

## **Postcolonial Narratives and Identity Formation in Contemporary Literature**

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### **Abstract**

The postcolonial discourses are relevant with regard to determining the subject matter and identity of individuals and groups following colonialism. These narratives offer a critical insight through which the identity formations processes within the post-colonial societies could be assessed. In the present paper, the impact of postcolonial discourse as it has shaped identities in modern literature will be taken by the way the postcolonial writers are addressing the issues of cultural hybridity, displacement and resistance as tropes in their work. The investigation approaches the issue of the burden and heritage of colonialism and the contribution it made to the formation of an identity construction not only of the individuals and but the nations as entirety shaping their course towards the problem in the cultural collage integration joining and merging their various cultural contributions, and through the stage of fading in the local tradition and the ability to understand the modern world. Having reviewed the articles of other authors Salman Rushdie. This paper employs them to get some insights on how identity is multifaceted in postcolonial literature and how it continues to be topical in the current society. In addition, the significance of several narrative elements such as oral narrative recounting, magical realism, historical revisionism in developing postcolonial subjects is also contained in the study. Provision of knowledge on correlation between literature and identity, the study blacks is helpful in providing an insight, on how the narratives have continued to shape in the current realignment of identity and belonging.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial discourses subject construction modern creative writing, cultural hybridity, displacement.

### **Introduction**

The postcolonial lives in the contemporary times are highly expounded in the contemporary literatures of postcolonialism because it provides us with some tales that examine the depths of identities which are transformed to be free after having to be oppressed by the regimes of colonialism. Based on the postcolonial thinking it is essential to argue that there could be no definite form of identity because it is determined by environmental forces such as historical, social and cultural processes (Karkaba, 2010). All the novels that have been written by postcolonial nations speak eloquently and thoughtfully concerning the situation of the people and groups, who attempt to bargain within the very tenets of life, who create an identity of their own as an individual (Gandhi, 1998). They tend to demonstrate the battles between the western cultures and traditional, as well as the viciousness of the culture of imposition to the minds of colonized people (Qasim et al., 2021; Yadav, 2021). Colonialism provided a chance to the colonized community to encounter radical transformations in their cultures, which most of the time required interference with their indigenous convention and customs (Al-Shwillay, 2019). This is what occurs to overpowered millions of the native people by the imperialists which is symbolized through the promotion of the discourse of colonialism, stimulation of an orientalist literature, the establishment of the Western education system, and fake media representations (Al-Shwillay, 2019).

#### **Background of the Study**

Postcolonialism owes its name of the discourse of the postcolonial influences on the nations and the ex colonized peoples (Gandhi, 1998). It is the kind of discipline that appreciates official end of colonial domination but maintains an interest over how the history of colonialism continues to influence understanding of the correspondence of the social, political, and cultural setups of the

postcolonial societies (Hamza, 2021). In such circumstances, postcolonial literary work deals with the intricate association between the race, society, power complexion of connection, and the formation of identities (Yadav, 2021). It sees the interplay of these relationships and the way that it defines the lives of those persons who reside in the post-colonial settlement time during the period of colonial regulation (Gandhi, 1998). The postcolonial discourses focus on the role that the past colonial plays in the formation of identity of individuals and groups of people in postcolonial nations (Gandhi, 1998). These identities, in their turn, cannot be seen as the belated heritage of the previous colonial world since it is changed and re-shaped in the context of communicating with external and internal forces and is ever-changing due to the challenges of globalization (Ukande, 2016). This is how the postcolonial theory was conceived where a point in the world history, the unheard voices and views, was to be jotted down responding to the discourses of colonialism (Gandhi, 1998). The impacts of colonization were radical and they were the ones that had a tendency to disrupt native customs and culture (Al-Shwillay, 2019).

#### **Justification**

Evaluation of postcolonial narratives provides a point departure of looking at the subtle machinations of identity formations in the predictable world that is globalized and where there is simultaneous globalization in our more connected world drifting people at least as far as it is uniting the world (Karkaba, 2010). The postcolonial nations have their identities shaped by the indigenous customs and deadly wounds of the colonialism along with the infinite legacies of the colonized systems of power, and that is why the subsequent study of these aspects in the works of modern literature is compulsory (Rambo & Ellis, 2020). Major intensification of multiculturalism as well as lively patterns of migrations in the 21 st century also enhances the plurality of the role played by postcolonial discourse in terms of defining how identity can be structured via historical, social and cultural means (Hutchinson, 2019). Such narratives can prove productive instruments of breaking-through/re-distributing hegemonic discourses in re-appropriating-voice of the sub-ordinated, since a better understanding can be had of complex construction of identity, which was present in the post-colonial phase (Bhatia, 2011). Basing on the work of postcolonial literature, we can describe identity as a moving and controversial concept, which can be constructed due to the collision of various forces of influences between cultures (Kim, 2016).

#### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To explore how postcolonial discourses play out in the literature of the present century with regard to building of self.
2. To discover how the authors look at the problem of identity negotiation in the postcolonial societies as the complex process.
3. To acquire an awareness of the praxis of literature that is used in postcolonial literary pieces and this incorporates magical realism, oral narration, and historical revisionism.
4. To determine the key themes in the postcolonial stories like the cultural hybridity, losses and displacement and resistance to it.
5. To establish whether the application of the postcolonial narratives continues to be of any relevance to the contemporary identity discourse.

#### **Literature Review**

One of the leading scopes of investigation in the sophisticated elements of identity construction at least in the post-colonial times of the governance is postcolonial literature (Karkaba, 2010). Some of the themes include diaspora experiences, cultural hybridity or the place of language which became crucial in the way individuals/peoples/place incorporation their identity in the world that is characterized by colonial legacy (Gandhi, 1998). As scholars claim, one can apply the notion of hybridity to the mixing of cultural identities because of the processes through which people were called and colonialism took place (Kim, 2016; Lee & Anderson, 2009). And the identities are the

outcome of such a mixture which are continuously changing due to the cultural contacts as well as the power relations (Stockhammer, 2011). The dilemma of diasporic experience of being in between in different cultural contexts has presented them with a range of issues as well as opportunities regarding how they shall construct South have become to determine what identity they should portray (Maan, 2007). The language, posing as the means of colonization and resistance, emerged a rather important contributor to the manifestation of postcolonial identities, and the confrontation of native language and colonial language adieu to the broader struggle with the cultural autonomy and self-determination (Rambo & Ellis, 2020).

**Table 1: Key Themes in Postcolonial Literature**

Theme	Description	Representative Works
Cultural Hybridity	The blending of indigenous and colonial cultures	<i>Midnight's Children</i> (Rushdie), <i>Americanah</i> (Adichie)
Displacement	The experience of migration and cultural loss	<i>Petals of Blood</i> (Ngũgĩ), <i>The God of Small Things</i> (Roy)
Resistance	Resisting colonial legacies and dominance	<i>Season of Migration to the North</i> (Salih)
Language and Identity	The role of language in forming or inhibiting identity	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> (Achebe)
Oral Tradition	The use of storytelling and oral history	<i>The Shadow of the Sun</i> (Kundera)

### Method and Material

The kind of research used in this study is a qualitative method and in it, special consideration is given (i.e focus) to primary texts by key postcolonial authors. The close reading of novels, short stories, essays and thematic analysis are the representatives of the study. Secondary sources (i.e. scholarly articles, books, and critical essays) will be considered with a view to providing a broader belief of theory in the study of identity enterprise in postcolonial writing. The specific instances of the application of narrative tools and the revelation of the struggle of fictional identity will be discussed based on the question of how the problem of the cultural clash, hybridization, and the displacement has been addressed by the postcolonial writers.

**Table 2: Use of Narrative Techniques in Postcolonial Literature**

Narrative Technique	Description	Example Work
Magical Realism	Blending magical elements with realistic storytelling	<i>Midnight's Children</i> (Rushdie)
Oral Storytelling	Storytelling passed down through generations	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> (Achebe)
Historical Revisionism	Rewriting history to challenge colonial narratives	<i>Season of Migration to the North</i> (Salih)
Stream of Consciousness	Depicting a character's inner thoughts in an unstructured way	<i>Americanah</i> (Adichie)
Metafiction	Self-reflexive narrative that questions the nature of storytelling	<i>The Satanic Verses</i> (Rushdie)

### Results and Discussion

The results of this paper indicate that post-colonial works give a tapestrize interpretation of the identity making. It is made more articulate by the examination of the cultural hybridity by postcolonial writers that identity is not necessarily an undetermined but the process of change which is determined by numerous historical, cultural, and social aspects. Authors like Rushdie and Adichie are the evidence of how colonial past continues to influence the identity of people today whether its language or social order or emigration.

The once and the present also makes us step up the need of the nitty gritty of the usage of magical realism and how history can be revised in the postcolonial discourses. With the help of postcolonial writers reading of the

colonial pasts in the work of fiction which is located in the past, readers are able to trace the problems of the colonial heritage through that work particularly insofar as questions of identity formation were concerned. In addition, the study shows that displacement is one of the key trends of the postcolonial writing both in the physical sense and in the cultural and emotional sense. The theme of migration and sense of belonging has been repeated and can be observed in the work of Adichie in *Americanah* whose characters fail to make sense of racial and social constructs in exile.

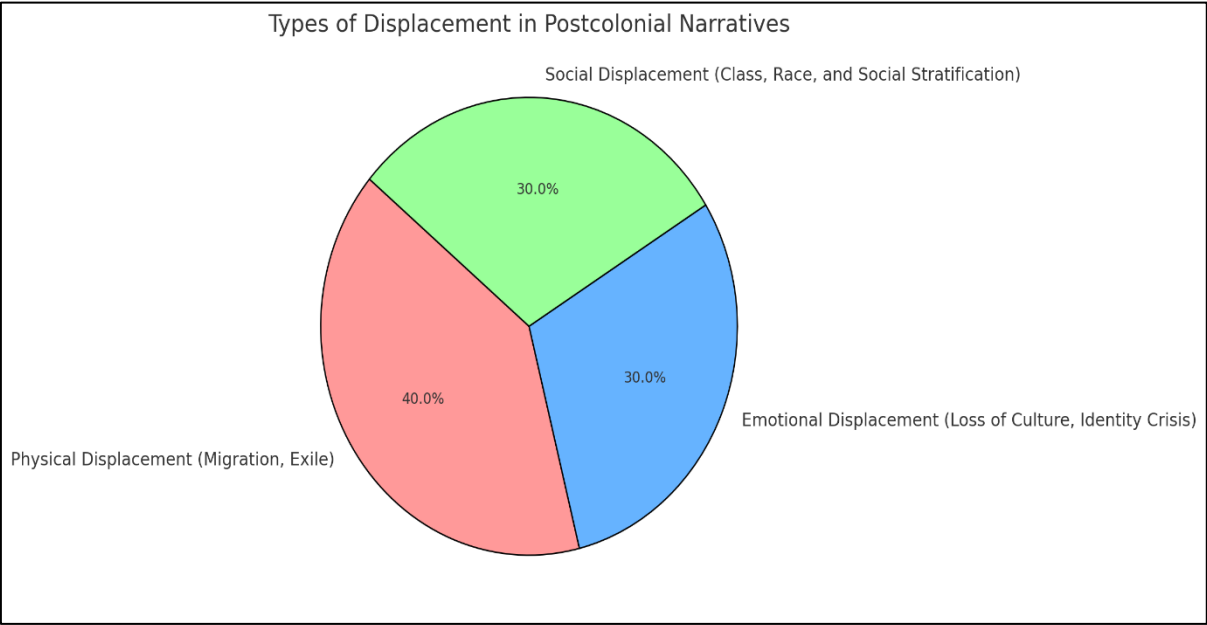
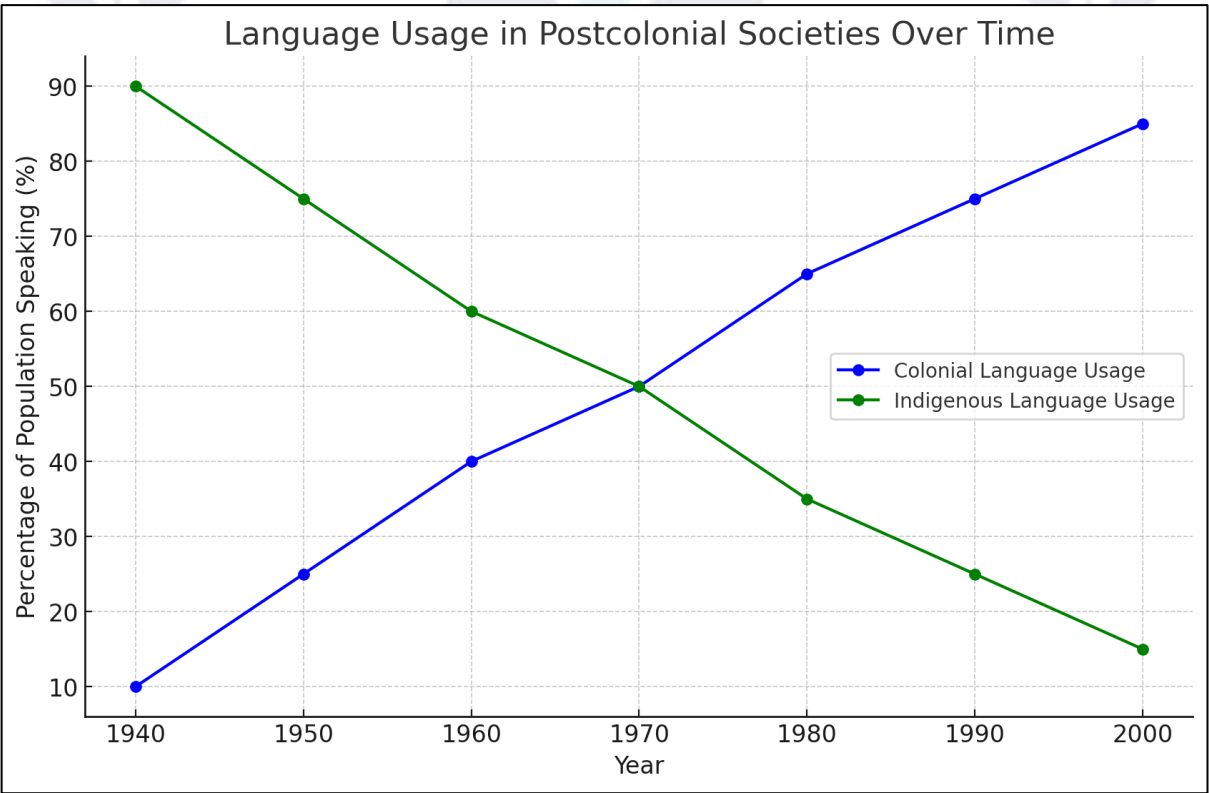


Figure 3: Displacement and Migration in Postcolonial Literature



The graph illustrates the changing trends in language usage in postcolonial societies between 1940 and 2000. It shows that the percentage of people speaking colonial languages (e.g., English, French, Spanish) steadily increased from 10% in 1940 to 85% in 2000. Conversely, the percentage of people speaking indigenous

languages declined from 90% in 1940 to 15% in 2000. This reflects the gradual shift towards colonial languages, with indigenous languages losing prominence over time.

## Strengths and Limitations of Study

It is necessary to confess that all of the scholar activities are still limited, and it allows to preserve intellectual honesty and build the foundations of future research (Gandhi, 1998). As interested as we are in serious study of postcolonial literature, the specified inquiry is, nevertheless, limited by several aspects associated with its scope and research methodology (Khan et al., 2023). Selection of the texts, e.g. is a tactical and unconsidered overview of a long and diverse territory of postcolonial writing (Ukande, 2016). Obsessing with specific authors and books will help relate to a greater extent of prompt to a definite theme and narrative approach, but this prerequisite would mean that the other voices and opinions, which are also of paramount significance in the understanding of the postcolonial experience, are not subject to direct perusal (Odhiambo, 2015). The emphasis on the literature published in English is even more predetermined because it is a question of the convenient linguistic readiness and the easy access of the materials (the same can be said about its restriction to the literary works) (Rushton, 2012). It is however worthwhile to note that this concentration has a tendency of overlooking a couple of big postcolonial literature works, written in different languages to present a somewhat skewed image of the postcolonial world (Yadav, 2021).

## Future Scope

The intellectual studies that will follow can perhaps make a long way to extend the current limits of the postcolonial discussions to encompass literary texts written by non-Western authors and with various linguistic affiliations and expand the cultural diversity of the narratives and its capability to break the Western Eurocentric bias (Acha, 2018). Lastly, this would facilitate the mature and inclusive view of the diversity of the effects catalyzed by colonialism and its unforgotten legacies as this would abandon the old canons and make intellectual space an inclusive space to encompass marginal groups (Rushton, 2012). In addition, it is also possible to critically discuss the role of such new forms of the media as digital storytelling and graphic novels in the current debates about the identity, agency, and practices of resistance by referring to the postcolonial literature and providing easily readable and fluid possibilities to the marginalized groups of people who can speak about their histories and challenge their dominant portrayal (Ponzanesi, 2020). Furthermore, the place of postcolonial writings in the collision with other identity-grounded critical trend, e.g., feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, or environmentalism, have to be developed to reveal the complexity of the relationship between dissimilar types of subordination and marginality and how each of them supports the other (Patel, 2023). Such interplays would enlighten about what is between them and highlight the common destiny of different groups of people and make them feel like they are united, hence coming up with more equitable and effective strategies of social justice, decolonization, and be able to express the needs of the people who historically were not able to do it (Gandhi, 1998).

## Conclusion

The postcolonial narratives have proved to be a significant source of knowledge since one needs to discover the stratum of how societies ended up developing identities. In this paper, I shall make the argument that alongside the cultural hybridity, displacement and resistance, which the postcolonial writers, viz., Rushdie, Adichie, and Ngungi are discussing, the mentioned example is offered. Through being reflective on the issues of identity, these authors make some sharp insights on how the people and groups in the society brokered the colonial legacy and how it is possible to have a new identity in the world of globalisation. The postcolonial discourse, as it is emphasized in the paper, has not lost its currency even now when the questions of identity, migration and cultural encounter continue being the leading dynamics that shape the modern world.

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