or to identify how sentences are linked or formed. Unlike extensive reading, the goal of intensive reading is not to read many texts for fluency, but a shorter passage to gain a deeper understanding of it (Nation, 1974). Many studies have shown that extensive reading contributes to vocabulary development, which obviously benefits the performance of all language skills. Some researchers have also seen benefits from ER in terms of writing development and grammar acquisition. Cognitive models of learning suggest that a great deal of input is required for learning to take place and ER can be a good source of it. ER is conducive for linguistic empowerment as well as increased knowledge about home and world culture. Research findings conclude that ER is key to linguistic proficiency and culture awareness. Implementing extensive reading, Day and Bamford states that there must be a wide range of materials on a variety of topics available, a non-negotiable condition towards introducing any ER program.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, it is noticeable that the importance and the power of extensive reading are manifold. It is a genuine instrument, the combining or the blending of which ensures to reading, balance, diversification and densification. In a Beninese setting made up but of intensive reading based on only one textbook, the current paper has cleared the way likely to boost both teaching and learning English. If reading and listening are receptive while writing and speaking are productive, reading is a privileged skill in EFL context for it generates aural, scriptural and oral abilities and makes the reader lexically autonomous. Indeed, what is fabulous with extensive reading in EFL environment is that one entry yields a plurality of exits. Otherwise, in case learners are really given the extensive reading ability, they will consequently reinvest it for any other skills. For learners to be in a position of receiving and producing, they should fully be drenched and soaked. It appears strictly unequivocal that there is a solid knot between extensive reading and language literacy and that there is no real language competence development outside literature. Benin therefore needs to deepen and broaden its EFL reading programs at different grades levels of the secondary education for the pivotal function reading plays towards effective communication skills development. When reading turns to be a hobby, the reader learns new words and phrases to use aurally, orally and scripturally. This

results from the development of an extensive umbrella or reservoir of lexicons allowing learners to convey their thoughts with clarity and sophistication. Through extensive reading, individuals are exposed to various writing and speaking styles and structures. The overall findings of the current research paper are unanimously clear that the extreme, acute and chronic deficit of communication whether oral or scriptural results from learners' lexical deficiency. As a matter of consequence, learners fail to benefit from real language immersion in an EFL setting where the taught curriculum is deprived of support. There is no effective foreign language instruction without its literature. Likewise, there is no effective foreign language immersion and literacy without sound classroom evaluations of productive skills. At the core of all these combinations is lexicalization. Lexicon has the tremendous function of unlocking the world of words. Indeed, vocabulary matters hundred per cent whether it is receptive, expressive or dormant. There is need to develop and implement a national policy of EFL reading supports taking learners from non-readers to readers and from readers to addicted readers via relevant initiatives promoting pleasurable readings. Textbooks are useful, yet they are insufficient and non-conducive for language literacy development. Limiting EFL learning to the study of a textbook is limiting learners' access to the language and jeopardizing their academic performances and careers.

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