

**Representation of Culture and Ideology through the
Power of Indigenized Language: A Linguistic Critique on
Khalid Hosseini's *and the Mountains Echoed***

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Abstract

This study attempts to explore linguistic strategies used to represent indigenous culture and ideology in Khaled Hosseini's novel *And the Mountains Echoed*. It identifies how far the ways through which language exercises its power is effective in serving postcolonial purpose. It uses qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Data was explored through exhaustive readings of the text to provide detailed analysis of the relevant linguistic strategies used in the novel. The framework used for analysis was drawn from the proposed strategies of appropriation by Kachru(1980), Ashcroft et al. (2002), and Awan and Ali (2012). The findings suggest that Hosseini exploits most of the strategies of appropriation of language in order to represent his culture and ideology. During the course of the study, a new strategy – 'Possessives' is discovered. The study demonstrates *And the Mountains Echoed* as a significant attempt at countering the hegemony of the language of power through the power of language.

Keywords: *Culture, ideology, language and power, linguistic appropriation and postcolonial discourse.*

Introduction

Increasing interest in the study of language in postcolonial backdrop has been observed in the recent years. Linguistic strategies and their role in representing indigenous culture through indigenized English language, have received considerable attention. In the present world, language has got primary importance as it helps not only in communication but also presenting, representing and even misrepresenting ideology, history and culture of a nation. With a shift from physical colonization to neo-colonialism or imperialism, the significance of sophisticated tools – language, culture, media, etc – to dominate the world came into prominence. Language is one of the most effective tools to exercise power. The power of language cannot be underestimated as it even controls life and death (Izre'el, 2001). With other sophisticated tools of colonization, language played a significant role in, first, creating neo-colonial hegemony of the colonizers over the former dependencies, and then maintaining it in the modern empire. In response to these changes, Ngugi (1986) opposed the use of the colonizer's language considering it a 'cultural bomb' (p. 3). Interestingly, the relation between power of language and the language of power is reciprocal as one supports the other in the overall process of maintaining dominance and hegemony. For instance, a control over political or economic state necessitates access to 'the language of those in control' (Eastman, 1993). Thus, language of power helps in acquiring control over political & economic situations and this control results in more power.

The relationship between language and power is worth exploring (Thomas, 2013). However, this powerful role of language to control the world is being countered with language itself. For instance, in the

modern times, a significant English influence on the regional languages can be perceived. However, at the same time a process of disempowering English influence is at work. Replacing borrowed English term with newly coined vernacular terms is an example in this context (Rajeshwari, 1986). Abrogation is a disavowal of a preconceived standard (of language) set by the colonizer and the procedure by which this dissent is used in undermining the language of power (Daroy, 1993, p. 101). It is to be comprehended as a refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of "standard" literary and aesthetic criteria of Western cultures (Klooss, 1998). In order to align the population of the colonized territory to the ideas of their masters, the colonizers are construed to (mis)use education and language. Their language was spread by them across the colonized states. Crystal (2003) considers the use of a common strategy as a political act meant to control and conquer colonies.

Various critics and writers like Leopold Senghor, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara and Frantz Fanon debated the role of language in decolonization of Africa. They suggested and practiced abrogation and appropriation in postcolonial writings to resist the language of the centre and replacing it with a nationalistic discourse. Vakunta (2011) finds such attempts at writing back to be the possibility of decolonizing the language of centre. Ngugi's rejection of English and use of his native Gikuyu is an example in this context (Yip, 2004). Ashcroft *et al* (2003) suggest that the role of language as a medium of power requires such resistant writings to seize the colonial language and subsequently replace it with native language(s). In order to resist the hegemony of English, the theorists and writers worked on establishing an equal status of their native languages. To demonstrate that English is merely one of the various varieties of 'englishes' (see for example

Kachru & Smith, 2008), they deconstructed and appropriated English language using different strategies of appropriation showing that their mother-tongue is an equally valid and authoritative voice (Becker, 1999). Their 'english' involves the rejection of the power of the metropolitan and reshaping, not only the language but also the colonial experiences. Joseph (2006) believes that languages change due to a conflict between the inherent resistance of change in a language and interference of mother tongue. The language of the centre exerts its power in terms of bringing the culture and ideology of the centre to dominate over the colonized. Zabus (2007) believes that writers consciously 'write with an accent' (p. xvi) for presenting a varying ideology through the use of abrogation and appropriation strategies of decolonization. Resultantly, the power of writings of postcolonial writers acts as a rebellion against the hegemony of colonial language. They employ some useful techniques to counter this hegemony while writing back.

[...] ex-colonized writers tend to respond to colonial legacy by writing back to the imperial center from the empire in a bid to express otherness. (Vakunta, 2011, p. 20)

In this regard, Crowley (1996) attests that the monoglossic nature of the language of centre has to be challenged such as is already evident in the writings of Joyce, Achebe, and many others, who resist the absolute control of the language of the master. The native rhetorical styles are imposed on the language of the centre considering it to be an 'alien' language which results in functional and communicative varieties of English distinct from the English of the centre. The reaction of native English to such 'deviant' communicative styles disempowers the hegemony of the language of the centre. In South Asian English for example, the text and context are nativized in order to make the text

‘meaningful’ in new situation in which it functions (Kachru, 1998, p. 43).

Thus, as far as colonialism is concerned, language has the foremost significance as it has been used by the colonizers to exploit colonial power, whereas the colonized used the power of language against colonizers. As language is the fundamental instrument of human correspondence that encourages individuals in preparing their idea in a better way (Baber, 1972; Aitchison, 1996), in the likewise manner it has various different operations (Sapir, 1033; Barber, 1972, Bakhtin, 1986; Aitchison, 2003). One of these operations is the resistance against (the power of) language itself. Ashcroft (2003) in this regard contests that there is an inclination of many writers for abrogating Standard English through the strategies of code-switching and vernacular transcription as well as appropriating ‘english’ as a discourse expressing cultural significance (p. 45-46). Various studies (e.g., Daroy, 1993; Awan & Ali, 2012) explore the strategies of textual resistance against the imperial powers of the modern age where language is being used as a power to subjugate, extending the old colonial agenda in a more sophisticated way. However, there is dearth of empirical research on the power of language and how it is resisted through ‘nativization’ of language. This article identifies the linguistic strategies used by South Asian writer Khalid Hosseini in his novel *And the Mountains Echoed* and the purposes the linguistic strategies serve for postcolonial writers. Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist who has written three novels, *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *And The Mountains Echoed* (2013) communicating a grim, conflicted and, complex but hopeful picture of his native land. The novel under study is a story of the ways multi-generational family love, hate, honour, betray and wound each other.

Objectives

This paper attempts to meet the objectives of identifying the techniques Hosseini uses in his novel *And the Mountains Echoed* and analyses how effective they are in representing the author's indigenous culture and ideology.

Significance

The present study is significant in terms of bringing into prominence that the language of power can be appropriated and made a powerful tool to carry the burden of local culture and ideology against the hegemony of the language and the culture of the powerful. It explores how Khaled Hosseini uses different strategies to appropriate English language in order to represent his culture and ideology.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial creative writers employ strategies of appropriation in their works. Ashcroft et al. (2002), Kachru (1980), and Awan and Ali (2012) analysed the postcolonial writings and listed certain strategies of appropriation of language which are mentioned in the table below.

Table 1

Strategies of Appropriation by Ashcroft et al. (2002), Kachru (1980), and Awan and Ali (2012)

Ashcroft et al. (2002)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Glossing 2. Untranslated Words 3. Interlanguage 4. Syntactic Fusion 5. Code Switching and Vernacular Transcription
Kachru (1980)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lexical innovations 2. Translation equivalence 3. Contextual redefinition 4. Rhetorical and functional styles
Awan and Ali (2012)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indigenous Discourse Markers 2. Indigenous Metonymy

Ashcroft et al. (2002) defined ‘Glossing’ as a strategy postcolonial authors occasionally use, to qualify the non-English words by adding an explanatory word or statement. ‘Un-translated words’ is another strategy of appropriating English where the author does not translate the word as its explanation may lose the impact of a local word or expression. Combining linguistic structures of two languages is called ‘Interlanguage’. In ‘Syntactic Fusion’, the writer takes the native word and applies grammatical rules of English on it. ‘Code Switching and Vernacular Transcription’ is simultaneous use of multiple languages in a written work. Kachru (1980) also identified four strategies of appropriation of language. ‘Lexical Innovations’ is a technique postcolonial writer employs mixing one lexical item of a language with the lexical item of another language. Authors sometimes use ‘Translation Equivalence’ to demonstrate the untranslatability of certain

emotions, feelings and behaviours. Kachru (1980) explains ‘Contextual Redefinition’ as employing some English terms according to its local settings or redefining them on the basis of their contextual use in local settings. Rhetorical and functional styles refer to trans-creation of native style repertoire into English. Awan and Ali (2012) also introduced two other strategies of appropriation of language: ‘Indigenous Discourse Markers’ and ‘Indigenous Metonymy’. They indicate the incapability of English expression to represent Afghan life and culture. Keeping the strategies of linguistic appropriation in the backdrop, the present study attempts to analyse how Khalid Hosseini uses different linguistic choices to resist linguistic and cultural hegemony of the centre and exercises the power of language using the language of power in *And The Mountains Echoed*.

Strategies of Appropriation in *And The Mountains Echoed*

Glossing

Glossing is an explanatory statement attached to a text. Authors use this strategy to qualify the non-English words. In the text used for this study, Hosseini uses the words *Maidansabz*(p. 2) and then glosses as *Field of green*. The writer has deliberately chosen to write *Maidansabz* to highlight that there is a difference between *Maidansabz* and *Field of green*. This particular choice of words from the local language emphasises that the language of the centre is not appropriate enough to describe the localised experience(s). In another example, the author used the word *div*(p.3) and then presented its explanation as

‘Maidansabz darken with his shadow. It was said that curved horns sprouted from its head and that coarsed black hair covered its shoulder and powerful tail. They said its eyes shone red’ (p. 3).

It seems that the purpose of glossing of the word is to convey the notion that is attached with it. The word *Div* does not convey the detailed picture as its description does. The word *div* is taken differently in eastern and western societies. In the West, the word *ghost* is used in this context which does not appropriately convey the horror as eastern *div* conveys. The writer used the description deliberately to transmit the horror of *div* to the readers.

The writer uses the word *dervish* (p. 13) and then gives its explanation as *a thin man with threadbare rags for clothing, hollow eyes and sunken temples*. *Dervish* is a Persian word which is very different from its English counterpart. The images of rags for clothing and slimness are associated with *dervish*. In the likewise manner *Taliban* (p. 124) and *mazdoor* (p.154) both are glossed in order to give a real picture of specific culture and tradition. Hosseini glossed the word *Taliban* as

‘...those sharp-faced young men with dark beards, kohl-rimmed eyes, and whips. Their cruelty and excesses have also been well documented...’(p. 124).

The word, *terrorist*, in English gives another image of the word. The word *terrorist* seems to be connected with the action whereas the word *Taliban* gives a detailed picture of the person and the action which is connected to them. *Mazdoor* in Afghani society is known as *simple labourer*. *Jihad* (p. 302) is glossed as [t]his was what *jihad* was all about, he said. *Sacrifice, sense of irony, the junta*. The writer used this word unaided on its first and second occurrences, then he glossed it on its third occurrence. It seems that he wanted to make the readers to understand the word in its context. Afterwards, he used different English words to convey the meaning of the word completely. He gives the concept *Cinema* as *where people went to watch films* (p. 35). Again it seems that the writer wants to give emphasis on people instead of

actions. The word *Cinema* is taken from the French, meaning ‘a movie hall’, whereas Hosseini gives its description *as where people went to watch films*. Here, his emphasis is on noun instead of action. It seems that the writer wanted to convey the message that in Afghani culture, they care more about people than other things. In the same manner, the writer gives English equivalence for the words like *Iftar, to break the fast after Ramadan* (p. 56), *No nang and namoos, no honour* (p. 81), *Pari. She is indeed as beautiful as a fairy* (p. 94), *Aziz, which means “beloved,” “darling,”* (p. 99). It seems that the writer wanted to convey his culture through language, therefore he used his native words and for the convenience of readers he glossed them.

Un-translated words

The use of the words such as *Naan* (p. 269), *chutney* (p. 34), *Sherbet* (p. 67), *Malida*(p. 67), *Bolani and lola kabob* (p. 97), *Daal*(p. 108), *Biryani* (p. 269), *chai* (p. 266), *Pastelli*(p. 286) are deliberately used by the writer as there is no appropriate vocabulary in English to make the readers relish the enriching flavors of the local cuisine. He did not translate the word as its explanation may lose the impact and sense of these dishes. As traditional words for the dishes express the rich culture of Afghans, the English translation for the words that are frequently used in eastern cultures, like *Tandoor* (p. 20) and *Mannar*(p. 336), is not provided for the lack of any equivalent expression in English. The word *mannar* represents the Muslim’s cultural heritage. Same is the case with musical instruments like *Shahnai*(p. 66), *Dohol*(p. 66)and *Tamboura*(p. 158). Hosseini employs words like *Inshallah* (p.165), *Mullah* (p. 21), *Salaam* (p. 165), *Burqa* (p.181),and *Mujahideen*(p. 228). These words have special relation with religion Islam and their English translation does not give the same essence.

The writer used the words *bandanna* (p.180), a Hindi word for a large handkerchief. English equivalent of this word does not give the same meaning. *Sahib* (p. 241), *Aziz* (p. 98) and *Kaka* (p. 102) are culture specific words used for showing relation and respect.

Syntactic fusion

In syntactic fusion, the writer takes a native word and applies grammatical rules of English on it. Hosseini constructs plurals of local words through application of English plural formation rules, for example: *Jinns*(p.346), *Garis*(p.34), *Sultans and jinns*(p. 31), *Dervishes* (p.31), *Bazaars* (p.42), *Hookahs* (p.63), *Dhotis* (p.315), *Pajamas*(p.335), *Bismillahs*(p.345), *Divs*(p.346). In these words, the writer fuses the lexical items of one language to the syntax of another language. Through the expressions like *Thank yous and Hellos and How are yous*(p. 223), the writer wants to convey the message that two cultures can be brought together.

Code switching

A multilingual writer frequently employs code switching, a simultaneous use of multiple languages in a conversation. To have an effective style, s/he fuses different languages i.e., Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Pashto, French and English, for example. It is interesting to note that Hosseini does not attempt to counter the hegemony of English with the hegemony of his own indigenous language(s); rather, he attempts to reduce domination of any one language (of power) which is English in the present case. Thus, the author not only code switches English with his indigenous language(s) but with French also.

“Parfois je pense que tu es mon seul ami, Nabi.” I blinked. “It means ‘Sometimes I think you are my only friend.’” (p. 99)Julien

calls her La che`vre, because of her goat like nest of chin hairs.(p. 176)., “It was a physical relationship, really,” he said.
 ‘*C’etait completementsexuelle.*(p. 190)

Lexical innovations

This technique is introduced by Kachru(1980). In this technique the writer fuses one lexical item of a language to the lexical item of another language. They have the same meanings and may be used as an alternative to each other, for example *Shorwa soup* (p. 47), *Iftar dinner* (p. 52), *Hookah’s vase* (p.64), *naswar tobacco* (p.64), *Pajama pants* (p. 72).

The second form is hybridized item in which one element specifies the meaning of another element: *Bakhsheesh bundle* (p. 74), *TV show (Alf)* (p. 347), *Non-halal burger* (p.363). In ‘Non-halal Burger’, non-halal specifies the type of burger. It seems that the writer uses the hybridized word in order to convey the message to the readers clearly and without any ambiguity. Moreover, the writer does not appear to trust that the linguistic constructs of one language, i.e., English, can genuinely pass on the ideas linked with another culture.

Translation equivalence

The purpose of translation equivalence is to familiarize the readers with the native beliefs and setting.

Idris knows he has been cornered (p. 154)

Here ‘cornered’ means that now Idris has no work to do and he is no more useful. It is a commonly used Afghan expression. The author used the word *cornered* instead of dismissed. Here the readers have to look into the context in which that very expression has been used.

[...] a forty-day mourning period (p.6)

The writer not only used translation equivalence but also depicts the ritual of mourning through its use. In western world, there is no concept of forty day mourning period. Further, the expressions like ‘Bullets are flying everywhere’ (p. 271), ‘My feet falling asleep’ (363), ‘Blew dust in the eyes’ (p. 2), ‘My heart kicked violently’ (p. 379) are very much nativized expressions of the characters. In order to present the true picture of the culture, the author uses the language according to the real setting.

[...] a river that swelled and swelled with each passing day (p. 6)

Heavy swollen raindrops (p.14)

Here the word *swelled* gives the meaning of increased and filled. The author has used his cultural expressions to express the ideas. The author used traditional expressions through the language of ‘others’.

Contextual redefinition

The author sometimes uses a term according to its settings or redefines some terms based on the contextual use in local settings. Such terms include kinship patterns and names of relations which in Afghanistan are very different from western societies, for example, *Bibi sahib* (p. 85) used for a respectable woman, *Kaka* (p. 102), for uncle and *Baba jan* (p. 242) for father. These native words have their own essence of respect and love.

Indigenous discourse markers

Discourse markers as part of a specific dialect are to a great extent particular to that very dialect and the general public who use them. While they fulfil different needs in a dialect, their utilization in some different language(s) is important. In the novel under

consideration, the use of indigenous markers affirms their specificity to the local setting of the novel. For example:

“Oui,allo?” she says into the receiver (p. 177), Oh la la (p. 203), “Bah oui,” Maman said (p. 187), “Ah, merde!” Maman says now (p. 193), “Oui,” She says into the phone (187), “Ah, bon?” ,Aaaah! (p. 383).

Indigenous metonymy

The gap between the expressive capacity of English language and everyday expressions in Afghani culture is evident through the use of indigenous metonymy. To understand the expression, a thorough study of Afghan’s culture is compulsory.

Your father is a river to his people. (p. 249)

While using such expressions, the author refrains from supplying their English counterparts as they would be insufficient to pass on the general message and its social significance.

In addition to the above mentioned strategies (as introduced by Ashcroft et al., 2002; Kachru, 1980; Safeer & Ali, 2012), one more technique of appropriation has been discovered by the researchers during the course of this study.

Possessive.

It is observed during the analysis of the current text that postcolonial writers use this technique to express one’s possessiveness.

We Afghans love our poetry (p. 97)

Instead of saying that Afghans love their poetry, the writer uses the words *we* and *our*, to express his affiliation with his culture and tradition.

Conclusion

The study reveals Khalid Hosseini, an Afghan writer educated and brought up in the West, as a postcolonial writer who chooses to appropriate English with his indigenous language. The structure of English language, its words, sentences and expressions are appropriated by the structures and expressions of the indigenous culture to glorify the local culture and people. Ashcroft et al.(2002), Kachru(1980),and Awan& Ali (2012) devised eleven strategies of appropriation. Khalid Hosseini has used nine of them in this novel, including Glossing, Untranslated Words, Syntactic Fusion, Code-switching , vernacular transcription, Lexical innovation, Translation Equivalence, Contextual redefinition, Indigenous Discourse Markers and Indigenous Metonymy. However, there is no example of inter-language, rhetorical and functional style. Further, according to researchers, one new strategy, *Possessive*, has also been employed by Hosseini. The paper shows that where *And the Mountains Echoed* demonstrates the inability of one (English) language to present diverse cultural experience(s), it is also a noteworthy endeavour to liberate and secure the language and culture of Afghanistan from the hegemony of the language and culture(s) of the dominant nations through the appropriation of the language of the neo-colonialism.

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