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“Language Politics and Multilingualism in Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*: English and Igbo as symbolic capital and markers of identity, power and belonging in postcolonial Nigeria”

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
PART I: Theoretical Framework.....	4
1. Power.....	4
2. Bourdieu – Language and symbolic power	5
2.1. Theory of capital	5
2.2. Symbolic power	9
2.3. Habitus and linguistic habitus	10
2.4. The language market and legitimate language.....	12
2.5. Acceptability	13
2.6. Social classes and language	15
3. Determining factors for language choice in interpersonal interactions.....	17
3.1. Fishman’s model of language choice.....	18
3.2. Communication Accommodation Theory.....	20
3.3. Elite closure.....	22
3.4. Codeswitching.....	24
4. Identity and language	26
4.1. General considerations	26
4.2. Social Identity Theory.....	28
4.2.1. Social identity and personal identity	28
4.2.2. Social comparison	30
4.2.3. Categorization	31
4.2.4. Strategies to improve social identity	34
4.3. Language and ethnic identity	35
5. The Nigerian civil war: Sociolinguistic and historical context	37
5.1. Historical context	37
5.1.1. Colonisation	38
5.1.2. Political developments after independence.....	39
5.1.3. The Nigerian civil war	42
5.2. Sociolinguistic context.....	43
5.2.1. The status of English in Nigeria.....	45
5.2.2. Attitudes towards indigenous languages in Nigeria.....	46
PART II: Analysis.....	50
1. Collective level.....	50
1.1. Domains of English and Igbo use	50
1.1.1. The dominant position of English in domains of power	50
1.1.2. The connection between the Igbo language and Igbo culture.....	53
1.2. The connection between English proficiency, whiteness and class.....	56
1.3. The status and power of English and Received Pronunciation (RP)	58
1.3.1. Positive attitudes towards RP.....	58
1.3.2. Preferential treatment due to RP	59
1.3.3. Negative attitudes towards RP	61
1.4. The symbolic power of languages in life-threatening situations	62
1.4.1. Arzize’s proficiency in Yoruba saves her and Olanna’s lives	62
1.4.2. Mohammed’s proficiency in Hausa saves his and Olanna’s lives	65
1.4.3. Richard’s whiteness hides his Igbo proficiency and his identification with the Igbo community	67

2. Interpersonal level	70
2.1. Language alternation and codeswitching	70
2.2. Language choice and emotional distance and proximity	73
2.2.1. Odenigbo uses an Igbo term of endearment to show his affection to Olanna.....	73
2.2.2. Olanna uses English to create distance to her parents.....	74
2.2.3. Language and emotions in Olanna's and Kainene's twin relationship	76
2.2.4. Kainene uses English to create distance to Major Udodoi Ekechi.....	78
2.2.5. Odenigbo uses English to give instructions in a stressful situation	78
2.2.6. Ugwu starts speaking Igbo with Olanna due to their increased intimacy	79
3. Individual level.....	80
3.1. Ugwu's positive attitudes towards English.....	81
3.2. Ugwu's use of English to increase his status	84
3.3. The connection between Igbo proficiency and Richard's social identity	86
3.3.1. Misrecognition of Richard's Igbo proficiency and identification with the Igbo community	87
3.3.2. Recognition of Richard's Igbo proficiency and identification with the Igbo community	89
3.3.3. Richard's "Igbo speaking whiteness" is not noticed.....	91
Conclusion	93
Bibliography	95
Appendix.....	101

Introduction

Nigeria is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries in the world. The country is home to more than 200 million people, between 250 and 400 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages (The World Factbook, Metz xvi). The three largest ethnic groups are the Hausas, the Yorubas and the Igbos and the three main indigenous languages, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, are associated with these groups, respectively. These three indigenous languages are, besides English, the official languages of the country. Considering this complex sociolinguistic context, the question arises what status and functions English and the indigenous languages have in postcolonial Nigeria.

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, published in 2006, critically addresses many of the challenges of postcolonial Nigeria that are related to the aftermath of independence and the complexity of the country's sociolinguistic situation. The novel, which is set at the beginning of the postcolonial era in the early 1960s and in the late 1960s, before and then during the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), focuses on the ethnically motivated power struggles that led to the outbreak of the civil war and the impact the war has on the main characters and their relationships. The multilingual and multi-ethnic setting of the novel is frequently addressed in the narration and, although the novel is written in English, it features many words and phrases in Igbo and, to a lesser extent, other indigenous languages.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the use of different languages, particularly English and Igbo, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Based on Bourdieu's notion of language as a form of capital and as symbolic power, I argue that in the novel language serves not only communicative purposes but is also a form of symbolic capital that can be used to obtain a certain benefit. Since the novel is set in a multilingual and multi-ethnic country and deals with ethnically-based violence during the Nigerian civil war, I am interested in exploring how the novel represents the relationship between different languages and social, cultural or ethnic identity. Consequently, in this thesis I will attempt to answer the following research questions: Which languages are used in which domains and what conclusions can be drawn from this? What determines the characters' attitudes towards different languages and their use of languages in different situations? What effects or consequences does the use of a language have in different situations

for the characters? How does the novel explore the connection between language proficiency and social, cultural or ethnic identity?

This thesis is divided into two parts: the theoretical framework (part one) and the analysis of the novel (part two). The analysis of the novel is based on a theoretical framework that consists of a combination of cultural, sociolinguistic and socio-psychological concepts. Since notions of power are at the centre of my thesis, in the first chapter of the theory part I will provide a definition of power and briefly address the impact of power on relationships. In the second chapter I will discuss Bourdieu's theory of capital with a special emphasis on his notion of language as cultural capital and language as symbolic power. Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power forms the centre of my theoretical framework and is an essential tool for the analysis of the novel. But often it is necessary to combine these theoretical concepts with other theories to determine what motivates characters' language choices. Therefore, in the third chapter of the theory part I will discuss Fishman's model of language choice, *Communication Accommodation Theory* (Giles and associates), and Meyers-Scotton's theory of *elite closure* and *codeswitching*. The selection of these theoretical concepts reflects the complexity of many communicative encounters in which speakers' language choices are often determined by a combination of sociolinguistic and psychological factors. Since in my analysis I aim to provide insights into the connection between the characters' language choices and their social, cultural or ethnic identity, in the fourth chapter of the theory part, I will discuss the connection between language and identity. For this purpose, I will provide a brief definition of identity and discuss relevant insights of *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel and Turner). Finally, in the fifth chapter I will provide a concise overview over the sociolinguistic situation of Nigeria and I will explore the historical context of the Nigerian civil war.

In my analysis of *Half of a Yellow Sun* I will focus on the function of language as a powerful form of capital on several levels, namely, on the *collective*, *interpersonal* and *individual* level. The analysis of the novel is structured according to these levels. Concerning the *collective* level, in the first chapter of the analysis, I will investigate the status and symbolic power of different languages in different domains and situations. Based on these findings, I aim to explore how the status and functions of languages correlate with the characters' attitudes towards different languages. In the second chapter, which focuses on the *interpersonal* level, I will examine the influence of different languages on the dynamics and the quality of interpersonal relationships. The aim is to find out which factors determine the language choices of characters in different

situations and which consequences using specific language has for the speakers. Finally, in the third chapter, focusing on the *individual* level, I am interested in the motivations of characters to learn languages and I will investigate the connection between language proficiency and a character's identification with a social, cultural or ethnic group.

PART I: Theoretical Framework

1. Power

In the analysis part of this thesis the impact of power structures on the relationship between individuals and ethnic groups is an important factor. Correspondingly, power plays a central role in the majority of the theoretical frameworks that are going to be discussed in the theory part of this thesis. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly outline the impact of power on relationships and to define what is meant when discussing power in this thesis.

Relationships between individuals and groups in which power (differentials) are a defining feature are characterized by their “asymmetrical nature” (Meyers-Scotton, *Codeswitching* 73). The question is how are these power asymmetries produced? Which factors determine an individual’s potential power? According to Meyers-Scotton, whether and how much power a person has in an interaction depends on their “sociolinguistic profiles”. Participants with the “‘right’ attributes (e.g. a high level of formal education, membership in the ‘right’ ethnic group, practitioners in the ‘right’ occupations, males rather than females, etc.)” usually have more power in communicative interactions (*Codeswitching* 73). What Meyers-Scotton calls the “right attributes” corresponds to what Fishman summarizes as the “large scale societal biases (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity or religion)” which he considers to be more relevant than “more nearly individual predictors such as attitudes, aspirations, interests and goals” (*More* 9-10). But what, exactly, is ‘power’?

The main problem that arises when attempting to define power is that various kinds of power exist. Fishman lists the following types of power: “physical strength, monetary power or the possession of items easily converted, recognized and accepted as legal tender, natural resources (coal, iron, oil, clean air and water), military power, social status, authority [...], social approval, legal power, brain power, and, last but not least, manpower and firepower” (*More* 5). Due to this extreme diversity of power forms, Fishman concludes that the following rather simple definition might be a workable solution which shall also suffice for this thesis: power is the “control over scarce resources, i.e. resources that are not available equally nor to the degrees that they are desired by the various parties to any interaction” (*More* 5). However, Fishman admits that a pitfall of this definition is that it might shift the focus to “material and easily quantifiable resources” (such as economic capital, property, etc.) despite the existence of a

variety of other forms of (non-material) powerful resources (*More* 6). Döring agrees with Fishman when he argues that “[t]here are situations where power seems to be immediately, almost visibly, manifest [...] [b]ut other forms of power are just as relevant, even if they are not immediately visible or observable in direct ways” (Döring 21).

This notion of power is based on Michael Foucault’s view that “[p]ower is implicit within everyday social practices which are pervasively distributed at every level in all domains of social life, and are constantly engaged in” (Fairclough 50). Döring explains that “[t]his suggests that ‘power’ should not be understood as a matter of physical violence only but of language, of everyday practices, routine business and habits” (22). In fact, Foucault’s notion of “the nature of power in modern societies [...] places discourse and language at the heart of social practices and processes” (Fairclough 49-50). In this context, the term “discourse” refers to the “combination of the linguistic and pragmatic means of power by which social control is enacted” (Döring 22). This notion of power is closely related to Bourdieu’s theory of capital which discusses in detail how a variety of resources, including language, can function as forms of power.

2. Bourdieu – Language and symbolic power

2.1. Theory of capital

A central concept in Bourdieu’s theoretical framework is his notion of ‘capital’. He distinguishes between three fundamental types of capital: *economic* capital, *cultural* capital and *social* capital. The relationship between the different forms of capital will be continuously addressed but becomes especially apparent in the last part of this section, which is concerned with the convertibility of the different types of capital.

Economic capital is capital which “is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights” (*Forms* 47). *Cultural* capital is “convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications” (*Forms* 47). Bourdieu further differentiates between 3 forms of cultural capital: the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalized state.

In the *embodied* state, cultural capital takes the form of “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (*Forms* 47), such as education and language skills. Since in its fundamental state

cultural capital is “linked to the body and presupposes embodiment” the acquisition of this form requires embodiment through “*Bildung* [sic]” (*Forms* 48). This is a time-consuming process and cannot be done by anybody else (“at second hand”) but requires the individual’s investment of his/her personal time and energy. Since embodied cultural capital needs to be acquired personally, the direct transmission or inheritance of embodied cultural capital (other than, for example, property rights and money) is not possible (*Forms* 48). It is important to note that the variable *time*, which is necessary for the acquisition of embodied capital, is directly linked to economic capital. Only families with sufficient financial resources can afford the extended education of their children since this not only requires financial resources for tuition fees, learning material etc. but also time in which the children are not (yet) able to provide for themselves (*Forms* 49-50).

To explain the connection between an extended education and the embodiment of cultural capital, which includes linguistic capital, a brief overview of the function of the school is necessary. Bourdieu argues that the school has an extremely powerful role because “the school [...] imposes the legitimate forms of discourse and the idea that a discourse should be recognized if and only if it conforms to the legitimate norms” (*Economics* 650). Bourdieu even goes so far as to claim that the school “has a monopoly over [...] the reproduction of the market on which the value of linguistic competence depends, in other words its capacity to function as linguistic capital” (*Economics* 652). Simply put, the medium of instruction and the foreign languages that are taught at schools become recognized as the legitimate language (see section 2.4. for a definition of ‘legitimate language’). People who, through an extended education, have become proficient in the legitimate language are at an advantage because they have embodied the cultural capital that is required to attain symbolic or material profit in all domains of power, such as academia, politics and the media, since these are dominated by the legitimate language (*Language* 70-71). However, the extent of embodied capital, including the level of proficiency in the legitimate linguistic form, which an individual can achieve through schooling “depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family” (*Forms* 48). In the case of language, those children who start to acquire the legitimate language in the domestic domain, which mainly applies to children of the elite or upper class have a decisive advantage over those children whose family language is not the legitimate language (*Economics* 659).

The second form of cultural capital is the *objectified* state which Bourdieu defines as “cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.)” (*Forms* 47) and “material

objects and media, such as writing, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc.” (*Forms* 50). The existence of this form of capital is invariably dependent on the interrelationship with a corresponding embodied capital and is, therefore, two-dimensional: there is always a material as well as a symbolic side to objectified capital. The material side of objectified capital, for example a machine or a painting, is easily transmissible. With the necessary economic capital available it is rather easy to purchase a machine or a painting. What is not easily transmissible is the symbolic side of objectified capital, namely the skills, knowledge and competences necessary for the use of that machine or for the appropriate appreciation of that piece of art (*Forms* 50).

Finally, the third form of cultural capital is the *institutionalized* state. The most common example of institutionalized capital are academic qualifications. By acquiring an academic degree, a person’s skills and knowledge – embodied cultural capital – receive official, objective and long-lasting recognition. Other than autodidacts who have similar abilities but lack what Bourdieu describes as the “performative magic of the power of instituting”, for owners of cultural capital in the institutionalized state there is no need to permanently demonstrate their abilities since these are guaranteed by the official degree (*Forms* 51). Through the institutionalization of knowledge and skills it is also much easier, for example for employers, to identify persons with the required qualifications and therefore also to find a substitute for someone with a similar, officially confirmed, skillset (*Forms* 51).

The third type of capital, is *social* capital. Social capital is comprised of all available social contacts and networks as well the membership in groups (*Forms* 51). The bigger a person’s social network and the higher the capital owned by one’s social contacts or networks is, the more powerful a person’s social capital. This type of capital requires continuous investment and care to ensure the maintenance of social connections and the related social capital. A common investment strategy to establish or reproduce social networks are symbolic exchanges (e.g. a gift, words) through which whatever has been exchanged becomes a “sign of [...] mutual recognition and the recognition of group membership” which ultimately “reproduces the group” and secures the continuing availability of the social capital connected to that group, network or social connection (*Forms* 52).

The different forms of capital can be converted into other forms of capital. Bourdieu argues that “economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital” because they are a “transformed,

disguised form of economic capital” (*Forms* 54). But the necessary “effort of transformation”, particularly time, and correspondingly the degree of concealment of the connection to economic capital varies considerably (*Forms* 54-55). For example, certain goods and services can be acquired instantaneously in exchange for economic capital. In such cases the connection to economic capital is not disguised but transparent. By contrast, embodied cultural capital, including language skills, conceals its connection to economic capital especially well. Another example of the disguised transformation of economic capital into another capital form is the attainment of a certain job or position that requires social capital which, unless the relevant social connections and networks already exist, need to be developed over time (*Forms* 54). Bourdieu argues that “these transformed, disguised forms of economic capital [...] produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal (not least from their possessors) that economic capital is at [...] the root of their effects” (*Forms* 54). Hence, all forms of capital are based on economic capital but the less apparent this is, the higher the potential power of a capital form.

In order to elucidate why it is so significant that certain capital forms conceal that they are based on economic capital some further explanation is required. Bourdieu argues that the disguised reproduction of economic capital is a “legitimation strategy aimed at consecrating both an exclusive appropriation and its reproduction” (*Forms* 55). Simply put, it is a strategy that helps the dominant class to legitimate the maintenance and transmission of their privileges. Therefore, the more “the official, direct transmission of power and privileges” is regulated and restrained, for example through laws of inheritance, the more “holders of capital have an [...] interest in resorting to reproduction strategies capable of ensuring better-disguised transmission, by exploiting the convertibility of the types of capital” (*Forms* 55). In this context, it is important to remember that, as has been discussed above, the embodiment of cultural capital is based on the investment of economic capital and time, which itself requires money. In fact, Bourdieu argues that “the link between economic and cultural capital is established through the mediation of the time needed for acquisition” (*Forms* 49-50) because “the transformation of economic capital into cultural capital presupposes an expenditure of time that is possible by possession of economic capital” (*Forms* 54). Only children from families with sufficient economic capital have the necessary capital to “delay entry into the labour market through prolonged schooling” (*Forms* 54). Since the access to domains of power is regulated through the possession of embodied cultural capital, which, in fact, is based on economic

capital, the privileges of those people who possess the necessary economic capital for the acquisition of the relevant embodied cultural capital is more concealed.

2.2. Symbolic power

Bourdieu's theory of capital is relevant for this thesis because he considers language to be a form of cultural capital (in the embodied state) and symbolic power. In the introductory chapter of Bourdieu's *Language and symbolic power*, the editor John Thompson provides a concise summary of Bourdieu's understanding of "symbolic power". First, it is important to note that symbolic power is a feature of most power forms. So, "the" symbolic power does not exist, but it is part of how almost every power form works (Thompson 23). The central idea of symbolic power is that "power is seldom exercised as overt physical force" but instead "is transmuted into a symbolic form" (Thompson 23). Bourdieu also refers to symbolic power as "invisible" power because the symbolic power is "misrecognized" as such and thereby "recognized" as legitimate" (Thompson 23). The recognition of the legitimacy of the symbolic power, and of those who exercise it, is a crucial condition for symbolic power to be successful. Hence, the successful implementation of symbolic power requires "the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it" (*Language* 164).

The more disguised or invisible the conversion of economic capital into another form of capital is, the better its potential to function as symbolic power. Because, as has been discussed above, cultural capital in its embodied state, which includes linguistic capital, conceals its relation to economic capital especially well. This capital form is "predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition" (*Forms* 48-49). This means that it is "misrecognized" that proficiency in the dominant discourse, an embodied cultural capital, is connected to the possession of economic capital. The real power that is operating here, namely the unequal distribution of economic capital which regulates the access to educational opportunities to embody the dominant discourse, is "invisible".

Based on these considerations, it is not surprising that Bourdieu argues that language is not only an "instrument of communication" but repeatedly emphasises that language functions as an "instrument of power" (*Economics* 648). Bourdieu does not disregard communicative

effectiveness as an important function of language use. However, he believes that the transmission of information is only extremely rarely the only and often not the predominant purpose of language use. Hence, one of Bourdieu's principal claims concerning his theory of language is that the goal of language use is always to obtain a certain symbolic profit. Bourdieu postulates that in a communicative encounter it is never merely information which is exchanged but the interlocutors aim at "procuring a certain material or symbolic profit" (*Language* 66). The amount of symbolic or material profit gained depends on the structure of "symbolic relation of power" between the participants on a language market (*Language* 66-67), a concept that will be explored in one of the following sections. However, it is first necessary to explain Bourdieu's concept of habitus and linguistic habitus since these are important concepts for the later discussion of the "language market".

2.3. Habitus and linguistic habitus

The concept of the *habitus* is a key concept in Bourdieu's analysis of social life and in his theoretical framework and he defines it as follows:

[t]he habitus is a *set of dispositions* which incline agents to *act and react in certain ways*. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular' *without* being *consciously co-ordinated* or governed by an 'rule'. The dispositions which constitute the habitus are *inculcated, structured, durable, generative and transposable* – features that each deserve a brief explanation. (*Language* 12; emphasis added)

According to Bourdieu how people act and react in a certain kind of situation is not the outcome of conscious thinking, planning and reflection but depends on the structure of their habitus (*Language* 12). So, the habitus "provides individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of their daily lives" (*Language* 13). The habitus is not a strict rule but rather "a sense of what is appropriate in the circumstances and what is not" (*Language* 13). This sense for what is acceptable in certain situations resides in the body or as Bourdieu calls it, the "bodily or corporeal 'hexis'" and not in the mind (*Language* 13). So, certain ways of acting are not seen as the result of "conscious calculation" but to result from the "encounter between a habitus and a field" (*Language* 17). Since field is a central term in Bourdieu's discussion of habitus in the following paragraph the term field will be defined.

Thompson explains that field is the term that Bourdieu most frequently uses to refer to the "specific social context or fields of action [...] within which individuals act." Terms that Bourdieu uses interchangeably with field are market and game. A field or market is "a

structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or ‘capital’” (14). This means that the distribution of resources or capital between the participants of a field determines the relative power of individual participants. Since the compatibility between a habitus and a field varies, the power of a specific resource varies as well. If a field is not compatible with a habitus at all agents are left without possibilities to act, which, in the case of the linguistic habitus means that they are literally speechless (*Language* 17).

Bourdieu argues that the dispositions that form the habitus are “durable” which means that they are rather stable over the lifespan of an individual (*Language* 13). Concerning the acquisition of dispositions, they are “inculcated” because they are acquired “through a gradual process of inculcation” (*Language* 12). This process starts at birth and the experiences that people have as (very) young children are considered to be particularly relevant (*Language* 12). In addition, dispositions are “structured” because the formation of the habitus is considerably determined by a person’s social position and resulting experiences. Therefore, the habitus of people who grew up in similar social conditions is typically very similar to each other (*Language* 12-13). Lastly, the habitus does not only generate practices on the field where it was developed, but the dispositions are *generative* and *transposable* which means that they can also serve as a sense of the acceptable on other fields as long as these are similar to the one where the habitus was acquired (*Language* 13).

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is relevant for this thesis because he describes a specific *linguistic habitus* which is closely connected to the habitus. The linguistic habitus forms part of the habitus and is developed in “relationship to a field with a determinate acceptability level” and through “selective reinforcement” that “the field imposes” (*Economics* 656). Through socialization agents learn which kind of linguistic forms are positively or negatively evaluated on a certain linguistic market and based on these experiences the linguistic habitus is developed (*Economics* 654). That is why Bourdieu also refers to the linguistic habitus as “the sense of the acceptable” that is “[a]t the basis of self-censorship” (*Economics* 655). This means that people’s ability to anticipate the acceptability and ultimately potential symbolic profit of a certain linguistic form in a certain situation is based on their linguistic habitus. Although this might suggest that linguistic habitus is a cognitive tool that individuals use with conscious planning in pursuit of symbolic profit, Bourdieu emphasises that this is usually not the case, as for the habitus in general, as has been established above. On the contrary, Bourdieu argues that people

do choose their mode of expression based on an anticipation of the chances to obtain symbolic profit in a specific situation, however he emphasises that this, in most cases, is an unconscious process (*Economics* 655; emphasis added).

In the following two sections the concept of the linguistic habitus is applied to the discussion of, first, the concept of the language market and legitimate language, and second to the notion of acceptability which is a central component of the working mechanisms of the language market.

2.4. The language market and legitimate language

Within a society a variety of different languages and/or regional dialects exists. Mackey's observation that "[o]nly before God and the linguist are all languages equal" (7) is reflected by Bourdieu's concept of the *linguistic market* (*Economics* 651). On the linguistic market the ability to produce a specific linguistic form functions as a form of linguistic capital that can be exchanged for other forms of capital. The market value of the languages depends on the market specifics, consequently on a specific market some languages are more powerful than others in terms of their potential for obtaining material or symbolic profit. There are no intrinsic characteristics that make one language superior to another but the value of a certain language is a social construct that "depend[s] on the market on which it is offered" (*Economics* 651). Apart from a multiplicity of other languages or dialects, the *legitimate language* is the official and universally acknowledged standard language of a society and is usually only mastered by a small number of people, typically the dominant class (*Economics* 658-659). Bourdieu argues that "a language is worth what those who speak it are worth" which corresponds to the overall tendency of the legitimate language to be the language of the dominant class (*Economics* 652). However, not all community members have an equal level of competence in the legitimate language. The reason for this discrepancy between universal recognition and (non)universal mastery of the dominant language are unequal opportunities for acquiring the dominant language. As has been mentioned above, a small portion of a society, generally the dominant class, starts learning the legitimate language at home because it is also the family language. These children have a head-start over those whose family language is not the legitimate one and whose acquisition process of the legitimate language starts at school (*Economics* 659).

Concerning the legitimate language, the basic market principle of supply and demand also applies to Bourdieu's concept of the linguistic market: the more highly demanded a good is, and the less available it is, the higher its value. Therefore, the limited and unequal distribution of access to and consequently mastery of the legitimate language results in the scarcity value of the legitimate language. It is important to remember that this "profit of distinctiveness" is only possible due to the successful establishment and recognition of it as the one and only legitimate form in a hierarchy of a variety of languages (*Economics* 654).

2.5. Acceptability

The notion of "acceptability" is central for the establishment of the value of a discourse on a linguistic market. Bourdieu argues that the "acceptability" of linguistic resources depends not only on its degree of grammatical correctness but on other features that make it "credible, admissible, efficacious, or quite simply listened to" (*Economics* 650-651). These features are, however, not universal but context specific since every linguistic market is characterized by a specific hierarchy of languages and the specific relation between the participants. So, the acceptability of a specific language in a specific situation is not fixed but depends on a multiplicity of factors (*Economics* 656) which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

First of all, what is acceptable does not so much depend on situational factors but rather "depend[s] on the relationship between a language habitus [...] and a language market" (*Economics* 656). Consequently, "[t]here are as many acceptabilities [sic] as there are forms of relationship between competence [...] and a field (or market)". So, what is acceptable conforms to the "social laws of acceptability" which depend on the specific structure of a market (*Economics* 651). Hence, in order to obtain a certain symbolic profit, there needs to be a "compatibility between certain discourses and certain situations" and the chosen discourse has to correspond with the "social laws of the sayable (which include the linguistic laws of the grammatical)" (*Economics* 651). This means that the acceptability of a discourse is not regulated by a fixed set of ideal linguistics characteristics that is acceptable in all kinds of situations but what is acceptable always depends on the relationship between a specific market and discourse (*Economics* 657). Therefore, the legitimate language is not always the most acceptable linguistic form. The required degree of formality depends on the specific conditions of the language market since every language market is "defined by a higher or lower

acceptability level, and hence by a higher or lower pressure towards correctness” (*Economics* 656).

However, despite the specific conditions that determine acceptability, an overall tendency for the relationship between certain discourses and their potential to secure symbolic profit exists. On the one hand, the more formal a situation, the more the legitimacy of the dominant language is recognized. Hence, the greater the formality of a situation, the more imperative the use of the dominant language becomes to obtain symbolic profit (*Language* 70). Spheres of life which typically require the use of the dominant language are education, politics, public administration. On the other hand, the greater the informality of a situation, the less successful the dominant language becomes in obtaining the respective symbolic profit (*Language* 71). Thus, the degree of formality or informality of a situation (market) corresponds to the level of recognition of the legitimacy of the dominant language and therefore the amount of symbolic profit that can be procured through use of the legitimate language.

It has been established that the acceptability of a discourse “depend[s] on the relationship between a language habitus [...] and a language market”. An important factor that shapes this relationship, thus has an impact on the acceptability of a person’s language use, is “the match or mismatch between language and speaker”. Bourdieu argues that it is “the *combination* of a particular set of social characteristics, a certain social position and a particular form of discourse” that determines the acceptability of a discourse (*Economics* 653). According to Bourdieu, “the same linguistic production may obtain radically different profits depending on the transmitter” (*Economics* 655) because “[w]hat speaks is not the utterance, the language, but *the whole social person*” (*Economics* 653; emphasis added). It is important to note, in this respect, that non-verbal features can also have a considerable impact on the symbolic power of an utterance, “the efficacy of an utterance, the power of conviction which is granted to it” (*Language* 70). Bourdieu refers to the findings of social psychology that show that non-verbal discourse characteristics “such as voice setting [...] pronunciation (‘accent’)” are “better indices than syntax” for identifying a speaker’s social class” (*Economics* 653).

Consequently, this means that the very same discourse (e.g. the use of the legitimate form or a regional dialect) can result in very different symbolic profit for different speakers. The reason for this is that the value of an utterance is not only determined by linguistic features but also depends on the social characteristics of the participants. This means that the chances of an

individual obtaining symbolic profit do not depend only on his/her linguistic repertoire, the “linguistic capacity to generate a certain type of discourse”, but also on “all the properties constituting the speaker’s social personality” (*Economics* 655). For example, if a politician uses a lower register in a speech this can be interpreted as a way to humble himself to gain symbolic capital through making himself appear as one of the common people. However, if someone whose general symbolic capital is lower were to use the same lower register the effect would not be the same, it would not enhance his symbolic capital but rather lower it (*Language* 68-69).

However, the amount of linguistic and other forms of capital that a speaker possesses and the speaker’s social position are relative and always need to be seen in relation to that of the interlocutors. Which discourse is considered appropriate in a certain situation depends, also, on the “objective relationship between their [the speakers’] own position and their interlocutor’s position in the structure of the distribution of specifically linguistic capital and, even more, the other forms of capital” (*Economics* 657). So, a person’s social position as well as the type and quantity of linguistic as well as other forms of capital in his/her possession *in relation* with the characteristics of the other participant(s), have an impact on every kind of discourse, on informal conversations between friends as well as scientific articles or a political speech (*Economics* 657).

The purpose of the following section is to make a connection between the insights gained in this section on the factors that determine the acceptability of a linguistic capital with people’s variably shaped linguistic habitus which is greatly determined by their membership in different social classes.

2.6. Social classes and language

In the previous section, it was argued that speakers whose linguistic repertoire consists of a greater variety of linguistic resources have a greater ability to choose the most acceptable language, which serves to obtain the greatest symbolic profit, than other speakers with a more limited linguistic repertoire. In a class-divided society this linguistic repertoire of a person varies according to their class membership. Consequently, a person’s linguistic repertoire also points towards his/her social position (*Economics* 657). In the following paragraphs, I will briefly discuss the linguistic repertoire and characteristics of the language use of different classes.

In terms of language use, the most important characteristic of the dominant class or the elite is that their “linguistic habitus is the *realization of the norm* [sic]” (*Economics* 658). This means that the dominant class is characterized by an exceptional fluency in the legitimate language and the ability to “produce continuously and apparently without effort, the most correct language” (*Economics* 659). That is why they can use “free, relaxed speech” even in situations with a high degree of formality (*Economics* 655). This exceptional capacity is due to the superior access to the legitimate language as members of the dominant class start learning the dominant language in the home environment. Bourdieu argues that schooling is essential for the further development of language skills but that it is only through such “early familiarization” with the dominant language that such exceptional competence can be achieved (*Economics* 659).

Due to their awareness of their exceptional mastery of the dominant language, members of the dominant class “can make deliberately or accidentally lax use of language without their discourse ever being invested with the same social value as that of the dominated” (*Economics* 653). Bourdieu further argues that these “transgressions” (*Economics* 659) which, in a later publication he also calls “strategies of condescension” (*Language* 68), are “a way of affirming their mastery of the norm and their distance from those who blindly adhere to it” (*Economics* 659). It is crucial to note that such strategies of condescension – the purposeful non-use of the legitimate language in a situation that would usually require it – are reserved for those people who are able to confidently use the legitimate language due to their exceptional mastery of it. To put it simply, not using the dominant language despite knowing it has a different effect than not using the dominant language due to lack of proficiency, although it is required by the situation. Hence, a subversion of the laws that regulate the acceptability of different linguistic forms on a linguistic market with the purpose of obtaining symbolic profit through the negation of the established hierarchy or relation between a certain language and type of situation is only possible for those speakers with an exceptional mastery of the linguistic norm (*Language* 69).

The greatest linguistic difference between the dominant class and the “petty-bourgeoisie”, a term which Bourdieu uses to refer to the “upper strata of the working class and [...] the lower middle class” is the tendency of the petty-bourgeoisie to use “hyper-controlled language” (*Economics* 655). The reason for this tendency to over correctness and self-corrections is a gap between the recognition of the dominant language as the legitimate linguistic form paired with limited mastery of it (*Economics* 656). Therefore, it is not surprising that the greater the “gap

between recognition and skill” (*Economics* 658) and the greater the formality of a situation, the greater the tendency to use the most correct form and to correct one’s own speech. This striving for correctness can be so strong that the “petty-bourgeoisie speakers” even use the dominant form in situations which would not normally require its use, hence their language use is often more “correct” than that of the dominant group (*Economics* 658-659). This tendency to hyper-controlled language use and constant self-corrections is a durable disposition (*habitus*) which puts those affected by it under a lot of pressure and can even result in “permanent linguistic insecurity” (*Economics* 656). The limitations of the working class are even greater due to the complete lack of proficiency in the legitimate language. Therefore, Bourdieu argues, this group is forced to remain silent in those situations which require the use of the legitimate language and is consequently excluded from participation in these spheres of life (*Economics* 658).

The exploration of a selection of Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts, with a focus on language as an instrument of symbolic power, has provided important insights into the structures and processes that regulate the acceptability of different linguistic forms on different language markets. These insights are helpful but do not always suffice to explain what motivates speakers to use a linguistic form in interpersonal interactions. Therefore, in the following two chapters, chapter three and four, I will discuss a variety of theoretical approaches that focus on the underlying motivations that determine speakers’ language choices in interpersonal interactions.

3. Determining factors for language choice in interpersonal interactions

In sections one through four of this chapter I will discuss Fishman’s model of language choice, Giles and associates’ *Communication Accommodation Theory* and Meyers-Scotton’s theory of *elite closure* and *codeswitching*. In the following chapter, I will discuss the relation between language and identity and explore social identity with the help of *Social Identity Theory*, a theory developed by Tajfel and Turner. All these theoretical concepts have two things in common. First, they show that a speaker’s language choices in communicative encounters are often a complex psycho-sociolinguistic matter as such choices can be determined by various social and psychological factors. Second, all the subsequently discussed theoretical concepts reflect Bourdieu’s notion that the acceptability and symbolic power of a language depends on the structure of the market, hence the specific characteristics of an interpersonal interaction.

3.1. Fishman's model of language choice

In his article “Who Speaks What Language to whom and when?”, published in 1965, Joshua Fishman identifies the following three variables to be responsible for language choice: group, situation and topic. Fishman repeatedly emphasises that it is never only one of these factors alone which affect language choice but that the interplay of various factors always needs to be considered. At the same time, Fishman also notes that it is impossible to take all possibly influential factors into account when analysing language variance since such an analysis “is likely to be exceedingly complex” (*Who* 77).

Group membership is the first variable that Fishman argues is a decisive factor for language choice. Besides group membership based on objective criteria, “i.e. in terms of physiological and sociological criteria (e.g. age, sex, race, religion, etc.)” Fishman argues that it is especially “reference group membership” that effects language choice (*Who* 68). Hence, what particularly affects languages choice is the group that people identify with, “a group to which [they] belong, want to belong, and from which [they] seek acceptance” (*Who* 68). The role of language as a symbol of group membership is also addressed in the next section on *Communication Accommodation Theory* and will be explored in detail in chapter four which focuses on the interrelationship between language and social identity as well as language and ethnicity.

Whereas the focus of the variable group is very clear, namely the connection between group membership and language choice, the second variable, *situation*, has, in the past, been used to refer to several factors such as “the participants who may be present, the physical setting, the topics and functions of discourse and the *style* [sic] employed” (*Who* 69). Such a multiplicity of factors seriously complicates any analysis which is why Fishman focuses on the aspect of “situational style”. Fishman defines “situational style” as “pertain[ing] to considerations of intimacy-distance, formality-informality, solidarity-non-solidarity, status (or power) equality-in equality, etc.” (*Who* 70). In other words, the use of a certain situational style has an impact on the degree of intimacy, solidarity, and status expressed by a speaker towards his/her interlocutor. Fishman argues that multilinguals tend to use a particular language in a certain situation because they “more frequently associate one of their languages with informality, equality, solidarity than the other” (*Who* 70).

Group membership and considerations of style have an impact on language choice in many situations but another significant, and sometimes the most important for language choice, is the *topic* of conversation. Concerning this third variable it is important to consider that many topics belong to certain domains (e.g. law, medicine, pedagogy, etc.) which are usually handled in a specific language in a society (*Who* 72). Correspondingly, people are often accustomed to speak about topic “x” in a language “x” because they are “*trained* [sic] to deal with this topic”, for example through their university education, in language “x” and therefore only know the relevant terminology in language “x”. This means that people prefer to use a certain language to discuss topics that belong to a certain domain as they are simply more used to, and linguistically better equipped, to discuss such topics in that language (*Who* 71).

At this point it is necessary to discuss the relevance of the topic of conversation in diglossic and polyglossic societies as Nigeria, the setting of the novel which is being analysed in this thesis, is a polyglossic nation. Diglossic or polyglossic societies are characterized by the distribution of “high-status formal functions” and “modes of communication in private and informal situations” between different languages (Sachdev and Giles 365). On the one hand, speakers use their native language to “discus[s] emotional issues or when talking about topics relevant to the cultural contexts in which they live” (Sachdev and Giles 364). On the other hand, the legitimate language (English in Nigeria) is usually used for official and public communication and considered the “voice of intellect”, hence the language to be used for the discussion of academic topics (Sachdev and Giles 365).

This section has provided an overview of some of the most important situational and contextual variables, namely group, situational style and topic, that determine language choices. These variables play a role, to a greater or lesser extent, in all the following approaches which also explore speakers’ motivations for language choices in interpersonal interactions but focus more on socio-psychological factors. For example, in the following section, the variable group and situational style greatly inform the discussion of *Communication Accommodation Theory* which focuses on speakers’ socio-psychological motivations to accommodate their speech towards their interlocutor(s).

3.2. Communication Accommodation Theory

Meyers-Scotton provides a concise summary of the development of *Communication Accommodation Theory (CAD)*. The theory is based on *Speech Accommodation Theory* which was developed by Howard Giles, a social psychologist, and associated researchers in the early 1970s. The theory was based on the results of matched guise tests which investigated the evaluation of different British dialects. The main insight of these tests was that a Received Pronunciation accent tended to be associated with education and authority whereas solidarity and integrity were associated with non-standard regional dialects. Based on these insights Giles and his associates continued to investigate what determined speakers' language choices in conversations. This way, their *Speech Accommodation Theory* was further developed into *CAD* (Multiple 131). Two central concepts of *CAD* are the concepts of convergence and divergence, which I will discuss in the following paragraphs because they provide important insights into speakers' motivations to adapt or not adapt their speech towards their interlocutor(s).

Convergence is the accommodation of one's own speech towards the interlocutor and is generally evaluated positively. One motivation for convergence can be the desire for communicative efficiency. Another principal motivation for convergence is the desire for social approval. In this case, the use of convergence is based on the premise that the greater the similarity between ourselves and our interlocutor, the greater the chance that our interlocutor will approve of us. Hence, people choose to adapt their speech to their interlocutor's way of using language because they hope that due to increased similarity, they will gain their approval and possibly even access to the interlocutor's social group. Simply put, if speakers want to be liked by their interlocutor, they tend to speak more like them. Similarly, to create emotional proximity and warmth people typically tend to use similar speech styles (Sachdev and Giles 355). The degree of similarity of a person's speech with the speech of his/her interlocutor is determined by "a wide range of linguistic (e.g. speech rate, accents), paralinguistic (e.g. pauses, utterance length), and nonverbal features (e.g. smiling, gazing)" (Sachdev and Giles 355).

However, convergence can also be evaluated negatively. For example, the accommodation to another individual's or group's speech is sometimes considered as unfaithfulness to one's own (group) identity or as transgression of social boundaries (Stavans and Hoffmann 194-195). In other cases, convergence is sometimes seen as disregard or even mockery of the interlocutor's

language skills. For example, when a westerner accommodates to local people in a (former) colonised country (where English is the official standard language) the westerner's convergence to the local language, instead of using English, can be interpreted as an implied assumption of the interlocutor's lack of English proficiency and might therefore be evaluated as a patronizing insult (Giles, Taylor, and Bourhis 188).

Divergence is the use of a different speech style than that of the interlocutor and is usually evaluated negatively. One motivation for divergence is the attempt to use language to create distance in an interpersonal encounter, between the speaker and the interlocutor(s) (Stavans and Hoffmann 194). But divergence is also used when the interlocutors "define the encounter in intergroup terms and desire a positive ingroup identity" (Hamers and Blanc 250). Hence, the purpose of using speech that accentuates in-group characteristics and differences from one's interlocutor based on group membership can serve as a symbol of in-group identity and emphasize the clear demarcation of group boundaries.

The concepts of convergence and divergence can be distinguished into cases of "upward" and "downward" convergence and divergence which are based on the "sociolinguistic status [and power] of the interlocutor" (Sachdev and Giles 356). "Upward" refers to the use of a language or dialect with a high status and "downward" refers to the choice of a language or dialect with a lower status (Meyers-Scotton, *Multiple* 131). All these forms of convergence and divergence have in common that they either increase or decrease social or emotional proximity or similarity through speech accommodation. The different cases of upward or downward convergence and divergence are briefly outlined below (Sachdev and Giles 356):

- *Upward convergence*: In this case the power variable is a decisive factor: A speaker in a subordinate position accommodates his/her speech towards the speech of the interlocutor in a superordinate position with the effect of increased social proximity.
- *Upward divergence*: Members of a lower class use a different speech style than their interlocutor who is member of the upper class to increase social distance.
- *Downward convergence*: A person in a superior position (who is fluent in the dominant language) in an interaction with an interlocutor in an inferior position uses the interlocutor's native language to increase social proximity.
- *Downward divergence*: A person in a superior position (who is fluent in the dominant language) begins a conversation in the interlocutor's L1 (who is in an inferior position and

does not have the same fluency in the dominant language) but then shifts to the dominant language. The effect is increased social distance.

The most important insight gained in this section on *Communication Accommodation Theory* is that the use of convergence or divergence can decrease or increase the distance between speakers and their interlocutor(s). *Elite closure*, the theoretical concept which I will explore in the next section, reflects these insights as well as Bourdieu's previously discussed notion of language as symbolic power.

3.3. Elite closure

Since the "elite" is at the centre of Meyers-Scotton's concept of *elite closure* it is necessary to briefly define who the "elite" are. According to Meyers-Scotton's definition, the two most important characteristics of the elite are their level of education and the type of job they have. She defines the elite as a group of people who have an above-average education, at least a high school diploma or a university degree, and as people with aspirations to have "traditionally prestigious jobs" such as "civil servants, instructors in higher education, or middle-range business executives", hence positions with considerable social status and power (*Elite* 153). In terms of language use, the elite are distinguished by an extremely frequent use of the official language in the professional as well as the private sphere (*Elite* 156). For example, in Nigeria, according to Agheysisi, the Nigerian educated elite are "a special social 'class' [...] whose salient status symbol" is their use of English in the majority of situations (99).

Now that it is clear who is meant when referring to the elite, I will discuss the concept of *elite closure* in relation to the previously discussed theory of language as symbolic power and *CAD*. *Elite closure* reflects Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power because *elite closure* is "a form of symbolic domination" which occurs through language use as well as through other factors (Meyers-Scotton, *Multiple* 134). The elite have exceptional power and status and "establish or maintain their powers and privileges via linguistic choices" (*Elite* 149). This is possible due to the elite's exceptional proficiency and fluency in the legitimate language which has the highest symbolic power in all domains of power such as administration, education, politics, etc. It is important to remember that the elite's privilege based on their linguistic capital is only possible because, depending on the structure of the market, the variety of languages spoken in a society differ in their symbolic power and acceptability. Meyers-Scotton argues that *elite closure* is

most accomplished when the elite have control over official language policies that define proficiency in the dominant language as a prerequisite for access to influential “political position[s] and socioeconomic advancement” (*Elite* 149). This means that the elite’s privileged access to socio-economic opportunities is also a consequence of their exclusive language proficiency in the legitimate language (Meyers-Scotton, *Multiple* 134).

This exceptional fluency in the legitimate language gives the elite the flexibility to use the dominant language in all types of situations, even in informal situations in which the rest of the community uses other linguistic forms (*Elite* 150-151). This means that *elite closure* is a special type of divergence, as it is defined by Communication Accommodation Theory, which “is practiced perhaps universally, not by minorities, but by the elite” (Meyers-Scotton, *Multiple* 134). In fact, Meyers-Scotton argues that a crucial criterion for *elite closure* is the elite’s use of the official language in informal situations in which other, more commonly spoken (indigenous) languages, are usually used (*Elite* 158). It is a clear example of downward divergence when the elite, with the purpose of ensuring their power, prestige or in order to profit in some way, use the dominant language even in situations in which the interlocutor has no or only a limited proficiency.

To a certain extent *elite closure* exists everywhere since in every community a certain language or even dialect is more positively evaluated than others and, at the same time, not equally accessible for all citizens (Meyers-Scotton, *Elite* 151). However, the degree of accessibility to the legitimate language varies between nations which is why Myers-Scotton differentiates between “strong” and “weak” versions of *elite closure* (*Elite* 151). Weak closure occurs in many western societies, especially in countries “where most of the populations speak different dialects of the same language” (*Elite* 152). In these societies, the elite use different linguistic forms and have different use patterns but due to general availability and affordability of education, due to a functional social and public education system, everybody has the possibility to develop fluency in the legitimate language and adopt the elite’s patterns of language use (*Elite* 151-152). Strong *elite closure* occurs in bilingual or multilingual countries in which the linguistic repertoires of the common people and the elite vary significantly. This is the case in countries in which the official language is not the native language of many citizens. An example would be most sub-Saharan African states in which the language of the former colonizing nation is the official language such as English in most former British colonies. However, the existence of an official language that is not the mother tongue of the majority population is not

the only criterion for strong *elite closure*. Another crucial aspect is the inequality in access to learning opportunities of the official language. In summary, strong *elite closure* is based on the following two criteria: the legitimate language that is required for socioeconomic mobility is not the native language of the masses and public education is not available for all citizens but only a minority elite (Meyer-Scotton *Elite* 152).

The previously discussed theories have all focused on speaker's motivation to use *a* linguistic form in different situations. However, sometimes speakers use two or more linguistic forms in a conversation. Therefore, in the following section, I will discuss the concept of *codeswitching* to find out why in some interpersonal interactions speakers switch between different linguistic forms.

3.4. Codeswitching

Stavans and Hoffmann define code-switching as the speakers' "alternat[ion] between different codes [...] in the course of the same conversation or speech act" (175) which corresponds with the definition of codeswitching that Meyers-Scotton and Ury suggest. However, Meyers-Scotton and Ury specify that the length of the switch can "be for only one word or for several minutes of speech" and the different linguistic codes used can be two different languages or dialects of the same language (5). Speakers may use codeswitching for a range of different reasons but, according to Meyers-Scotton and Ury, the basic underlying motivation for codeswitching is the desire of "at least one speaker [...] to redefine the interaction by moving it to a different social arena" (5). This means that there is always "a relationship between (a) the linguistic code and (b) the social meaning of the interaction" (Meyers-Scotton and Ury 5).

Meyers-Scotton identifies two functions of codeswitching: *index* and *tool*. Linguistic choices in general can function as "indexical signs" since they, just as other social behaviours such as clothes, can indicate how people think of themselves and how they wish to be perceived by others (*Multiple* 145). When codeswitching functions as a tool it "can be used in an ongoing conversation to step in – or out – of a presumed or expected identity" (*Codeswitching* 73). An example of the tool function is Meyers-Scotton's analysis of the speech pattern of a person of European descent, whose L1 is English, in an interaction with South Africans. She claims that the English native speaker's use of two indigenous languages (both understood by the interlocutors), even though the interlocutors are proficient in English and in the given situation

normally English would be used, as a strategy to point towards a shared South African identity between him and the interlocutors and also to “sho[w] off how much of a South African he has become” (*Codeswitching* 81). And, “[a]s an index codeswitching can index a speaker’s self-perception as a *multidimensional* person, whether as a member of a specific group or as a member simultaneously of several groups” (*Codeswitching* 73). For example, when speakers switch between the dominate language and another local language or a dialect of the standard language, they index their identification with both groups that are associated with the respective languages or dialects (*Codeswitching* 73). Both functions, index and tool, are very much related to the insights of *Social Identity Theory* concerning the relationship between language, group membership and identity (see section 4.2.)

As the examples discussed above have shown, codeswitching can be used for different purposes and can have a variety of social meanings depending on the type of attributes that are indexed by a certain switch of linguistic codes or codeswitching pattern. The question becomes how such code choices are made. Meyers-Scotton and Bolonyai argue that situational and contextual variables, such as those proposed by Fishman, cannot explain all code choices (2-3). They argue that linguistic code choices can be based on rational choices and support a rational choice model. Rationality in this context “means cognitively based calculation” (Meyers-Scotton and Bolonyai 5). However, it is important to note that ‘rational’ does *not* mean that the speaker’s decision to switch to one code or another is “objectively the best choice” (Meyers-Scotton, *Codeswitching* 82). ‘Rational’, in this context, means that the speakers choose the code that they assess to be the “‘best choice’ for them personally” (Meyers-Scotton, *Codeswitching* 83). Hence, speakers’ code choices are based on subjective motivations and the greatest personal benefit for them, whether that may be attributes of solidarity or power (Meyers-Scotton, *Codeswitching* 82-83).

The discussion of the theoretical approaches in this chapter has provided insights into a variety of socio-linguistic and psychological processes that determine speaker’s language choices in interactions. Some of these theoretical approaches have already demonstrated the impact that identity issues and group membership can have on speaker’s language choices. Therefore, and most importantly because the relationship between language and identity is a central issue in the later analysis of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, in the following chapter I will discuss in detail the connection between social identity, ethnicity and language choices.

4. Identity and language

The following exploration of the connection between identity and language is mainly based on a discussion of relevant insights of *Social Identity Theory*. Due to the focus on identity issues in this chapter, it is necessary to define the term ‘identity’ and to briefly address that the connection between language and identity has been a topic of controversial discussion.

4.1. General considerations

Identity has been studied extensively in many different disciplines (psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, etc.). Consequently, a multiplicity of definitions of identity across and within disciplines exists (Stavans and Hoffmann 202) and it is impossible to provide a complete overview of the discussion of identity within the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it is indispensable to clarify which understanding of “identity” informs the discussion of identity issues in this thesis. The selection of the following defining characteristics of identity is based on their relevance for the later analysis of identity issues in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. “[I]dentities are who we are” (Jackson xxvi) and identity is not unidimensional but consists of “a number of identities – or facets of one overarching identity” (Edwards 2). This means that identities “can refer to an individual’s own subjective sense of self, to personal classification ‘markers’ that appear as important, both to oneself and to others [personal identity] and also to those markers that delineate group membership(s) [social identity]” (Edwards 16). A detailed definition of personal and social identity will be provided later in this chapter. Identities are not only understood as a person’s sense of self but they also “help us to see the world” (Jackson xxvi). A person’s identity, his/her understanding of him/herself fundamentally influences the person’s “social perceptions, cultural interpretations, personal behaviors, and global actions” (Jackson xxvi). Finally, it is important to note that identities are not static and fixed, as it was argued until the 1980s (De Florio-Hansen and Hu viii), but instead are fluid and dynamic and subject to constant re-evaluation and re-shaping (Jessner 28).

Just as it is difficult to find a single definition of ‘identity’ across disciplines, the complex relationship between identity and language has also been an issue of controversial discussion. Stavans and Hoffmann argue that the existing lack of agreement on the role of language and identity is reflected by the existence of two theoretical paradigms. Theories that pertain to the *variationist sociolinguistic paradigm* do not consider language to be constitutive of identity.

These theories maintain the view that language is an instrument to express identity (Stavans and Hoffmann 202). For example, Hogg and Abrams claim that people usually adapt their speech style to “convey information about what sort of person [they] are, about [their] identity” (163). This notion of language as “a symbol of identity” entails that a person’s speech “contain[s] social markers”, hence “information concerning the speaker’s personality, social status, age, mood, social group membership, and so forth” (Stavans and Hoffmann 163). Thus follows the basic premise that every person has a repertoire of various “speech styles” which carry different social markers and accordingly convey a somewhat different identity (Stavans and Hoffmann 170). Myers-Scotton’s notion of the connection between language and identity is similar to the view of Hogg and Abrams: she argues that a speaker’s choice to use a certain language or dialect “is both a tool and an index of interpersonal relationships” (*Multiple* 143). She also argues that the language choices of bi/multilingual individuals are meaningful because they are “indexical of the self” (*Multiple* 144) and they reveal “how an individual views him- or herself” (*Multiple* 145).

In contrast to the *variationist sociolinguistic paradigm*, which views language as a symbol of identity, the *socio-psychological paradigm* argues that language is a “central component of identity” (Stavans and Hoffmann 207) and that language choices are “driven by two primal social needs, group inclusion and identity”, which are fundamentally related with each other (Stavans and Hoffmann 201). This notion of language as being a constituting component of social identity suggests that learning a language has an important impact on the learner’s social identity. This view is supported by Pavlenko and Lantolf who discuss “second language learning as a struggle for participation [...] in another culture” (155) and as “(re)construction of selves” (155). They argue that language learning not only concerns the “acquisition of a new set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological forms” but is a process through which language learners are enabled to participate in a certain community (Pavlenko and Lantolf 155). This argument is based on Sfard’s notion that learning is a “process of becoming a member of a certain community [which] entails, above all, the ability to communicate in the language of this community and act according to its particular norm” (6). Accordingly, Stavans and Hoffmann argue that “[m]ultilinguals can have multiple identities that are not isolated one from the other, in fact they are privileged to have a kind of ‘kaleidoscopic’ identity” (202) which corresponds to the previously stated definition of identity as multidimensional (Edwards 2). In fact, the assumption of a “one-to-one correlation between language and identity” has been contested because it views group-members as a homogeneous monolingual group and fails to recognize

the existence of hybrid identities and diverse linguistic repertoires (Pavlenko and Blackledge 5). The function of language as a marker and regulatory device of group membership and group boundaries will be discussed in detail in the following sections that focus on social identity and ethnolinguistic identity.

4.2. Social Identity Theory

Several disciplines, “such as social psychology, linguistics and second language acquisition”, have studied social identity (Hansen and Liu 567). In this paper the focus will be on Henri Tajfel’s and John Turner’s theoretical framework of *Social Identity Theory* which is considered “one of the most notable theories of social identity” (Hansen and Liu 567). Since *Social Identity Theory* emphasises the importance of membership in social groups for an individual’s identity, it is important to define what is meant when speaking of a “group”. Tajfel and Turner explain that “from the social-psychological perspective, the essential criteria for group membership [...] are that the individuals concerned define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group” (40). Furthermore, group members “share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it” (Tajfel and Turner 40). Hogg et al. further note that a group consists of at least three people, hence a dyad is not a group (251). With this definition in mind, in the following sections I will discuss the central ideas of *Social Identity Theory* and the principal assumptions on which the theory is based.

4.2.1. Social identity and personal identity

At the centre of *Social Identity Theory* is the interrelationship between identity, especially social identity, and the sense of belonging to a group. Tajfel defines social identity as “the individual’s knowledge that he [or she] belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him [or her] of the group membership” (292 qtd. in Abrams and Hogg 180). Simply put, the most fundamental claim of *Social Identity Theory* is that an individual’s social identity results from his/her membership in a group and that the sense of belonging to that group is of some significance for the individual. It is claimed that to identify as member of a group is very different from “being a unique and separate individual” (Hogg and Abrams 3) as group membership results in the development of a social identity which has an important impact on the person’s sense of self and on his/her behaviour (Hogg and Abrams 3). The

behaviour of group members is usually in line with group norms and in favour of one's own group (Hogg and Abrams 3).

It is important to note that a person's social identity stands in relation to his/her personal identity, not in contrast to it. Still, personal identity is "quite different from social identity" (Hogg et al. 251). According to Hogg et al., the construction of an individual's personal identity is based on "idiosyncratic personality attributes" (which are specific for a person and not shared with others) and interpersonal dyadic relationships. Other than for social identity, group processes do not play such a central role for personal identity. Nevertheless, membership in a group, for example through resulting friendships, can also have an impact on the development of personal identity (Hogg et al. 251). Concerning the relationship between personal and social identity, the more developed an individual's personal identity, the less he/she needs identification with a group (Deschamps and Devos 6). This also works the other way around: the stronger one's sense of social identity, the smaller the demand for a strong personal identity. Deschamps and Devos argue that the reason for this is that both social and personal identity "satisfy the same need for a positive self-image" (6).

In the discussion of social identity and personal identity it is important to remember that an individual does not have *a* personal identity and *a* social identity but that people usually have multiple social and personal identities (Hogg et al. 252; emphasis added). In fact, Hansen and Liu criticize that Tajfel and Turner neglect to consider that people are usually members in multiple groups and consequently have multiple social identities (571). The number of social and personal identities depends on the number of groups an individual identifies with and the number of interpersonal relationships, respectively. However, not all identities are equally important for an individual and in a specific situation usually only one identity is "psychologically real" (Hogg et al. 252). This means that the identity which is the "salient basis of self-construal, social perception, and social conduct" depends on the context (Hogg et al. 252).

Tajfel and Turner's tendency to not fully take into account the multi-faceted and dynamic character of identity is also reflected in their differentiation between the following two types of behaviour, namely "interpersonal versus intergroup behaviour" (34). But it must be admitted that Tajfel and Turner do explain that these are extremes and that "'it is unlikely that 'pure' forms of th[ese] extreme[s] can be found in 'real' social situations" (34). Interpersonal behaviour, on

the one hand, refers to interactions between people that only depend on “interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics” and not at all on identification with social groups (Tajfel and Turner 34). On the other hand, interactions characterized by the other extreme, intergroup behaviour, are not determined by interpersonal relationships at all but completely depend on “the actors’ identification of themselves and the others as belonging to different social categories” (Tajfel and Turner 40). As examples for the two extremes, Tajfel and Turner mention the relationship between married couples or very good friends (interpersonal behaviour) and the behaviour of soldiers on a battlefield (intergroup behaviour) (34). It has been established that in ‘real life’ the behaviour of people only rarely corresponds to one of the extremes described above. Yet, Tajfel and Turner have identified certain factors which make intergroup behaviour more likely. They found that “in relevant intergroup situations, individuals will not interact as individuals, on the basis of their individual characteristics or interpersonal relationships, but as members of their groups standing in certain defined relationships to members of other groups” (35). Furthermore, they argue that in the case of intergroup conflicts, the intensity of the conflict directly corresponds to the likelihood that the people involved will act corresponding to the needs and values of their social group rather than base their behaviour on relationships with members of the opposing groups or other individual characteristics (Tajfel and Turner 34).

4.2.2. Social comparison

The previous section discussed the principal ideas of Tajfel and Turner’s *Social Identity Theory*. Now, I will discuss the connection between these insights and some principal assumptions of human behaviour and socio-psychological needs, particularly the notion of social comparison and categorization. First of all, it is important to consider that *Social Identity Theory* is based on the claim that a positive social identity is a central human desire and that a person’s social identity can contribute to the development or enhancement of two basic human needs: a positive self-concept and self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner 40). This claim is supported by clinical research that demonstrates that self-esteem is a basic human need and that a lack of it can have adverse effects (Hogg and Abrams 21).

If a positive social identity is something that people strive for, the question is how it can be achieved. Tajfel and Turner argue that “favourable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-group” considerably contribute to a positive social identity (40).

The aim of social comparison, of comparing oneself with an out-group member, is to “identify those dimensions which make them distinct from each other” (Hamers and Blanc 243). Ideally, the process of social comparison results in maximum and positive distinctiveness of the in-group (Hogg et al. 257-258). Thus when the in-group and the out-group are compared to each other and the in-group is perceived to be different from the out-group in terms of positive characteristics, this results in “positive distinctiveness” for the in-group and therefore a positive social identity and ultimately “a sense of well-being, enhanced self-worth and self-esteem” for the individual (Hogg and Abrams 21). In addition to a positive social identity, positive distinctiveness based on intergroup comparison results in high prestige whereas negative distinctiveness results in low prestige (Tajfel and Turner 40).

If language is a salient dimension of intergroup social comparison, this can have an impact on people’s language choices because “intergroup distinctiveness also influences speech accommodation” (Hamers and Blanc 243). This means that, “if language is a salient dimension of the speaker’s identity”, in an interaction with an out-group member, the speaker can use the language or way of speaking that is associated with his/her in-group to “assert his [or her] cultural identity and to distinguish himself [or herself] from his [or her] interlocutor” (Hamers and Blanc 243).

Social Identity Theory is not only informed by people’s desire for a positive social identity and the process of social comparison but is also based on a specific notion of the organization of the social world as I will discuss in the following section.

4.2.3. Categorization

Hogg and Abrams explain that *Social Identity Theory* is based on the notion that societies are “hierarchically structured into discrete social categories which stand in power, status and prestige relations to one another” (17). This systematic organization of the social world is based on categorization. Categorization is a cognitive process through which the social world is organized into distinct categories based on shared attributes in a systematic way (Tajfel and Turner 40). Such social categories are, for example, race, class, occupation, sex, and religion. People do, of course, belong to several social categories but normally they do not belong to two contrasting categories as these are mutually exclusive. For example, a person cannot be both a member of the ‘upper class’ and a member of the ‘working class’. Which categories a person

belongs to can be very significantly because not all social categories are equally valued. Belonging to certain categories, for example 'whiteness', gives more power and status than others (Hogg and Abrams 17). Which categories are positively evaluated and which negatively is mostly in the power of the dominant group and the "dominant value system" (Hogg and Abrams 24). This system typically concedes more favourable evaluations to those attributes that correspond to the dominant class and therefore also contributes to the legitimacy of their power, status and prestige (Hogg and Abrams 24). It is important to note, however, that social structure is not fixed and that categories and the value ascribed to them are changing in relation to societal developments (Hogg and Abrams 13). As has already been mentioned, it is through the sense of belonging to these social categories that people develop their social identity which forms part of "their sense of self, their self-concept" (Hogg and Abrams 17).

When this notion of categorization is related with the previously discussed principle of social comparison, the question arises why certain characteristics such as race or gender are more frequently used to categorize, and ultimately compare, people than others. Hogg et al. explain that people choose characteristics for organizing the social world that are "readily accessible social categorizations – ones that are valued, important, and frequently employed aspects of the self-concept [...] and/or because they are self-evident and perceptually salient in the immediate situation" (Hogg et al. 254-255). However, people's behaviour as well as perceived similarities or differences between people or groups cannot always be explained based on the chosen (readily accessible and/or perceptually salient) category. For example, the chosen category might be 'gender' but in the given situation this category does not successfully explain a person's behaviour. In such a case, a new category is chosen as long until the chosen category successfully accounts for the person's behaviour (Hogg et al. 255).

This principle of categorization is particularly relevant for *Social Identity Theory* because one of the most important effects of categorization is that of "accentuating similarities between objects within the same category and differences between stimuli in different categories" (Hogg and Abrams 18). This principle applies to members of the same group as well as to members who belong to another group. Hence, the effect of the cognitive process of categorization and the resulting simplification is that there is an enhancement, on the one hand, on the similarities of members of the in-group (including oneself) and, on the other hand, the differences between the own group (including oneself) and another group. (Hogg and Abrams 19). Therefore, people classify other people according to their perceived similarity or difference with the effect that

there seem to exist basically just two types of people: in-group members and out-group members, people like oneself and people who are different (Hogg and Abrams 19). Ultimately, the aim of social comparison, based on categorization, is to achieve maximum and positive group distinctiveness (Hogg et al. 255). So, even though a member of one group might have more similarities with an individual from the out-group, the emphasis of one or a few defining features leads to a distorted perception which suggests great similarity with the members of one's own group and creates an enhanced sense of belonging with the in-group.

According to Hogg et al., categorization processes and the resulting emphasis of in-group similarities and out-group differences results in the cognitive representation of groups in terms of prototypes (254). These prototypes are the basis for stereotyping because "prototypes rarely describe average or typical in-group members: rather, they are polarized away from out-group features and describe ideal, often hypothetical, in-group members" (Hogg et al. 254). If the perception of an out-group person is based on the prototypical characteristics of the group that an individual belongs to, this is called "prototype-based perception" or, more frequently, "stereotyping" (Hogg et al. 254). So, due to prototypes and stereotyping all members of an out-group are perceived to be similar and their individual identities and characteristics are neglected (Hogg et al. 254). However, people are not only categorized and reduced to prototypical group characteristics by others. Through "self-categorization" people also limit their self-perception to prototypical characteristics of the in-group. This process is also called "self-stereotyping" and does not only have an impact on people's self-concept (Hogg et al. 254) but there are two further effects of this process of self-categorization. First, due to "self-stereotyping" individuals feel they have an 'identical' social category as their group members, and are just like them. The second effect is that individuals behave in ways that they believe to be congruent with (stereotypical) group characteristics (Hogg and Abrams 19). Since group-prototypes also "describe and prescribe group-appropriate ways to feel and behave normatively", this leads to behaviour that conforms to group norms. Furthermore, such group normative behaviour is rewarded with "in-group liking, trust, and solidarity" (Hogg et al. 254).

At this point it is useful to briefly summarize the main points of Tajfel and Turner's *Social Identity Theory* discussed so far. Tajfel and Turner use the term "social identity" in a very specific way, namely to refer to "those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he [or she] perceives himself [or herself] as belonging" (40). They argue that social categories provide a "system of orientation for *self*-reference [sic]":

which social group(s) or categories an individual identifies with and the status of the in-group has an impact on the individual's self-concept and, ultimately, the individual's self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner 40). For example, if the in-group's status is rather low, a person's social identity tends to be rather negative (Tajfel and Turner 43). In this regard it is important to remember that the status of the in-group depends on positively discrepant intergroup comparison. Since social identity forms part of a person's sense of self it is obvious that people adopt strategies to make their social identity more positive. The most relevant of these strategies will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.4. Strategies to improve social identity

The most common strategy to attain a more positive social identity is 'individual mobility' which means that a person who used to identify with a group now becomes member of another group. The following two prerequisites are required for a low status group member to attempt gaining access to a high status group: (1) people do not question the legitimacy of the status quo and perceive it as stable (2) people believe that it is generally possible to change group membership, in other words, they perceive intergroup boundaries as permeable (Hogg et al. 258). In the case of 'individual mobility', individuals who want to belong to another group need to adapt to the group characteristics of that group to be accepted which means that at the same time they also need to "disidentify from their group" (Hogg et al. 258). However, this mobility strategy is only rarely successful since it is going against the interest of the dominant group. If too many individuals from a subordinate group would become members of the dominant group, the distinctiveness of the dominant group compared with the subordinate group would diminish. Hence, the dominant group would lose its superior status, prestige and related privileges (Hogg et al. 258). Despite the low success rate of this strategy, the mobility ideology is widespread. This is convenient for the dominant group since this strategy does not question the legitimacy of the privileged position of the dominant group. As long as the status quo is accepted and the subordinate groups do not organize themselves in order to achieve more substantial changes, the privileges of the dominant group will remain unchanged (Hogg et al. 259).

Apart from changing group membership, there are also other options to enhance social identity. One possibility is "social creativity" which consists in making a group's social identity more positively distinct. Tajfel and Turner mention three strategies how this can be achieved. The first option is to change the dimension on which the in-group and the out-group are compared.

The second option is to attempt a positive re-evaluation of the group's defining characteristic (which previously were considered negatively). And the third option is to improve the group's positive distinctiveness by comparing it with another outgroup (Tajfel and Turner 43). Whereas the strategies of individual mobility and social creativity entail changes on part of the individual or the group to increase positive distinctiveness, the strategy "social competition" aims at larger structural changes. This strategy has the potential to "generate conflicts and antagonism between subordinate and dominant groups" because "social competition" consists in "direct competition with the out-group" with the goal to achieve substantial changes in the "distribution of scarce resources" and "the relative position of the in-group and the out-group on salient dimensions" (Tajfel and Turner 44-45).

In this chapter so far, the connection between language and identity, particularly social identity, which is based on people's identification with a group, has been discussed. Because in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* ethnicity and identification with ethnic groups plays an important role, the following paragraph extends the previous discussion of the connection between language and social identity to the link between language and ethnic identity.

4.3. Language and ethnic identity

Because "ethnic" and "ethnic group" are central terms in the subsequent discussion of the link between language and ethnic identity, it is necessary to provide a brief definition of these terms. Meyers-Scotton explains that the root of the word "ethnic" is the Greek word *ethnos* which means "people". The word was later used in Latin (*ethnicus*) and finally found its way into Middle English in which it meant "foreigner" (*Multiple* 108). The meaning of "foreigner" is reflected in the contemporary use of "ethnicity" since the term is commonly used to indicate the difference between one group, usually a minority group, and another group, often the majority group within the society. While the use of the term "ethnic group" in popular discourse often implies negative sentiments towards the respective ethnic group, in academic discourse "ethnic group" is a neutral term (*Multiple* 108).

As indicated by the definition of "ethnic groups", the meaning of "ethnic identity" is a complicated matter. In fact, researchers do not agree on a single definition of ethnic identity, but it is uncontroversial that there exists a close connection between ethnicity and identity (Jones 258). Nevertheless, despite the lack of consensus on a definition of ethnic identity, Jones

argues that there are features that most definitions of ethnic identity share. Most importantly, the definition of social identity also applies to the definition of ethnic identity. Like social identity, ethnic identity refers to people's identification as members of a certain group that is characterised by a certain set of distinct characteristics. In the case of ethnic identity some examples of such group defining categories are "some shared national or regional heritage, religion, class, language, or culture" (Jones 258). However, it has been discussed controversially, "in the media, as well as in academic and government institutions", how it can be determined that somebody belongs to an ethnic group (Jones 258). The definition of criteria for ethnic group membership is especially complicated when "such issues as migration, immigration, diversity, and multiculturalism, racial and postracial identity, and citizenship" are involved (Jones 258). In this regard, Hamers and Blanc argue that the best option to define membership of an ethnic group is self-categorisation, when people identify themselves as members of a certain ethnic group (201). If language is a defining category of an ethnic group, the notion of ethnic identity can be extended to the notion of ethnolinguistic identity.

Hamers and Blanc define ethnolinguistic identity as follows: "a subjective feeling of belonging to a particular ethnolinguistic group for which the language spoken by the group is an important characteristic" (202). This definition implies that language is not always a defining category of an ethnic group and consequently of ethnic identity. However, according to Hogg and Abrams "language is *frequently* a highly salient feature of [...] cultural differences and can become the most potent symbol of ethnic identity" (172; emphasis added). Meyers-Scotton agrees with this view when she argues that for many ethnic groups "their language [is] an intrinsic part of the group's identity" (*Multiple* 109) and that language "can serve as [a]boundary marker, setting off one social group from another" (*Multiple* 135). If language is a defining category of an ethnic group, which language people choose to use in a situation reflects a lot about "their group membership in relation to how they view themselves and in relation to others" (*Multiple* 143).

However, there also researchers who acknowledge that language is "an important part of the collective consciousness of any group" but argue that there are also other features which can be significant features of (ethnic) group identity (*Multiple* 111). On the other hand, Meyers-Scotton argues that, even though language is not always the most salient category of an ethnic group, due to its frequent use in everyday life, it is often perceived as "the most 'visible' symbol of a group" and speakers are constantly reminded of the symbolic power of their group's language (*Multiple* 112).

Thus, there is some debate about how frequently language is a significant marker of ethnic group identity and to what degree language can define group boundaries. However, it is unproblematic to assert that a connection between people's identification with an ethnic group and their social identity exists. Therefore, if language is a defining category of an ethnic group, it is very likely that language has an impact on people's social identity which is then called ethnolinguistic identity. In their research Giles and Johnson have focused on this specific form of identity and have developed *Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory* to explore the interrelationship between people's identification with an ethnic group and the patterns of their linguistic behaviour (69). Although some insights of this theory would provide some additional perspectives, the discussion of *Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory* is beyond the scope of this paper.

In this section, different theoretical concepts have been discussed which provide tools to understand the reasons behind people's use of a linguistic form in a conversation. It is evident that a variety of situational and socio-psychological factors can determine a speaker's language choice. What all these determining factors have in common is that the structure of the field, including the distribution of power between participants, and the related acceptability of certain linguistic forms have an impact on speaker's language choices. Having completed the discussion of these theories, in addition to Bourdieu's theoretical concept of language and symbolic power, it is possible to begin to establish the relevant sociolinguistic and historic context for the analysis of *Half of a Yellow Sun* that comprises the second part of this thesis.

5. The Nigerian civil war: Sociolinguistic and historical context

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* is set in postcolonial Nigeria, during the early 1960s and in the late 1960s, before and then during the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), a period of Nigerian history in which the nation's sociolinguistic situation had a particularly powerful impact. Therefore, the first part of this chapter provides a brief overview of the historical developments, particularly focusing on language policies, that led to the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war and the second part will discuss the sociolinguistic situation of postcolonial Nigeria.

5.1. Historical context

For a strong analysis of *Half of a Yellow Sun* a basic understanding of the historical events that led to the powerful status of English in Nigeria as well as the civil war is indispensable. The constraints of this thesis prevent the presentation of a detailed account of Nigeria's

(sociolinguistic) history, therefore the focus of the following historical overview will be on the period between colonisation and the civil war (1967-70). Particular attention will be paid to language policies during colonisation and after independence because, as Adegbija argues, the “most sociolinguistically crucial dimension of European contact (palpably symbolized by British colonialism), also the single most momentous landmark in Nigeria’s history [...] is [...] the implantation of the English language” (15).

5.1.1. Colonisation

In Nigeria contact with the English language began in the 17th century through trade relations with the British Empire (Adegbija 14). When the entire trade sector was taken over by the British government in 1821, the colonial period started and English was soon established as the medium of instruction in schools since the British conquerors considered the “indigenous languages [...] incompetent to bear the burden of the importation of modern skills and knowledge” (Adegbija 17). In 1914 the northern and the southern British “protectorates” were merged into a single administrative unity which required a common language to facilitate administration. The language chosen for this purpose was English. Nonetheless, the language policy strategies that the British adopted were very different in the north and the south of the country (Adegbija 17).

In the north, Hausa was the language used for administrative purposes due to its lingua franca status. The language was already spoken by the majority of the population and at the time of colonisation a standard form of Hausa already existed, which considerably aided its use for administration and contributed to the further development and spread of the language, and additionally, British officials learned the language (Simpson and Oyetádé 179).

In the south, English was established as the main language. To enable communication with the local population, the British worked with interpreters who were members of the indigenous community who had been taught English, especially at British missionary schools. These interpreters acquired a rather powerful status within their community since only a limited number of the local population received education in English. Unlike in the northern region, where the British officials learned Hausa, in the south, to interact with British officials, it was imperative for one to learn English (Simpson and Oyetádé 178). In fact, the available education resulted in the production of “a new ambitious elite which often aspired to Western values and

cultural habits” (Simpson and Oyetádé 179). However, apart from a very small elite, the majority of the indigenous population had no opportunity to acquire English – indeed, they were deliberately left uneducated to prevent colonial resistance (Simpson and Oyetádé 179). The different functions of English in the north and south and the unequal opportunities to learn English, especially the establishment of missionary schools in the south but not the north of the country, had long lasting consequences for north-south relations and played a decisive role in the period of power struggles after independence and eventually the civil war (1967-1970). After independence, the southern elite had an advantage due to their English proficiency and Western education which was then required for various kinds of employment, especially in the national administration. Therefore the southern elite quickly gained dominance in national administration (Simpson and Oyetádé 179). Besides the ethnic and linguistic division of the north and south, the two regions were also characterized by a religious divide. The north was dominated by Muslims, while in the south the majority of the population were Christians (Heerten and Moses 172).

5.1.2. Political developments after independence

Until independence was secured, pan-Nigerian ideals and the vision of an “ethnically unified and harmonious nation” dominated the political landscape. However, “in the 1950s, as the attainment of independence seemed guaranteed and set to occur not far off in the future” there was suddenly a drastic shift in political rhetoric towards the emphasis of ethnic, regional and religious differences (Simpson and Oyetádé 180). This strategy seemed a promising, and ultimately successful, way to attract votes. The result were narrow-minded political parties who lacked a nationwide vision but only focused “on a specific ethnic group or region rather than a national agenda” (Simpson and Oyetádé 180). All over the country organizations were developed by minorities with the purpose to promote their respective interests. For example, in the southeast two Igbo-based organizations promoted the idea of an Igbo nation and even created a new national anthem in Igbo (Simpson and Oyetádé 180).

The formation of groups based on their ethnicity was new because groups “with clear cross-group group loyalties” based on ethnic group identification had not previously existed. However, due to the “rhetoric and insistence of the new breed of politicians”, people quickly developed an awareness of themselves as members of certain ethnic groups (Simpson and Oyetádé 180). This development, the establishment of distinct regional and ethnic identities,

probably would not have been possible without the (arbitrary) “British division of Nigeria into different regions” (Simpson and Oyetádé 181).

In 1939, in addition to the early administrative division into the north and south of Nigeria, the south had been further subdivided into southwest and southeast regions. Consequently, Nigeria was divided into three administrative regions. An important effect of this division was that the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo communities became the numerically dominant ethnic group in their respective region. This development also contributed to the extent people identified with their ethnic group and the “potential for rivalry and competition for resources to be linked to ethnicity and official homeland” (Simpson and Oyetádé 181).

The impact of these developments was further increased when the self-government of the regions was made possible as a result of the 1954 constitution. The first regions to establish self-government were the southwest and the southeast in 1956, followed by the north in 1959. Meaning that by the beginning of the 1960s, Nigeria was divided into “a federation of three regions each with its own legislative and executive power, and decreasing connections between the three parts of the country, outside the important competition for central resources” (Simpson and Oyetádé 181). Because of these ethnocentric developments, close to the start of independence, three factors threatened future political stability. First, the north was concerned that the south would become the dominant power due to its better economic development. Second, the south feared that the north would become the dominant power due to its larger population. Third, minority groups feared discrimination through the three major ethnic groups and therefore wanted to establish more regions to guarantee representation and thereby secure their interests (Gordon 97).

As a result of these developments, when independence was finally achieved on 1 October 1960, Nigeria was finally an independent state, but there was nothing left of the pan-Nigerian ideal that dominated the 1940s. Instead, the nation was divided into three regions that were dominated respectively by the most populous ethnic group: the Hausas in the north, the Yorubas in the southwest and the Igbos in the southeast. Akinwumi describes Nigeria’s political situation at the beginning of independence as follows: “By the time of national independence in 1960, Nigerian politics had become synonymous with the inter-ethnic struggle for power. Political power was perceived as an instrument in the struggle among ethnic groups for the division of national wealth” (155 qtd. in Simpson and Oyetádé 181) So, instead of a vision for the

advancement of the whole nation, Nigeria was characterized by internal conflicts and by “self-seeking ethno regional politics” that focused on the interests of each region and ethnic group (Simpson and Oyetádé 182).

After the first elections, the most powerful political force was the Northern People’s Congress, however they had to form a coalition with the Igbo-led NCNC. Considering the earlier developments, it is not surprising that several laws were passed that favoured northerners over the rest of the population, especially southerners. One of the main purposes of the ‘Northernisation’ policy (established in 1957) was to avoid that the generally better educated and English speaking southerners would be over-represented in the administration and threaten northerners’ access to jobs in the civil service (Simpson and Oyetádé 182). Instead, the policy ruled that northerners would be treated favourably “in the competition for government employment wherever candidates’ qualifications were otherwise similar” (Simpson and Oyetádé 182). This meant that many southerners who already lived and worked in the north lost their jobs. Another discriminatory law concerned the purchase of land. This northern favouritism naturally resulted in great discontent on the part of the people who had been discriminated against, especially Igbo migrants living in the north (Simpson and Oyetádé 182).

When Nigeria became independent in 1960, the country’s constitution specified English as the only official language (Simpson and Oyetádé 172). Although post-independence there has been some discussion concerning language policy, in the end English has remained as the sole “de facto official language in most formal domains at the national level, as under British rule, and without a road map for the establishment of a national language” (Simpson and Oyetádé 183). On the national level English continued to be the language that granted access to spheres of power such as politics, administration, media, and education (Simpson and Oyetádé 183). However, in the north Hausa was established as co-official language for parliamentary discussion in 1963, largely due to the Northernization policy and also as a result of the colonial period during which Hausa was the dominant language of the north for official purposes (Simpson and Oyetádé 184).

In this section the origin of tensions between the north and south have been outlined. It has been explained that the nation’s political instability and lack of a pan-Nigerian vision in the years before and immediately after independence was largely due to power struggles between the various regions. These power struggles were fundamentally based on ethnic division which was the result of the division of colonial territories between colonial powers regardless of the

distribution of indigenous ethnic groups. According to Simpson and Oyetádé, the perceived instability of Nigeria due to ethnic tensions was an important reason why the government avoided the establishment of any language planning policies which would have given an advantage to any ethnic group. Nevertheless, the tensions further intensified in the first half of the 1960s (184). Heerten and Moses argue that at that time there was not much left of the optimism of decolonisation but that the nation was deeply divided along ethnic lines resulting in power struggles and competition for resources among the three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) (173). In the following section I will discuss how these power struggles finally led to the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war.

5.1.3. The Nigerian civil war

The first major violent incident of the ethnicity based power struggles was an Igbo-led military coup in January 1966 which “successfully overthrew the government, eliminating various senior political leaders and seizing full control over the country” (Simpson and Oyetádé 184). The leaders of the coup argued that the motivation behind the coup was to end corruption and to “restor[e] law and order to the country” (Simpson and Oyetádé 184). However, none of the victims killed in the coup were Igbo while almost all (90%) of the people installed in positions of power were Igbo. Because of this, the coup, especially by people in the north, was seen as ethnically motivated and as a threat to the power structures established through the policy of ‘Northernisation’. The Igbo-led coup was followed by “demonstrations [that] led to riots and then to violence against Igbos in the north” (Simpson and Oyetádé 184). Finally, in July 1966 the response to the Igbo-led coup was a “counter-coup initiated by the northerner-dominated army” (Simpson and Oyetádé 184). The effect of the counter-coup was another turnover of power, this time from the Igbos to the northern military leaders, along with the death of “tens of thousands of Igbo residents of the northern region” and finally a “mass exodus of Igbos from the north back to the southeast” (Simpson and Oyetádé 184-185). The Igbo leaders’ answer to the counter-coup was to threaten to declare the independence of the Igbo dominated eastern region of Nigeria as a secessionist state which they finally did on 30 May 1967. On 6 July 1967 the civil war began (Simpson and Oyetádé 185). This war is also commonly known as the Nigerian-Biafran war and the Biafran war since the name of the eastern region that seceded was Biafra (Heerten and Moses 173). It is important to note that only about half of the population of the secessionist state were Igbo, the rest of the people living there identified with other ethnic groups (178).

The Nigerian-Biafran war did not receive a lot of international attention during the first year (1967). However, this was changed through the total blockade imposed by the Federal Government which caused a severe famine as well as a shortage of medical supplies in Biafra and led to major international relief operations in 1968 (174). According to Heerten and Moses, the Biafran war was “the first postcolonial conflict to engender a transnational wave of humanitarian concern” (176). An estimated one to three million people died “from hostilities, disease and starvation during the thirty-month civil war” and over 3 million Igbos were left refugees “crowded into a 2,5000-square-kilometer enclave” (Lovejoy 60). On 6 January 1970 the Biafran forces surrendered and the reintegration of Biafra into Nigeria followed (Lovejoy 60).

This section has discussed the sociolinguistic impact of the British colonisation on Nigeria and the nation’s political developments after independence, particularly the ethnically based power struggles which finally culminated in the Biafran war. Some of these historical developments, for example the differential colonial language policies in the north and the south of the country, have already indicated the complexity of Nigeria’s sociolinguistic situation which in the following section will be explored in detail.

5.2. Sociolinguistic context

Nigeria, inhabited by over 200 million people, is a multilingual country in which more than 500 languages are spoken. Nigeria is also a multi-ethnic country, with 250 to 400 ethnic groups. However, there is no majority ethnic group and even the three largest groups, the Hausas, Yorubas and Igbos, only account for a little less than two thirds of the Nigerian population (The World Factbook, Metz xvi). The Hausas are the ethnic groups with the biggest population (30% of the total population), followed by the Yorubas, the second largest ethnic group (15,5 %), and the Igbos, the third largest ethnic group in Nigeria (15,2 %) (The World Factbook). The Hausas are especially influential in the north of the country. The Yorubas dominate the southwest of the country while the Igbos dominate the southeast of Nigeria. These three areas, the north, the southwest and the southeast are also where the majority of the population lives (Simpson and Oyetádé 174-176). As the great number of languages spoken in Nigeria already suggests, the nation’s sociolinguistic situation is very complex. Adegbiya argues that the languages known and used in Nigeria exist in a hierarchical system and developed a systematic representation of the function and status of all these languages, which is presented below (133-134):

1. English – “Federal official language”

The constitution specifies English as one of the nation’s official languages. It is the most commonly used language in politics and administration on the national as well as the regional level. English is the dominant language in universities and in the media and it is the most frequently used language in written communication.

2. Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo – “National and regional official languages”

Besides English, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, which are considered as the country’s three major ethnic languages, are also specified as official languages in the constitution. Hence, *de jure* the status of the nation’s official language is shared between these three languages and English. But in many domains, especially in politics, public administration and education, English is in a clearly dominant position and the function of official indigenous languages is very much limited to the regional level. Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are “used on national radio and TV”, however, “with largely regional audiences”.

3. “State major language(s) (quasi official at state level)”

This category refers to those languages that are most frequently used on “electronic media (TV and radio) and also in day to day oral communication and administration”. These languages are different in every state.

4. “State minor languages”

This category covers similar functions as the previous category: “state radio and TV broadcasts and public enlightenment campaigns”. The difference is that these languages are less frequently used.

5. “Local government major languages”

Languages in this category are the languages used in “oral communication at the local government level”.

6. “Local government minor languages”

Again, the languages in this category serve a similar function as those in the previous category but are less frequently used.

This table does not only illustrate that the functions and domains of the multiplicity of languages spoken in Nigeria vary considerably (Adegbija 134) but also indicates the prestige of the languages since this is “directly related to language function” (Adegbija 63). The higher up in the hierarchy, the more formal the situations in which the language is usually used. For example, English is the language that is predominantly used in formal domains, including education, and has a very high prestige. At the other extreme are minor ethnic languages of

which frequently not even a written form exists and which are almost exclusively used in informal conversations (Adegbija 63).

The connection between a language and its function is not completely fixed but languages can have different functions. Adegbija argues that in Nigeria especially on the individual level “languages [...] behave more or less like a chameleon” (63). Adegbija mentions a number of factors that determine the acceptability of a language: “occasion, the subject-matter, the participants, the intention of the communicative encounter, and interpersonal goals relating to identity, solidarity, exclusion and committing oneself” (63). These factors reflect aspects of the theories discussed in chapters one through three and suggest that in Nigeria, in some situations the use of a certain language has high symbolic power and serves to secure status and prestige but in other situations the use of another language is more acceptable. However, this flexibility of language use on the individual level, does not apply to the societal level. In formal domains, such as education, governmental administration, and public service, the relationship between language functions, status and prestige are very fixed (63-64). Wolf and Igboanusi argue that the dominance and prestige of English in these domains is largely related to the function of the language (“the superior roles assigned to it”) which is reflected in the dominance of “practically all official aspects of the public domains” (333). In the following two sections the connection between English and domains of power, as well as people’s attitudes towards English in Nigeria will be discussed in detail.

5.2.1. The status of English in Nigeria

Although the Nigerian constitution specifies English and the three major ethnic languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) as the country’s official languages, nevertheless, as in many other former British colonies, English “remains the language of power” (Wolf and Igboanusi 333). The language is not only used for interethnic communication but, most importantly, dominates those spheres of life that are related to power, namely “practically all official aspects of the public domains – government and administration, education, the mass media, the parliament, the judiciary, science and technology, the creative literature” (Wolf and Igboanusi 333). Conversely, the indigenous languages, are generally considered inappropriate in such areas (Adegbija 96). To describe the status and function of English in Nigeria in the words of Bourdieu: English is the legitimate language, the most powerful linguistic capital that is required to obtain symbolic profit in formal situations and for success in all domains of power.

Due to the dominant position of English in all domains of power, English proficiency is a decisive tool for social mobility (126). English is the language of the powerful elite while the majority of the population has no or only limited English proficiency (Adegbija 20).

The reason why the mastery of the legitimate language, English, is limited to a small elite is unequal learning opportunities. Who is offered the opportunity to learn to speak English fluently and who does not is very much connected to class membership (Adegbija 15). According to Adegbija, in Nigeria the relationship between education and English is commonly perceived in the following way: “English is education and education is English” (17). This structural dominance of English in all domains of power, including education, in Nigeria is closely connected to the impact of British colonisation.

Ramanathan argues that language is the colonial instrument of power with the most lasting effects. She claims that the impact of English in the postcolonial area is so strong because of the language’s role within powerful macro-structures, such as educational policies on regional and national levels which all, ultimately, “produce and perpetuate power/ knowledge inequalities between those who have access to English and those who do not” (2). This means that societal power structures, which are largely a colonial legacy, are responsible for inequality in access to English and the division of the population into those who have a chance to succeed in life and those who have little chance of upward social mobility (Ramanathan 2). It can be concluded that the role of the English language in Nigeria during colonisation had far reaching consequences on the power structures in the country and can be read as an example of *elite closure*: the superior position of a small elite is reinforced and secured due to the combination of (a) the dominance of English in all official domains associated with power and the resulting importance of English proficiency for social mobility and socioeconomic success with (b) an unequal distribution of English proficiency among Nigerians due to uneven learning opportunities. However, despite the high symbolic power of English in official domains, people in Nigeria have very positive attitudes towards their native languages.

5.2.2. Attitudes towards indigenous languages in Nigeria

Adegbija explains that most Nigerians feel the greatest attachment to their own ethnicity and their native language (127). In order to gain more insights into Nigerians’ attitudes towards English and indigenous languages Adegbija has conducted a survey on language choices in

Nigeria. Despite, as Adegbiya himself admits, the limited reliability of this questionnaire, given that the survey was conducted among 200 Nigerians (107), the results are still interesting and I will refer to them throughout this section.

For example, the clear majority (80%) of participants indicate that they generally prefer their indigenous mother tongue over English. Nigeria's indigenous languages are especially "loved as vehicles of nationalism, symbols of Nigeria's sovereignty and identity, and tools of cultural identity development and enrichment" (Adegbiya 127). Adegbiya explains that for dealing with all kinds of cultural and traditional matters Nigerians prefer to use their indigenous languages. English is generally considered inappropriate in the domain of cultural expression and traditional ceremonies, etc. (135). Important cultural areas in which ethnic languages are preferred are "oral literature, including riddles, jokes, proverbs, praise singing, traditional religious ceremonies, greeting norms and traditional discussions on dancing, on the agrarian culture". This preference of indigenous languages for cultural expression shows the "cultural saliency" of indigenous languages (Adegbiya 127). The notion of indigenous languages as symbols of cultural identity, Adegbiya argues, has an important impact on Nigerians' positive attitudes towards indigenous languages (127).

In contrast to the clear preference for indigenous languages in the domain of culture and tradition stands the widely-spread disregard of indigenous languages for educational purposes where English is in a clearly dominant position (135). This tendency is also reflected by the results of Adegbiya's survey that consider language choice for different areas of discussion. The results clearly indicate a division between English and indigenous languages. For example, for the discussion of academic topics English is generally the preferred language. Adegbiya argues that the reason for this is that people acquire knowledge about academic topics in English since the medium of academic education is generally English. By contrast, indigenous languages are clearly preferred for the discussion of topics that are associated with "traditional aspects of Nigerian life such as marriage, burial ceremonies, expression of condolences or of special greetings" (Adegbiya 110).

Adegbiya explains that an important reason for these code choices, especially in situations that are interwoven with traditional ways of doing things, is that in English there simply are "no acceptable equivalents for many of the culturally related issues" (110) which would be equally able to "convey such delicate sensibilities and nuances" (111). Translations into English, Adegbiya further argues, are unsatisfactory because they cannot reflect the "metaphorical

illocutionary force” of the indigenous expression (110). Finally, the survey also revealed that some participants sometimes code-switch between English and their indigenous first language (Adegbija 111). The different status and acceptability of English and native languages in different spheres of life reflects Bourdieu’s notion that the acceptability of a language depends on its specific relation with a field. A factor that can have an important impact on language choice and acceptability that has not yet been properly addressed in this section is the connection between languages and ethnic identity.

In section 4.3. (‘Language and ethnic identity’) the relationship between ethnicity and language has already been discussed. Now these insights into this issue will be applied to the specific context of Nigeria. For this discussion of language and ethnicity is important to consider that there exists no clear one-to-one overlap between language and ethnicity in Nigeria. At the beginning of this chapter it was noted that in Nigeria there are more than 250 ethnic groups, and more than 500 languages are spoken (CIA). Some of these languages are spoken by more than one ethnic group and there are also ethnic groups within which several languages are considered as native languages by different people who still all identify with the same ethnic group (Adegbija 8-9). Furthermore, although languages do concentrate in some areas, the more commonly spoken languages are spread throughout the whole country (Simpson and Oyetádé 173). An important reason for the existence of such a multiplicity of languages and ethnic groups in Nigeria is that the British colonisers did not form the territory of the present day Nigeria in order to avoid the division of ethnic groups (Simpson and Oyetádé 172). In fact, the borderlines were drawn rather arbitrarily. This had serious effects for the ethnic groups: the Yoruba and the Hausa were separated into different states and, most importantly, a multiplicity of distinct ethnic groups was now gathered in one administrative territory (Falola 60).

Despite the large number of ethnic languages spoken in Nigeria, some general observations can be made. In general, it can be said that in Nigeria, in certain situations, ethnicity can have an important impact on language choice and the use of language accommodation strategies such as convergence and divergence. For example, when two people who identify themselves as members of the same ethnic group and who share a common indigenous language communicate, the most likely scenario is that they choose the indigenous language to interact with each other (Adegbija 113). The reason for this, according to Adegbija, is not just communicative effectiveness but also that the use of the indigenous language is the easiest way to express ethnic identity (113).

However, Adegbjia adds that some dialects of ethnic language, for example certain Igbo dialects, are not mutually intelligible. In such situations, interlocutors usually choose to use English to ensure communicative effectiveness (114). Although “many Nigerians are generally proud to speak the language that pinpoints their ethnicity”, it is important to consider that the degree of identification with indigenous languages varies according to the status of the ethnic group (Adegbjia 114). Adegbjia argues that people who belong to ethnic groups with high status and institutional support, predominantly the three major ethnic groups Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, then speakers feel more proud to use their language. This implies that members of minor ethnic communities are less likely to use their indigenous languages (Adegbjia 114).

PART II: Analysis

1. Collective level

1.1. Domains of English and Igbo use

In the theory part, it has been discussed how in multilingual societies certain domains of social life are often associated with the use of a specific language. In this section, I will demonstrate how in the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* these domains of social life are divided between English and Igbo, the native Nigerian language that is most frequently used in the novel. I will show that this divide is not arbitrary but reflects the symbolic power of the languages in the respective domains.

1.1.1. The dominant position of English in domains of power

There are several scenes in the novel that indicate which domains are dominated by English, namely domains that are related to power such as the media, science, and politics. The first domain that is shown to be clearly dominated by English is the media, specifically newspapers, the radio and lifestyle magazines. In one scene it is described how Kainene is reading an article written by Richard in the *Observer* (Adichie 308) and in another scene, Odenigbo is “wav[ing] around a copy of the *Daily Times*” (Adichie 75). As the title of the newspapers are in English and Richard’s article is written in English, it can be assumed that the newspapers are published in English. In another scene, the language that is used on the radio is transcribed in very formal and elaborate English: “The Constitution is suspended and the regional government and elected assemblies are hereby dissolved. My dear countryman [...]” (Adichie 123-124). Also, a lifestyle magazine called “*Lagos Life*” is mentioned twice. Again, just like the newspapers, since the title is in English it can be assumed that the magazine too is published in English. The following two scenes in which the magazine is mentioned indicate that the magazine’s target audience is financially privileged and can afford a luxurious lifestyle. In the first scene “[s]he [Kainene] was flipping through the copy of *Lagos Life*, her silk robe tied tightly around her skinny waist” (Adichie 35). The second scene in which the magazine is mentioned unfolds at a party where a photographer wants to take a picture of Kainene’s necklace for the magazine because “[t]he necklace will be featured in tomorrow’s *Lagos Life*” (Adichie 58). The silk robe and the necklace are luxury items that point at Kainene’s (and her family’s) wealth and, consequently, their powerful social status. It is significant that a magazine dedicated to a luxurious lifestyle is

published in English as this emphasises the connection between English and power. But not only the media, also the domain of science and politics are firmly connected with English as I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

It is mentioned repeatedly in the novel that Odenigbo has a variety of scientific books and journals that are all written in English. In one scene, for example, it is described that “Ugwu did not understand most of the sentences in the book, but he made a show of reading them” (Adichie 18). Since the book belongs to Odenigbo, who is very proficient in English, and Ugwu does not understand its content, it can be assumed that the book is written in English. The assumption that the scientific discourse in Nigeria is clearly dominated by English is supported by another scene in which the use of English in academic journals is indicated: “Harrison [another houseboy] touches the pile of journals on the table. ‘You are reading all of these?’ he asked in English. ‘Yes.’ Ugwu had saved them from the study dustbin; the *Mathematical Annals* were incomprehensible, but at least he had read, if not understood, a few pages of *Socialist Review*” (Adichie 210). It is significant that Harrison uses English to ask Ugwu about the journals although both men are more proficient in Igbo. It might simply seem more adequate for Harrison to use English to talk about this scientific literature in English. More importantly though, speaking English in that situation might make Harrison feel less ignorant; he might not know anything about the subjects of these journals but, at least, he is able to demonstrate his knowledge of English. Harrison’s use of English to raise his status and conceal his ignorance contrasts with the elite’s effortless use of English in the discussion of political issues. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the connection between English and education and how the elite’s privileged access to education and English proficiency enables them to participate in domains of power.

Corresponding to the use of English in newspapers and scientific publications, Odenigbo and his circle of intellectual friends clearly prefer the use of English for their discussions of political issues. One can surmise that these conversations are in English due to Ugwu’s difficulties to follow them.

Ugwu did not [...] entirely understand the conversations of Master and his friends but listened anyway and heard that the world had to do more about the black people killed in Sharpeville, that the spy plane shot down in Russia served the Americans right, that DeGaullee was being clumsy in Algeria, that the United Nations would never get rid of Tshombe in Katanga. (Adichie 17)

The reason for the use of English in these discussions is probably simply that Odenigbo and his friends are better trained and linguistically better equipped to discuss such topics in English rather than in Igbo. The setting of these meetings is so closely linked with English that Odenigbo even uses English to introduce Ugwu to his friends: “More friends visited on weekends, and when Ugwu came out to serve drinks, Master would sometimes introduce him – in English, of course” (Adichie 18). However, it is also mentioned that, after the meeting with his friends, Odenigbo sometimes talks to Ugwu in an “English-inflected Igbo” [...] “mostly [...] about things Ugwu did not understand, as if the brandy made him forget that Ugwu was not one of his visitors” (Adichie 18). That Odenigbo chooses to use Igbo to talk with Ugwu about issues which he would normally discuss in English, can be interpreted as downward convergence. Hence Odenigbo here uses a language with a lower status but one that enhances communicative effectiveness. It becomes clear, however, that Odenigbo is not accustomed to discuss these topics in Igbo as Ugwu notices the influence English has on his Igbo in these conversations.

Apart from books, scientific journals and the media, the novel suggests that in Nigeria the most significant domain that is dominated by English, is education. To support this argument subsequently three scenes are going to be discussed in which the recognition of English as legitimate language and the status of English education becomes evident. During the civil war Olanna runs a school to continue the children’s education. Olanna argues that they “will teach them [the children] to speak perfect English and perfect Igbo” so that “when the war is over, they will all fit back easily into regular school” (Adichie 291). This statement suggests that Olanna regards both English and Igbo important for the children’s education. However, the importance of English seems to be higher since Olanna only names English, but not Igbo, besides mathematics and civics, as one of the three subjects that they “will teach [...] every day” (Adichie 291). This recognition of English as the legitimate language is also shown by the book donations of some parents to Olanna’s school. The book donation consists of “six copies of *Chike and the River* [and] eight simplified editions of *Pride and Prejudice*” (Adichie 292). Since the book titles are in English, it can be assumed that the books are written in English as well. *Chike and the River* is a novel written by Chinua Achebe, Nigeria’s most famous author and probably one of the most influential writers of the African continent. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel considered a classic in British literature by the well-known author Jane Austen. The selection of these two books can be interpreted as a political statement that classic British literature but also works by Nigerian authors should be read and studied at school. However,

the fact that only books written in English and especially two more copies of *Pride and Prejudice* were donated, indicates the recognition of English and particularly British English as the legitimate language in Nigeria. Less explicitly than in the previous scenes, in the following conversation between Ugwu and Odenigbo the dominant position of English in education is expressed through Odenigbo's language choice. When Odenigbo learns that Ugwu has stopped going to school after only very few years of schooling, Odenigbo expresses his view of the importance of education first in Igbo but then switches to English.

‘Why did you stop school?’ ‘My father’s crops failed, sah.’ Master nodded slowly. ‘Why didn’t your father find somebody to lend him your school fees?’ ‘Sah?’ ‘Your father should have borrowed!’ *Master snapped, and then, in English*, ‘Education is priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don’t have the tools to understand exploitation?’ ‘Yes, sah! Ugwu nodded vigorously. (Adichie 11; emphasis added)

It can be argued that the reason why Odenigbo formulates his statement on the value of education in English and not in Igbo is his educational training to discuss such issues in English, as has been discussed above. However, it can also be asserted that the use of English here emphasises that in Nigeria a fundamental relation exists between socioeconomic status and exceptional English proficiency that can only be developed through adequate education. It can be concluded that the novel clearly indicates the dominance of English in domains that are connected to power: the media, science, politics and education. Now, of course, the question arises whether a similar dominant position exists for Igbo in other domains.

1.1.2. The connection between the Igbo language and Igbo culture

In this section, I will first examine the connection between Igbo and the domains of cultural expression and tradition, and subsequently I will discuss the connection between the Igbo language and identification with the Igbo community. The following scene illustrates the existence of a deep connection between Igbo and traditional practices of the Igbo culture: during the meetings of Odenigbo's circle of intellectual friends, often kola nut is served – “Whenever Ugwu brought out the kola nut, Master would say, ‘Doc [“Dr Patel, the Indian man [...] Master called him Doc] you know the kola nut does not understand English,’ before going on to bless the kola nut in Igbo.” (Adichie 18). Although the language of communication in these meetings is generally English and even though Dr Patel does not speak Igbo, Odenigbo uses Igbo to “bless the kola nut”. This means that the language use in this scene is definitely not informed by a concern for communicative effectiveness. Instead the use of Igbo for the kola nut ritual emphasises the existence of a connection between traditional Igbo rituals with the Igbo

language. In fact, in the Igbo culture the “kola nut is a great icon, a socio-cultural icon coded with several meanings” and the “presenting, breaking and sharing [of the] kola nut” is a traditional ritual in the Igbo culture (Ekundayo & Ugwu 99). This explanation is not provided in the novel and the reader can only assume that to “bless the kola nut” is a traditional Igbo ritual. Nevertheless, it can be argued that in this scene the connection between the Igbo language and Igbo culture is described rather explicitly.

This connection between the Igbo language and the Igbo culture is emphasised in a less explicit but more frequent manner via the scattered use of Igbo words throughout the novel. These words are always italicised and are usually left untranslated. However, in most cases the meaning of the words and phrases becomes clear through the context. These Igbo words very frequently refer to cultural practices, rituals, beliefs, food, dishes or plants that are all closely connected with the Igbo culture. For example, in the novel the following vegetables, herbs and dishes are mentioned, some of them repeatedly: *akpu* (Adichie 7; “seed yam”, Echeruo 19), *akidi* (Adichie 318; “cowpea”, Echeruo 16), *ugu* (Adichie 8, 96; “pumpkin”, Awde & Wambu 58), *arigbe* (Adichie 15,17; a “plant which gives out a fragrant smell when burnt; used both as medicine and as seasoning” Echeruo 25) and *jollof rice* (Adichie 23, 92, 95; a special rice dish). Also, *ube* (Adichie 8) and *kuka* (Adichie 40), two different trees, *agbada* (Adichie 59), a special type of clothing, *obi* (Adichie 71), a special type of house and *umunna* (8, 92), a special concept of neighbourhood and *oga* (Adichie 38), a game, are mentioned. A traditional festival, *ori-okpa* festival and *mmuo*, “spirits; belonging to other than the human world” (Echeruo 101), which form an important part of the *ori-okpa* festival (Adichie 86) and also the *dibia* (Adichie 74, 87, 91, 99), a “doctor or medicine man [...] [and] fortune-teller” (Echeruo 38), are mentioned several times.

In two scenes two traditional songs are sung in Igbo. In the first scene, it is Ugwu who sings a song after Odenigbo has asked him to sing a song: “‘Sing me a song. What songs do you know? Sing!’ Master pulled his glasses off. [...] Ugwu began to sing an old song he had learned on his father’s farm. His heart hit his chest painfully. ‘*Nzogbo nzogbo enyimba, enyi...*’ (Adichie 12). In the second scene, it is Odenigbo’s mother who sings a song while cooking: “Back in the kitchen, Ugwu was surprised to hear Master’s mother singing a gently melodious church song: *Nya nya oya mu ga-ana. Na m metu onu uwe ya aka....*” (Adichie 97). Songs are an important part of every culture and through them emotions are frequently expressed. Therefore, the practice of singing songs in Igbo indicates that for Ugwu and Odenigbo’s mother, who identify

as Igbo, the Igbo language and Igbo culture are connected. These scenes also suggest a connection between the expression of emotions and the Igbo language which will be discussed in detail in chapter 2 ('Interpersonal level') which focuses on interpersonal relationships.

To conclude, the use of Igbo for the songs and all the words that refer to traditional Igbo rituals and practices, including clothing, food, plants, housing and other culture specific concepts, suggests that these domains are deeply connected with the Igbo language. The purpose of the frequent use of Igbo could arguably be to contribute to the authenticity of the local setting within the reader's imagination. It is important to consider that it is a contested issue whether a culture can be expressed through language (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 51-52). However, Igbo culture and cultural practices as well as the use of plants and herbs for traditional dishes is certainly not what is habitually associated with the English language. Therefore, the use of some Igbo words, rather than an English translation, adds meaning to this novel and reflects the fact that this novel is set in Nigeria where not only English but many other languages, including Igbo, are spoken. It can be argued that the use of Igbo and other native languages besides English, is a powerful tool to raise the reader's awareness of the complex multicultural and multilingual setting of the novel. This is particularly relevant due to the central role of language in the Nigerian civil war that it is at the centre of this novel.

The previously discussed use of Igbo to describe traditional practices and rituals suggests that the Igbo language is deeply connected with the Igbo community. Now this notion will be extended to the connection between the Igbo language and identification with the Igbo community. To be precise, I will demonstrate how the novel indicates that the Igbo language is a salient dimension of the social and ethnic identity of people who identify with the Igbo community. Even though social and ethnic identity are not domains in the same way as the media, science, politics and education are, the significance of Igbo for social identity can be compared to the status of English in the aforementioned domains. In the following paragraph, the deep connection between the Igbo language and social and ethnic identity will be briefly explored.

The relation between the Igbo language and the feeling of belonging to the Igbo community and its homeland, is exemplified in a scene that unfolds in the following situation: during her visit in Kano Olanna must witness the dreadful killings of Igbos and even sees the dead bodies of some of her relatives. Olanna only closely escapes the violence herself and is finally on a

train to Nsukka, her home, when “[s]he closed her eyes [...] and kept them closed for hours [...] until *somebody shouted in Igbo*, ‘*Anyi agafeela! We have crossed [translation] the River Niger! We have reached home!*’” (Adichie 149; emphasis added except for Igbo phrase). The use of Igbo to announce the arrival home after having lived through an extremely stressful and threatening situation is significant because it demonstrates which language the person who shouted this message of relief, and arguably also the other people on the train, who are all Igbos, including Olanna, associates with “home”. “Home” is a place where people feel safe. In this case home is the place where the Igbos feel safe enough to speak their language. Hence, the use of Igbo, the very same language that only hours before would have been a death sentence – because the killers identified their victims mainly based on their language use – now indicates a shared social identity and sense of belonging to the same “home”.

In conclusion, this section has discussed how the novel demonstrates the division of domains between English and Igbo. Whereas Igbo seems to be connected with Igbo culture and the social, cultural or ethnic identity of people who identify with the Igbo community, English dominates all domains of power. In the following section, I will demonstrate the correlation between English proficiency and membership in Nigeria’s educated and rich elite.

1.2. The connection between English proficiency, whiteness and class

There are various scenes in the novel which serve to illustrate how much differences in linguistic proficiency, particularly in English, are related to class differences. Before moving on to the detailed analysis of such a scene, the connection between the elite and exceptional English proficiency in the novel shall be discussed briefly. Odenigbo as well as Olanna and her twin sister Kainene belong to the educated elite of Nigeria. All three of them have academic degrees and successful careers. Kainene is a successful businesswoman and Odenigbo and Olanna hold teaching positions at the university of Nsukka. In addition to their education, the social status of Olanna and Kainene is further strengthened by their extremely wealthy and influential family. Apart from their successful careers, what Odenigbo, Olanna and Kainene have in common is their exceptional fluency in English, the legitimate language in Nigeria. Olanna and Kainene even speak English with a British accent that they most certainly started to acquire during their English medium education. Olanna and Kainene attended “Heathgrove”, an exclusive, very expensive British style secondary school in Nigeria since their “father thought [they] were too young to be sent abroad, but he was determined that [they] [were] as

European as possible". This school was very exclusive, in fact, Kainene argues that "[t]here were very few of [them] there. It is so exclusive, many Nigerians don't even know it exists" (Adichie 61). Olanna and Kainene further developed their English accent during their university education in London. Thus Odenigbo, and Olanna and Kainene in particular are representatives of a very educated and influential Nigerian elite who are characterized by their exceptional proficiency in English.

A scene that explores the relationship between class membership and language proficiency is the following one in which Jomo, the gardener who works for Odenigbo, offers Ugwu bush meat which Ugwu rejects in English: "I cannot cook bush meat here!" Ugwu said in English, laughing" (Adichie 92). Jomo immediately reacts to this by expressing his admiration for Ugwu's increased English proficiency and accent: "Jomo turned to look at him. '*Dianyi*, you now speak English just like the children of the lecturers.' Ugwu nodded, happy to hear the compliment [...]" (Adichie 92). So, Ugwu rejects Jomo's offer because he "cannot cook bush meat here" in English. "Here" refers to the family Ugwu is working for. Since Olanna and Odenigbo belong to the elite he considers it inappropriate to "cook bush meat here" (Adichie 92). Shortly after Jomo's compliment for Ugwu's English skills it is mentioned that Ugwu often still has an accent when speaking English that he refers to as a "thick [...]" bush accent" whereas "those children with their cream-pampered skin and their effortless English sniggered whenever Mrs Oguike [Ugwu's teacher] asked him a question because of how he pronounced his words, how thick his bush accent was" (Adichie 93). It can be argued that in this scene two diametrically opposed worlds are present. On the one hand, "here" is the upper class, the educated elite who speak English fluently, for whom bush meat cannot be cooked and whose children have "cream-pampered skin". These scenes clearly establish that the upper class is associated with English fluency and whiteness. On the other hand, there is the working class, people like Ugwu, Jomo and Harrison, who work for the upper class or elite, are in an inferior position, have only limited education, and are described to have "insistent bad English" or a "thick [...]" bush accent" (Adichie 93). In short, this scene indicates that English proficiency is not only closely connected with status and power but also with social class and whiteness. This notion will be further discussed in the following section, which focuses on the characters' attitudes towards Received Pronunciation.

1.3. The status and power of English and Received Pronunciation (RP)

It has already been established that the novel suggests that English is the most powerful symbolic capital in Nigeria. This observation will be further explored in this section as it will be demonstrated that speaking with the ‘right’ accent, especially Received Pronunciation (RP), is often looked upon favourably and functions as a powerful resource.

1.3.1. Positive attitudes towards RP

At the school Olanna runs during the civil war Ugwu experiences that some people do not want their children to be taught by him since they do not consider a houseboy to have the necessary (English) skills to work as a teacher. This behaviour is contrasted with the reaction of the parents when they see and most importantly hear Olanna speak: “[t]hey looked at Olanna, her beautiful face, her undemanding fees, and *her perfect English*, with *awe-filled respect*” (Adichie 292; emphasis added). This example clearly illustrates the symbolic power of the ability to speak “perfect English” because people consider Olanna’s English proficiency as a prestigious feature that demands respect. The reason for this behaviour is arguably the existence of powerful associations between English and power, hence the dominant status of English in all kinds of domains, including education and the resulting generalized positive attitude and respect for anybody with English proficiency.

In the following scene, it becomes evident that Olanna is very aware of the benefits of speaking with a “proper” accent, as she relentlessly works on her students’ pronunciation: “‘Enunciate! Enunciate!’ Olanna would say to her students, her voice rising. ‘Set-tle. Set-tle. The word has no c!’”. And “[b]ecause she made each of her students read aloud every day, Ugwu made his own class recite simple words aloud.” (Adichie 293). The importance that Olanna and Ugwu give to pronunciation training suggests that in Nigeria it is an advantage to be able to speak with a “proper” accent. The following observation, however, exemplifies Bourdieu’s notion that those children who already start to acquire the legitimate language at home have a clear advantage: Baby, although “[s]he was the youngest, not yet six in a class of seven-year-olds, [...] flawlessly reads *cat*, *pan*, *bed* in an accent that was like Olanna’s” (Adichie 293). Because Baby’s adoptive mother, Olanna, who is her principal caretaker, speaks with a “posh English accent”, Baby has already started to learn to speak with that accent in the domestic domain. This section has demonstrated that the novel suggests that Nigerians generally have very positive attitudes towards English and especially RP. In the following section I will show how

these attitudes are connected to the function of English and RP as powerful linguistic capital and how, in some situations, the symbolic power of this linguistic capital is so big that people who possess and use it receive preferential treatment.

1.3.2. Preferential treatment due to RP

In the first scene that I want to analyse in this section, Ugwu is given preferential treatment because of his English proficiency. This is especially significant because Ugwu only started to improve his very limited English skills when he began to live with Odenigbo and Olanna. However, the following scene suggests that Ugwu's English proficiency has improved so drastically that he can now use the symbolic power of the language for his own benefit: in the middle of the civil war, Ugwu is confronted with a soldier who is searching for "idle civilian[s]", hence people who do not actively support the Biafran war. The following passage shows that the soldier is apparently surprised and impressed by Ugwu's English proficiency and his claim to be a teacher.

The soldier was staring at him. 'Good afternoon,' Ugwu said. 'Who are you?' the soldier asked. 'Are you an idle civilian?' 'I am a teacher.' 'A teacher? Onye nkuzi?' He swung his gun back and forth. 'Yes,' *Ugwu responded in English*. 'We organize classes in this neighbourhood and teach the young ones the ideals of the Biafran cause.' *He hoped his English sounded like Olanna's*; he hoped, too, that his affection would frighten this soldier into not asking him any more questions. 'Which classes?' the soldier asked, in a near mumble. He looked both impressed and uncertain. 'We focus on civics and mathematics and English. The Director of Mobilization has sponsored our efforts.' The soldier stared. (Adichie 296; emphasis added)

This scene shows how Ugwu uses different types of capital, social capital and cultural capital, to reject the soldier's suspicion of him being an "idle civilian" and to gain his sympathy. Ugwu uses social capital to impress the soldier by mentioning the support of their school through "[t]he Director of Mobilization". Also, Ugwu's use of English functions as a powerful cultural capital here. Ugwu responds to the soldier's question in English although the soldier addressed him in Igbo. The soldier's use of Igbo points towards his limited proficiency in English. Otherwise, the soldier would have probably used English due to the already discussed associations of English with power. Unlike the soldier, Ugwu is proficient enough in English to be able to use his linguistic capital to gain the soldier's sympathy and respect. Ugwu's awareness of the potential power of English in this situation is indicated by the description of Ugwu's hopes that his "English sounded like Olanna's". The analysis of the following scene shows how Olanna herself uses her "proper English accent" to obtain preferential treatment.

As the civil war develops the civil population is increasingly affected by health problems due to food shortages as well as a lack of medication. This happens to Baby, Olanna's and Odenigbo's (adoptive) child, who falls sick: "[t]owards the end of the rainy season, Baby began to cough in drawn-out whistles" (Adichie 263). When Olanna takes Baby to the hospital the following scene unfolds: "She told the nurse that she was a colleague of his [Dr Nwala] 'It's terribly urgent,' she said, and *kept her English accent crisp and her head held high*. A nurse showed her into his office promptly" (Adichie 263; emphasis added). This scene exemplifies two important theoretical concepts: Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital, linguistic habitus, the language market, and language as symbolic power, as well as Meyers-Scotton's idea of *elite closure*.

Firstly, since Olanna's use of a "crisp" English accent leads to the desired result of immediate medical treatment, in this scene the powerful status of English and particularly the ability to speak with a "crisp" British accent becomes evident. The communicative encounter depicted by this scene is an example of a communicative interaction in which the ability to speak a certain linguistic code, in this case a 'posh' English accent, is used with the purpose of obtaining a certain profit. Since the use of the "crisp" English accent is successful, the scene illustrates the status and symbolic power of English, particularly RP, in the context of postcolonial Nigeria as it is portrayed in the novel. Corresponding to the extreme conditions produced by the civil war, the famine and lack of medical equipment the profit obtained in exchange for linguistic capital, in this case, is extreme: it is the increased chance of Baby's survival. Hence, in this context the symbolic power of the RP English accent is so big that it becomes the powerful currency that potentially creates the difference between life and death.

Secondly, this scene at the hospital can also be interpreted as an example of *elite closure*, a concept that is very closely connected to the function of language as symbolic power. Olanna's "crisp" English accent is juxtaposed with the Nigerian Pidgin of another woman who has already been waiting in the corridor: "One of the women sitting in the corridor cursed. '*Tufiakwa* [*"God forbid"* in Nigerian Pidgin, Naija Lingo]! We have been waiting since dawn! Is it because we don't *talk through our nose like white people*?" (Adichie 263). As the woman argues, she and Olanna are in the same situation; in fact, she and other (ordinary) people, unlike Olanna, have already been waiting for a long time to be treated. However, the decisive difference is that Olanna, a member of the elite, in this situation can use English, the dominant language, with the 'right' kind of accent as an instrument to reinforce her status. The ability to

speak RP, which is deeply connected with whiteness, is a privilege that ordinary people, like the woman, do not have since, as the woman remarks, they “don’t talk through [their] nose like white people” (Adichie 263). That Olanna is given preferential treatment due to her ability to use the dominant language is, as has just been discussed, based on the divergent symbolic power of the women’s linguistic capital. This does not only point towards class-based power asymmetries but also indicates that the elite and their way of speaking is associated with whiteness.

There are two more things that are important to note in this scene: (1) Olanna not only uses language as symbolic capital but also uses it as social capital and (2) her “choice” to use the language with the most powerful linguistic capital in this field is not the result of conscious calculation. When Olanna tells a nurse that she knows Dr Nwala personally, that she is “an old colleague of his” (Adichie 263), she uses her social capital to obtain a goal, in this case to receive preferential medical treatment. However, Olanna seems to be aware, albeit unconsciously, that the social capital of the personal acquaintance with the doctor, as well as stressing the urgency of her case, will not suffice to be treated with priority. These other strategies are certainly helpful but the most decisive factor seems to be the language Olanna uses to make her request, namely English with a “crisp” accent, which is commonly associated with the upper class and, most importantly, with whiteness. However, there is no evidence that Olanna consciously decides to speak this way. Therefore, it can be argued that Olanna’s use of language reflects Bourdieu’s notion of the linguistic habitus which, usually through an unconscious process, enables people to anticipate the most positively evaluated and accepted language to use in a given situation in order to gain symbolic profit.

1.3.3. Negative attitudes towards RP

It has been demonstrated that generally in the novel English, particularly RP, is a powerful symbolic capital. Yet there is also one scene in which speaking with a “proper English accent” is not positively evaluated. When Olanna is introduced to Miss Adebayo, the woman disapprovingly comments on Olanna’s accent: “‘And what a proper English accent,’ Miss Adebayo murmured, with a pitying smile [...]” (Adichie 49). On the one hand, this comment confirms the already discussed association between certain languages and social classes. It can be assumed that Miss Adebayo, based on Olanna’s way of speaking English with a “proper English accent”, guesses Olanna’s privileged upbringing in a rich family. However, when

Olanna recalls Miss Adebayo's criticism of her accent, she refers to her accent as "her mimicking-the-oppressor English accent" (Adichie 51). This comment suggests that Olanna does not interpret Miss Adebayo's disapproval with her way of speaking as a criticism of her family's financial privileges that gave Olanna the opportunities to develop "a posh English accent" in the first place. Instead, Miss Adebayo apparently considers speaking with RP an unacceptable expression of whiteness and agreement with Britain's colonial activities in Nigeria. However, it must be added that Miss Adebayo's criticism of Olanna's way of speaking, is in fact very ironic. Miss Adebayo does not only make abundant use of English during the discussion with Odenigbo and their other friends. But, despite her criticism of Olanna's "proper English accent", even Miss Adebayo uses English to add power to her rude and sarcastic comment on Olanna's appearance. She calls Olanna "illogically pretty" (Adichie 49) which is a rather formal expression and therefore emphasises Miss Adebayo's own exceptional English fluency. To sum up, this section has shown that two characters in the novel, Miss Adebayo and the woman at the hospital, critically reflect on the connection between the power of English and whiteness. Nevertheless, English and particularly RP often serve as powerful capitals that can be exchanged for valuable resources such as preferential medical treatment. However, in the next section, which focuses on the symbolic power of languages in life-threatening situations during the civil war, I will demonstrate that in the novel English is not always the language with the greatest symbolic power.

1.4. The symbolic power of languages in life-threatening situations

The focus of the following section is the analysis of scenes in which the symbolic power of languages other than English and the function of these language as an instrument of power becomes evident. However, sometimes the analysis of the scenes requires to address other issues as well that are reflected by the theoretical framework of the thesis, such as the relation between language and ethnic identity. In the following sections I will show how in different situations a particular linguistic capital, sometimes in combination with social capital, is extremely powerful in terms of procuring a certain profit, including the most valuable of all resources, the characters' life.

1.4.1. Arzize's proficiency in Yoruba saves her and Olanna's lives

During Olanna's stay in Kano (located in the north of the country, a region dominated by Hausas) to visit her pregnant cousin Arize and her family, the two women live a terrifying

experience with the violence of the civil war. The following scene reflects Bourdieu's notion of language and symbolic power and is also worth analysing through the lens of social and ethnolinguistic identity. The two women are shopping when "[s]omebody from the crowd called out, 'We are counting the *Igbo* people. Oya, come and identify yourself. *You are Igbo?*'" (Adichie 132; emphasis added). The two women probably would have been killed if it would not have been for Arize's reaction to "star[t] to *speak fluent, loud Yoruba*" after which "[t]he crowd lost interest in them" (Adichie 132; emphasis added).

This scene not only shows the violent atmosphere against Igbo people in the north of Nigeria but also how easily the two women are able to escape due to speaking a certain language. It is important to note that, in contrast to the previously analysed scene (at the hospital), here it is not English but Yoruba, one of the three major ethnic languages of Nigeria, which is the most powerful, in fact life-saving, linguistic capital. Olanna's academic education, her fluent English, which so frequently functions as a powerful instrument, has no such power here, it is basically insignificant or even dangerous in this situation. Consequently, the comparison of this scene with the previously discussed scenes in which English serves as powerful symbolic capital, reflects the notion that the acceptability, or usefulness, of a language always depends on the specific characteristics of a situation, the relationship between a particular discourse and language market.

This situation also shows how similar the ethnic groups in Nigeria in fact must be if only speaking the language is satisfactory to eliminate or confirm the suspicion of being Igbo. Olanna reflects shortly after the "experience": "She couldn't believe how easy it had been to deny who they were, to shrug off being Igbo" (Adichie 133). Accordingly, it can be argued that the scene described above is a prime example of the effect of categorization, as it is discussed by *Social Identity Theory*, namely the emphasis of similarities within the in-group and of differences with the out-group. Apparently, the only or at least most salient difference between ethnic groups in this context is considered to be language. However, as is indicated by the scene, in this context it is apparently not a valid category to identify somebody's ethnic belonging or identification with a certain (ethnic) group. The women, in fact, do identify as Igbo, but this is not detected by the people due to Arize's Yoruba language skills and her quick reaction to use the language. Therefore, it can be argued that this scene can ultimately also be read to reveal the absurdity of the conflict since, in fact, there does not seem to be any difference, at least not

one that is easily distinguishable with any validity, between people belonging to different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

In conclusion, this scene indicates the extremely powerful consequences of speaking the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ language in the context of the Nigerian civil war. This effect is based on the extremely high salience of language for identifying ethnic groups in this context which, however, is contradictory to the inadequacy of basing judgments of ethnic belonging on the demonstration of linguistic skills also shown by the scene. It can be argued that this scene illustrates that what informed the ethnically motivated killings during the civil war is an essentialist notion of ethnic identity. Since the killers murdered everybody who spoke Igbo, it seems clear that for the killers, language is the one and only characteristic that differentiates one ethnic group from another. For the killers, the language a person uses determines the person’s ethnic identity and consequently, if that language is Igbo, for them, it justifies the death of that person. However, several scenes in the novel demonstrate how absurd and problematic such an essentialist notion of ethnic identity is.

For example, in the following scene Madu, a friend of Kainene, realizes that to make assumptions about a person’s ethnic identity based on the person’s language use is completely arbitrary and often simply wrong: “Madu did not seem to hear her [Kainene], ‘So many of us are gone,’ he said. [...] and these were men who believed in Nigeria and didn’t care for tribe. After all, Udodi *spoke better Hausa than he spoke Igbo*, and look now how they slaughtered him” (Adichie 141; emphasis added). Madu mourns the death of a friend who apparently was killed because he was identified as Igbo even though he “spoke better Hausa than Igbo” and “didn’t care for tribe”. Due to the killing of his friend, Madu seems to realize how problematic and arbitrary it is to determine people’s ethnic identity based on the languages they speak.

The problematic perception, that ethnic identity can be determined based on a person’s language skills, is examined in additional scenes throughout the novel. In the following scene, which is set in the early sixties, years before the outbreak of the civil war, it becomes evident that in Nigeria no one-to-one overlap between ethnicity and language exists: “Olanna sat with them [her uncle Mbaezi and his friend Abdulmalik] for a while, but their Hausa was too swift, too difficult to follow. She wished she were fluent in Hausa and Yoruba, like her uncle and cousin [Arize] were, something she would gladly exchange her French and Latin for” (Adichie 40-41). This passage clearly indicates that Olanna’s cousin Arize and her uncle Mbaezi, who

identify as Igbo, do not only speak Igbo but also Hausa and Yoruba. Olanna even admits that knowledge of these native languages might be more useful than her French and Latin skills. Olanna is of course not aware at this point that soon proficiency in Hausa and Yoruba is not only useful for conversation with people who do not speak Igbo or English. In the following sections I will discuss more scenes in which speaking the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ native Nigerian language has drastic consequences during the civil war due to the killer’s essentialist notion of ethnic identity.

1.4.2. Mohammed’s proficiency in Hausa saves his and Olanna’s lives

During Olanna’s visit to Kano she experiences the violence against the Igbos again, this time, much more drastically than before when Arize was able to save them both relatively easily. Olanna is at Mohammed’s house when there is a sudden outbreak of violence that requires Olanna’s escape. Mohammed wants to take her to the train station immediately, however, Olanna urges Mohammed to drive to her relatives’ home to help them escape as well unknowing that they have already been killed. On the way, “[a] man was hanging out of the door [of a bus], a loudspeaker pressed to his mouth, *his slow Hausa words resonating. ‘The Igbo must go. The infidels must go. The Igbo must go’*” (Adichie 147; emphasis added). At the centre of this passage is the striking juxtaposition of the two fighting ethnic minorities, Hausa and Igbo, and their respective languages that serve as an essential criterion for identification. Shouting “[t]he Igbo must go” in Hausa is a straightforward rejection of the Igbo. The description of “a crowd of young men on the roadside chanting, ‘*Araba, araba!*’” (Adichie 147) only puts further emphasis on the hostility against the Igbo since ‘araba’ means “secession or to divide” in Hausa (Omaka 33). It is significant that the language in which these violent concerns are expressed is Hausa since it stands for the Hausa group and functions as a symbol of group identity. The men’s expressions on a content level already clearly indicate their desire for differentiation from the Igbo community, which is only further emphasized through the use of Hausa – due to its function as a symbol of the men’s ethnic identity. Consequently, it can be argued that the Hausa language becomes a symbol of the men’s hostile intentions against the Igbo.

This scene is followed by rather graphic descriptions of killed bodies and the violent rage of the killers. This brutality of the civil war probably becomes most apparent when Olanna and Mohammed reach her relatives’ home and see the dead bodies of her uncle Mbaezi and her aunt Ifeka outside their house which have been killed by a group of men among whom was

Abdulmalik, a Hausa man who used to be a good friend of Uncle Mbaezi and even gave some sandals -an act of kindness- to Olanna on her previous visit. Mentioning these descriptions of the violence of the civil war are relevant for this thesis because they are paired with a scene that, once again, exemplifies the role of language in the civil war when one of the rioting men asks Olanna and Mohammed to identify themselves: “[w]ho are you?” another asked, standing in front of the car. Mohammed opened his door, the car still on, and *spoke in rapid, coaxing Hausa*” (Adichie 148; emphasis added). Similar to the earlier situation with Arize, it is again a friend, this time Mohammed, who is able to save himself and Olanna due to his fluency in Hausa. Hence, in this situation, again, a language, Hausa, serves as a symbol of identification. Or, as Bourdieu would say, Mohammed does not use language here for communicative purposes, but language clearly serves as an instrument to achieve a certain profit. And in this situation the exchange rate of both Hausa and Igbo are very drastic – life or death. Here Hausa is the powerful linguistic instrument that secures Olanna’s and Mohammed’s lives, the most valuable of all resources.

It is important to note that Mohammed himself identifies as Hausa, so, in this case it is not a fellow Igbo, as Arize in the previous scene, who saves another Igbo’s life. This shows two things: On the one hand, Mohammed’s character can be read as a symbol for the part of the Hausa community who disagrees with the ethnically motivated violence against the Igbo and were not involved in the killings. Mohammed’s friendship with Olanna, an Igbo woman, continues during the civil war; he even puts his own life at risk when he takes Olanna to the train to save her life. Mohammed’s behaviour is juxtaposed with that of another Hausa man, Abdulmalik, who is involved in the violent killings of Igbos, including Olanna’s relatives, despite the friendship he had with the family before. On the other hand, despite Abdulmalik’s and Mohammed’s diametrically opposed behaviour in the scene, they do have something in common. They both identify as Hausa and use the Hausa language to show their identification with the Hausa, albeit for very different reasons. This, similar to the previous scene, shows that the identification as Hausa and, most importantly, the use of the Hausa language, is an unreliable criterion for the identification of a person as Hausa. This consequently shows the brutal arbitrariness of the killer’s “selection” criteria.

1.4.3. Richard's whiteness hides his Igbo proficiency and his identification with the Igbo community

On his way back from London to Lagos, Richard has a stopover at the airport in Kano, which is in the north of the country, where the majority of the population is Hausa. At the airport Richard has two experiences that are completely different although both are fundamentally based on people's identification with an ethnic community and language. The first experience is a conversation with the customs officer, a young Igbo man. Initially the man disapproves of Richard for being engaged to a Nigerian woman which, as can be inferred from the scene, is based on a general disapproval of romantic relationships between Nigerians and foreigners/white people. However, when the officer realizes that Richard speaks Igbo, his attitude towards him suddenly changes completely.

'Your fiancée, sir?' The young man looked *disapproving*. 'Yes. Her name is Kainene.' Richard spoke slowly, making sure to drag out the second syllable fully. '*You speak Igbo*, sir?' There was a slender *respect* in the man's eyes now. '*Nwannee di na mba*,' Richard said, enigmatically, hoping that he had not mixed things up and that the proverb meant that one's brother could come from a different land. 'Eh! *You speak! I na-asu Igbo!*' The young man took Richard's hand in his moist one and shook it *warmly* and started to talk about himself. His name was Nnaemeka. (Adichie 151; emphasis added except for Igbo phrases)

In this scene, Richard, who is already experienced with people's extremely positive reactions to his "Igbo-speaking whiteness" (Adichie 428), very purposefully uses Igbo to gain the young officer's sympathy. That Richard's language choice in this situation is based on conscious planning – which is not the usual, but still a possible way the linguistic habitus operates – is indicated by his effort to ensure the correct pronunciation of Kainene's name and the wording of the proverb.

By using Igbo and taking care of linguistic details, Richard points towards his identification with the Igbo community, the same group that the young officer also identifies with. The result is that the salient dimension of comparison that the officer perceives between himself and Richard is not his race anymore, specifically his whiteness, that was prevalent at the beginning of their encounter. Through Richard's careful use of the Igbo language, this dimension has been shifted towards their shared identification with the Igbo community. At the same time Richard's choice to use Igbo can also be interpreted as an example of convergence as it is described by *Communication Accommodation Theory*. The effect of Richard's use of the language that is a symbol of shared social and cultural identity is the creation of an atmosphere of emotional

proximity and a sense of shared identity with a stranger. This is indicated by the warm handshake and the men's chatter that follows the quoted passage.

The clearly positive effects of the public display of Richard's ability to speak Igbo and his identification with the Igbo community is juxtaposed with a scene in which the effect of speaking Igbo has drastically different consequences. Just after Richard and Nnaemeka parted, armed soldiers suddenly storm into the departure hall and shoot people they identify as Igbo. The use of the very same language, Igbo, that just minutes before served to create a sense of a shared identity now suddenly is tantamount to a death sentence. The languages with the highest symbolic power are now Hausa and Arabic, since the majority of the Hausas are Muslims. A soldier forces Nnaemeka to 'Say Allahu Akbar' ("literally meaning 'God is greater'" in Arabic, Ghazanfari, Attaran and Zabetipour 96) but "he would not say Allahu Akbar because his accent would give him away" (Adichie 152). This results in the young man being brutally killed by the soldiers. Accordingly, shouts of despair in Igbo are immediately penalized with brutal killings: "Somebody was shouting in Igbo, 'My mother, oh! My mother, oh! God has said no!' It was the bartender. One of the soldiers walked up close and shot him [...] There were more soldiers now, more shots, more shouts of '*Nyamiri!*' and '*Araba, araba!*'" (Adichie 153). It has already been established that 'araba' is Hausa and means "secession or to divide" (Omaka 33). 'Nyamiri' "has no Hausa [...] meaning, it came to be as a mispronunciation of an Igbo word "nye m mmiri" (give me water)" and is used as a derogatory name for the Igbos" (Onyekachi). The use of this derogatory name by the killers emphasises that the only reason that these people are killed is because they are identified as Igbo by the killers.

In this scene, like in the previously analysed scenes, two languages, Igbo and Hausa, are used simultaneously but differ fundamentally in terms of the speaker's status. Igbo, on the one hand, is the language used by the victims of the killings and Hausa and Arabic, on the other hand, is the language used by the killers. It is clearly shown that the killers pick their victims based on people's way of speaking. The scene shows that the immediate consequence of the man's shouting in Igbo is being shot by one of the soldiers. This means that again, just as in the previous encounter of Richard and the customs officer, language serves as a symbol of identification with an ethnic community. However, here the consequences of the use of Igbo are drastically different. While in the previous scene Richard's ability to use the Igbo language created a sense of shared experience and identification with the officer, in this scene language serves as a clear demarcation of group boundaries, to separate between "us" (the soldiers,

Hausas) vs “them” (Igbos) which is immediately followed by brutal consequences. How problematic this essentialist notion of ethnicity is, becomes even clearer when the two scenes at the airport are compared and discussed in relation to Bourdieu’s theoretical framework of linguistic capital.

In both scenes, language clearly does not only serve a communicative function but the use of the ‘right’ language is an instrument of power. In the first scene, Richard’s use of Igbo helps him to gain the custom officer’s sympathy. In the second scene, the people who speak the “wrong” language, namely Igbo, are killed by the soldiers. The crucial point is that the very same language that helped Richard gain the custom officer’s sympathy turns into the decisive factor that makes the difference between life or death. This, again, shows that the symbolic power of a discourse is not determined by the discourse itself but by its relationship with a language market. The diametrically different evaluations of the same language also show the arbitrariness of making assumptions of someone’s ethnicity based on language and, ultimately, the killings since the selection of the victims is based on their language use. This arbitrariness of identifying people’s ethnic identification based on their language use is further emphasized by the fact that Richard is not threatened at all by the soldiers which is, of course, due his physical appearance. Richard’s whiteness and English proficiency clearly identify him as a foreigner – despite his identification with the Igbo community and his use of the Igbo language, which, however, are not visually apparent.

In summary, section 1.4. has focused on scenes in which the symbolic power of languages other than English is particularly evident and has drastic effects on the characters’ lives. This central focus of analysis is closely connected with the issue of an essentialist notion of the connection between language and social, cultural, or ethnic identity. I have shown that in the analysed scenes, the symbolic power of languages depends on the specific structure of the situation. Unlike in previously analysed scenes, English does not function as a powerful instrument here but the use of native languages, especially Igbo, has drastic consequences. For example, in the previously analysed scene at the hospital, English is clearly a language of power that has an upper class or elite status and is exchanged for valuable resources. In the scenes that have been discussed in this section, however, speaking the ‘right’ Nigerian language (Hausa or Yoruba) or rather not speaking the wrong language (Igbo) is the most powerful, life-saving, code choice. I have argued that the power of these languages is so big because they are the most salient dimension of ethnic group comparison since the language that is associated with an ethnic group

serves as an indication of ethnic group identity. It has been shown that this essentialist notion of a fixed connection between language and ethnic identity is not a valid basis to determine somebody's social, cultural or ethnic identity. The killer's brutal killings of anybody who cannot identify as Hausa or speaks Igbo is juxtaposed with Richard's encounter with the custom officer. The analysis of this scene suggests that speaking Igbo among the Igbo community is generally evaluated positively and has high symbolic capital in terms of interpersonal relationships. The effect of the use of Igbo in the analysed situation is the decrease of social distance and the increase of emotional proximity. The effect languages can have on the emotional distance or proximity in an interpersonal encounter is also reflected in several other scenes in the novel which I will discuss in the following chapter.

2. Interpersonal level

This chapter is dedicated to language use at the interpersonal level, hence situations which are fundamentally characterized by the interlocutor's interpersonal relationships. It will be shown that factors that have already been discussed, such as the symbolic capital of a language and the connection between a language and social, cultural or ethnic identity, as well as other factors have an impact on language choices at the interpersonal level. The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the elite's alternation between English and Igbo and the elite's frequent use of codeswitching. The second part of this chapter explores how language choices are determined by the emotional atmosphere of a situation or the characters' desire to create emotional proximity or emotional distance.

2.1. Language alternation and codeswitching

In the novel, characters who belong to the educated elite, especially Odenigbo, Olanna and Kainene, speak English in some situations and speak Igbo in others. Members of the elite do not only alternate between the two languages in different situations, but they also frequently use codeswitching, hence they switch between English and Igbo in the same conversation. This is only possible because members of the elite, which in the following passage is represented through Olanna, are exceptionally fluent in English *and* Igbo.

Ugwu was about to pour the cold Coke into her glass when she touched his hand and said, *Rapuba*, don't worry about that.' Her hand was lightly moist. 'Yes, mah.' 'Your master has told me how well you take care of him, Ugwu,' she said. Her Igbo words were softer than her English, and he was disappointed at how easily they came out. He

wished she would stumble in her Igbo; he had not expected English that perfect to sit beside equally perfect Igbo. (Adichie 23)

Ugwu's observation of how "easily [Olanna's] Igbo words came out" and that her Igbo is "equally perfect" as her English clearly indicates Olanna's bilingualism. This fluency in both languages, English and Igbo, allows Olanna and other members of the elite to alternate between English and Igbo and to also engage in frequent codeswitching of which I will provide examples in the following paragraphs. The analysis of scenes in the previous chapter has already proven that Olanna and Odenigbo frequently use English. Therefore, it is now necessary to provide evidence that members of the elite do not only speak Igbo fluently but that they also do so frequently. Since in the following examples the Igbo words and phrases are translated, either immediately before or after they appear in the text, it can be assumed that in these instances the entire utterance is spoken in Igbo. For clarification purposes, I have indicated in square brackets which English phrases are the translation of the Igbo phrases.

- “‘*Kedu afa gi?* What’s your name [translation]? ‘Master asked” (Adichie 5).
- “‘Yes, Ugwu. Look here [translation], *nee anya*, do you know what that is?’ Master pointed” (Adichie 7).
- “‘Safe journey [translation], *ije oma*,’ he [Odenigbo] said [to Olanna]” (Adichie 26).
- “‘Go well [translation], *jee ofuma*. Greet Aunty and Uncle and Arize” [Kainene to Olanna]” (Adichie 36).
- “‘Are you running? [translation] *I na-agba oso?* Have you deserted?’ Kainene asked [a soldier]” (Adichie 404).
- “‘Fine, Mama. Did your journey go well?’ ‘Yes. *Chukwu du anyi*. God led us [translation].’ [Odenigbo’s mother to Olanna] “(Adichie 94).
- “‘Mama, come, let’s sit down. *Bia nodu ana*. You should not bother [translation], in the kitchen. You should rest [translation]. Let Ugwu do it.’ [Olanna said to Master’s mother]” (Adichie 96).
- “‘Welcome, Mom, *nno* [translation]’, Olanna said, hugging her [mother]” (Adichie 188).
- “‘Baby, *ezigbo nwa*, how are you [translation]?’ Olanna [said]” (Adichie 267).

Unlike in the examples provided above, the Igbo words and phrases that characters use in conversations are not always translated. This might indicate that in these instances the characters codeswitch between English and Igbo. In the examples provided below they use some Igbo words and phrases that are embedded into an English utterance.

- ““Your older books are in the second bathroom. I need the space for *my* books.’ [Olanna] ‘*Ezi okwu* [“truth”, Awde & Wambu 37]? You’ve really moved in, haven’t you?’ Odenigbo was laughing” (Adichie 48).
- “She [Olanna] kissed Master. ‘I’ve asked Patel to come,’ she said and then turned to Ugwu’s mother. ‘Mama, *Kedu?* [“How are you?”, Awde & Wambu 92]’ ‘I am well,’ his mother whispered. [...] ‘I’ll take her inside,’ Olanna said. ‘Ugwu, please finish in the kitchen and set the table.’ ‘Yes, mah’” (Adichie 90).
- ““I wanted to say *kedu* [“hello”, Awde & Wambu 44],’ Olanna said” (Adichie 247).
- “*Anugo m* [“I have heard you”, Adichie 217], I’ll give this more thought’ [Olanna to Kainene]” (Adichie 251).

Many conversations between Odenigbo and Ugwu are examples of codeswitching as Odenigbo often speaks to Ugwu in Igbo but also includes some English words and phrases in his speech, as the examples below show. Since in these examples in the novel it is indicated for which word and phrases Odenigbo uses English, it can be assumed that except for these words and phrases the utterances are in Igbo.

- ““You could be anything from twelve to thirty.’ Master narrowed his eyes. ‘Probably thirteen.’ He said *thirteen* in English” (Adichie 5).
- ““Where are you, my good man?’ He said *my good man* in English” (Adichie 7).
- ““I can make that, sah,’ Ugwu said quickly, although he had no idea what fried rice was. ‘Let me make the rice and you get the chicken from the staff club.’ ‘Artful negotiation,’ Master said in English. ‘All right, then. You make the rice’” (Adichie 22).

Similarly, there are also conversations between Ugwu and Olanna and Ugwu and Odenigbo in which most of an utterance is in English and Odenigbo and Olanna, respectively, use just a word or a phrase in Igbo:

- ““You should look around the house and put your bag in the first room on the corridor. I’m going for a walk, to clear my head, *i nugo?* [“Have you heard?”, Adichie 217; “i” means “you” (second person pronoun), Echeruo 75]”” (Adichie 6).
- ““*Ngwa* [“desire or encouragement to proceed”, Echeruo 106], go to the kitchen; there should be something you can eat in the fridge” (Adichie 5).
- ““Osiso [“quick”, Awde & Wambu 56]! Put my blender in the car!”” [Olanna to Ugwu] (Adichie 228).

It can be argued that the most important effect of the characters’ frequent alternation between English and Igbo and the use of codeswitching is its cumulative effect. The frequency in which

some characters, especially Olanna and Odenigbo, who belong to the educated elite, switch between English and Igbo and use codeswitching is meaningful as it suggests that the respective characters identify both with English and Igbo. Hence, these language patterns serve as an index of the characters' "self-perception as [...] *multidimensional* person[s]" (Meyers-Scotton, *Codeswitching* 73) who consider both languages, English and Igbo, and the associated social groups and their cultural practices as part of their identity. However, as I will show in the second part of this chapter, there are also scenes in which the use of Igbo or English, respectively, is not so much an expression of the characters' social, cultural or ethnic identity but provides insights into the emotional atmosphere of the situation and the quality of the relationship between the interlocutors.

2.2. Language choice and emotional distance and proximity

The topic of this section is the connection between language choices and the expression of emotional distance and hostility, on the one hand, and emotional proximity, love and affection, on the other hand. In each of the following sections, I will explore these issues in a different type of relationship.

2.2.1. Odenigbo uses an Igbo term of endearment to show his affection to Olanna

Odenigbo always uses the Igbo word "nkem" to address Olanna. "Nkem" is a proper name but is also used as term of endearment among couples and literally means "my own" (Oha 531, Sokan). Hence, when Odenigbo calls Olanna "nkem" he addresses her in an affectionate way, as the following examples suggests: "I can't wait, *nkem*," he said, his lips pressed to hers. He tasted of marmalade. She wanted to tell him that she couldn't wait to move to Nsukka either, but he knew anyway" (Adichie 26). Further examples of Odenigbo's use of *nkem* can be found on page 47 and page 49. It is important to note that Odenigbo never uses Olanna's name or an English equivalent for "nkem". This suggests that for him and Olanna Igbo is the language that is closer to the heart. Odenigbo's habitual and affectionate use of "nkem" shows that for the expression of love and affection his language of choice is Igbo.

Since Odenigbo so frequently uses "nkem" to address Olanna and never any alternative expression, the omission of "nkem" in the following scene is significant. When Kainene has already been missing for a couple of days, Olanna desperately insists on looking for Kainene's

body for which, Odenigbo argues, “[t]here’s no point” because he believes that she is still alive. He argues that “[e]ven if they shot her, *Olanna*, they would not take her to a mortuary inside Biafra” (Adichie 410; emphasis added). Odenigbo’s statement and especially his use of Olanna’s name, instead of the usual *nkem*, to address her is immediately noticed by Olanna: “she knew he was right but she hated him for saying it and for calling her Olanna instead of *nkem*” (Adichie 410). It can be argued that the purpose of the replacement of *nkem* with “Olanna” is the creation of emotional distance, however, not between Odenigbo and Olanna but rather to the topic of discourse, Kainene’s possible death. Odenigbo certainly did not refuse to call Olanna *nkem* because he wanted to hurt her or to express emotional distance towards her. Odenigbo’s unusual way of addressing Olanna can rather be explained as an attempt to emphasize rational thinking in order to be able to deal with this emotionally extremely challenging situation. The observation that Igbo and not English is associated with emotional proximity and warmth is also supported by the language use in the following two conversations between Olanna and her father and Olanna and her mother.

2.2.2. Olanna uses English to create distance to her parents

In the first scene, Olanna purposefully uses English to create an atmosphere of emotional distance with her father. Olanna speaks in English when she confronts her father (who is married to her mother) about his affair with another woman: “[s]he would speak mostly in English. *It was easy to be formal and cold in English.* ‘I wish you had some respect for my mother’” (Adichie 218; emphasis added). In this passage, Olanna’s motivation to choose English for this conversation with her father is explicitly mentioned: she uses English because the language is associated with formality and “being cold”. The use of English in this conversation can be interpreted as example of divergence because it helps Olanna to establish distance between herself and her father. She wants to “be formal and cold” in order to emphasise her disappointment with her father and her disapproval of his behaviour. Her father’s language use in his response is completely different as, in addition to English, he also uses Igbo: “[a]nugo m, I have heard you’, he said.” (Adichie 219). He even calls Olanna “*ola m [...]* my gold, something he had not done since she was a child and which now had a contrived solemnity to it” (Adichie 219). The father’s use of Igbo and especially the special term of endearment “*ola m*” indicates that he wants to express his love and affection for Olanna. However, since “[his] Igbo was low, conspiratorial” (Adichie 219) and he does not express any regret about his affair with another woman, it is likely that his use of Igbo to express affection is, in fact, an

insincere and cowardly attempt to regain Olanna's respect and sympathy. In the scene that I will analyse in the next paragraph, Olanna's mother uses Igbo for very similar reasons.

For the discussion of this conversation between Olanna's mother and Olanna, it is necessary to provide some contextual information. The scene takes place after a dinner that was attended by a rich businessman called Chief Okonji, Olanna's parents, Olanna and her twin sister Kainene. The parents don't admit it but it is obvious that they invited Chief Okonji because an affair between Olanna and Chief Okonji would be beneficial for the family business. Olanna does not openly express her disapproval with her parents' attempt to arrange an affair between her and Chief Okonji but she firmly rejects Chief Okonji's advances. After the dinner Olanna's mother comes to see Olanna in her room. This scene is interesting to analyse because Olanna and her mother have a conversation that confirms the previously discussed connection between language choice and the expression of affection and emotional distance.

She was in bed reading when her mother knocked and came in. 'Oh, you're reading,' her mother said. She was holding rolls of fabric in her hand. 'Chief just left. He said I should greet you.' Olanna wanted to ask if they had promised him an affair with her, and yet she knew she never would. 'What are those materials?' 'Chief just sent his driver to the car for them before he left. It's the latest lace from Europe. See? Very nice, *i fukwa* ["you see", Aboh 6]?' Olanna felt the fabric between her fingers. 'Yes, very nice.' 'Did you see the one he wore today? Original! *Ezigbo!*' Her mother sat down beside her [...] 'Which one do you want, *nne*? I will make a long skirt and blouse for you and Kainene.' 'No, don't worry, Mum. Make something for yourself. I won't wear rich lace in Nsukka too often.' (Adichie 34)

It is significant that Olanna in this conversation only speaks English but her mother uses some words in Igbo and even a special term of endearment in Igbo ("nne"). The motivations behind these language choices are similar to those of Olanna and her father in the previously discussed conversation. As has already been discussed before, Olanna considers it easier to "be formal and cold in English". Olanna does not openly express her disapproval of Chief Okonji but her use of English emphasises her rejection of Chief Okonji and his luxurious lifestyle which is indicated by his luxurious dress and the luxurious lace he gave her family. Therefore, her use of English in this scene can, again, be interpreted as a strategy of divergence; speaking English helps Olanna to draw clear boundaries between herself and her parents, Chief Okonji and his luxurious lifestyle ("I won't wear rich lace in Nsukka too often"). In contrast to Olanna, her mother, in addition to English, also uses Igbo. The mother's use of Igbo can be interpreted as an attempt to demonstrate her love for Olanna. Especially the use of "nne" to address Olanna indicates that her mother attempts to create an atmosphere of emotional warmth. The meaning of "nne" here goes beyond its literal meaning ("mother") and is a very affectionate way of a

mother to address “a beloved female daughter” (Ubani 24). However, the motivation behind her mother’s attempt to create a positive atmosphere seems to be her desire to change her daughter’s mind about Chief Okonji. Olanna seems to be aware of her mother’s manipulative strategy; her rejection of Chief Okonji and her mother’s intentions are expressed through her use of English and her refusal to accept her mother’s offer to sew her clothes made from the luxurious lace that Chief Okonji gave them.

2.2.3. Language and emotions in Olanna’s and Kainene’s twin relationship

In the novel, there are two telephone conversations between the twin sisters Olanna and Kainene in which the women’s language choices are interesting to analyse. The emotional atmosphere is very different in the two conversations and has immediate effects on the characters’ language choices. The first conversation takes place after Olanna has learned that Odenigbo had shouted at Richard, Kainene’s boyfriend, because he had sex with Olanna. However, when Olanna calls Kainene she apparently is not aware of her boyfriend’s affair with her twin sister: “[*ejima m*,” Kainene said. Olanna could not remember the last time Kainene had called her my twin. It warmed her, as did Kainene’s unchanged voice” (Adichie 247). It is significant that Kainene uses Igbo to call Olanna “*ejima m*” which means “my twin”. The use of this term of endearment not only clearly expresses Kainene’s affection for her twin sister; but because “*ejima m*” is Igbo and it “warmed” Olanna to be addressed this way, this, again, proves that Igbo is the preferred language to express love and affection. If Kainene had called her ‘my twin’ in English rather than Igbo, the effect probably would not have been the same. It is not entirely clear whether the rest of the conversation is in Igbo or only a few Igbo words are used: “‘I wanted to say *kedu*’, [‘hello’, Awde & Wambu 44] Olanna said.” [...] Kainene said, with an amused tone, ‘*Ngwanu* [translation]. Good night’” (Adichie 247). However, it is certain that Igbo is used in this conversation which marks a new chapter in the twin sister’s relationship. Therefore, the language use in this situation suggests a close connection between Igbo and the expression of emotions in relationships. The language use in this conversation, particularly Kainene’s use of Igbo, stands in stark contrast to that in the following phone conversation.

The following conversation takes place shortly after Kainene has found out about Richard’s and Olanna’s affair. Olanna, however, is unaware of Kainene knowing about it. When Olanna “called again at night and when Kainene said, ‘Hello,’ she sounded hoarse.” Olanna greets Kainene with the affectionate phrases “‘*Ejima m* [my twin]’” and asks her whether she “‘ha[s]

a cold?” to which Kainene replies ““You fucked Richard.”” (Adichie 254). When Olanna calls Kainene ‘*Ejima m*’ (my twin) she is not aware yet that Kainene knows about what has happened between her and Richard. Therefore, the use of this expression, that in the previous conversation was used by Kainene for the first time after a long time, can be interpreted in a similar way as before, as an expression of affection. When Kainene tells Olanna that she knows about her and Richard’s affair (““You fucked Richard.””) she uses English which emphasises her hurt and disappointment. Her emotional condition is also indicated through her “hoarse” voice which suggests that she must have cried. So, to express her negative emotions towards Olanna, Kainene uses English as this language choice is closely connected to emotional distance and hostility.

At this point it is useful to make a little excursion to briefly discuss the allegoric function of the twin sisters’ relationship in the novel because it serves to illustrate the complexity of the issues within which the discussion of the connection between languages and emotions is embedded. It is, however, important to note that Olanna and Kainene are two very complex characters and are not reduced to this allegoric representation in the novel. The difficult relationship of Olanna and Kainene can be read as an allegory of the troubled relationship between Nigeria and Biafra or, more specifically, the two ethnic groups Hausa and Igbo. Like Olanna and Kainene, whose relationship as twin sisters will always connect them but who have very different personalities, Nigeria’s ethnic groups are very different and did not choose to be joined in one nation during colonialism. In the novel, not only are the increasing tensions between the ethnic groups described but also at the same time the novel describes Olanna’s and Kainene’s increasing alienation: although “[t]hey used to be friends [...] they had simply drifted apart” (Adichie 37). During the last months of the civil war, however, the twin sisters reunite and support each other. In the end, in the light of the suffering and existential needs created by the civil war, the twin sisters’ differences have become meaningless. The twin sisters’ reunion and newly found affection for each other can be read as an optimistic outlook that the ethnic groups can improve their relationship in the future. However, it must also be noted that Kainene disappears shortly before the end of the war and her death is never confirmed in the novel. Her disappearance arguably stands for the disappearance of Biafra which might indicate the possibly permanent loss of something very precious through the civil war.

In the three previous sections, I have discussed the use of language to express emotions in conversations between people who have rather close relationships and who have a similar social

status. Now, in the following three sections, I will analyse the relation between language choices and emotional distance or proximity in conversations between people who have less close relationships or who do not have the same social status.

2.2.4. Kainene uses English to create distance to Major Udodoi Ekechi

Similar to Olanna's previously discussed use of English with her father, in the following scene Kainene uses English to add rigor to her statement and to establish clear boundaries between herself and her interlocutor. On one of his visits to Kainene's house Major Madu, a friend and regular visitor, brings a friend, Major Udodoi Ekechi. When Richard and Udodoi are finally introduced to each other and Udodoi, who had assumed that Richard was "Kainene's business associate", realizes that Richard is Kainene's lover, the following scene unfolds: "[o]h,' Major Udodi said, his eyes narrowing. He poured some whisky into a glass, drank it in one gulp, and said something in Igbo *to which Kainene replied, in cold, clear English, 'My choice of lovers in none of your business, Udodi'*" (Adichie 80; emphasis added). It is significant that Kainene refuses to reply to Major Udodoi in Igbo but uses "cold, clear English" instead. Kainene's use of English in this situation confirms the previously discussed observation that the use of English can be a strategy of divergence which serves to emphasize the speaker's disapproval and to create emotional distance to the interlocutor. By diverging from Major Udodoi, Kainene stands up for herself, for Richard and their relationship and thereby firmly puts Major Udodi in his place.

2.2.5. Odenigbo uses English to give instructions in a stressful situation

In the first part of this chapter it has been discussed that Odenigbo's instructions addressed at Ugwu are often formulated in Igbo and, when they are in English, they often contain a word or phrase in Igbo. It has been argued that these language patterns can be read as a symbol of Odenigbo's identification with both languages and their associated cultures. At the same time, it can also be argued that Odenigbo's use of Igbo with Ugwu indicates the mutual respect and affection that characterizes their relationship. Their relationship is not characterized by the power structures of a traditional master-servant relationship. Nevertheless, in the following scene Odenigbo gives a very strict instruction to Ugwu in English: Ugwu's aunty has come to inform Ugwu that his mother is very sick and wants him to go home. When Ugwu explains the situation to Odenigbo and asks for permission to travel to his rural village, Odenigbo "drank all his water and then *turned to Ugwu and spoke English. 'Put on a shirt and get in the car. Your*

village isn't far away. We should be back in good time.' – 'Sah?' – 'Put on a shirt and get in the car!'" (Adichie 88; emphasis added). The purpose of Odenigbo's use of English in this scene is certainly not to "be formal and cold" and to establish an emotional distance between himself and Ugwu. Rather, the reason why in this situation Odenigbo uses English to quickly give instructions to Ugwu might be that he is trained to think and act rationally in English. The association of English with power and education emphasises Odenigbo's determination that the best option in this situation is to take Ugwu to his village. Therefore, Odenigbo's use of English in this scene is very similar to his use of language in the previously discussed scene in which he does not address Olanna with the habitual *nkem*. In both scenes speaking English apparently helps Odenigbo to focus on rational thinking and to convince his interlocutor that his suggestion is the best option in a stressful situation.

So far in this chapter the focus has been on the language use of bilingual characters who are equally fluent in English and Igbo. Ugwu is very different in this respect because his English proficiency is very limited. Therefore, the analysis of the following two scenes is particularly interesting because it reflects on Ugwu's motivation to use English and Igbo, respectively.

2.2.6. Ugwu starts speaking Igbo with Olanna due to their increased intimacy

Initially Ugwu insists on speaking English with Olanna at all times. However, as the personal relationship between Olanna and Ugwu develops, Ugwu's language use in conversations with Olanna also changes, which is described in the following scene. In the following I will refer to this scene as "the gecko scene".

He finally started to speak Igbo to her on the day she rearranged the photos on the wall. A wall gecko had scuttled out from behind the wood-framed photo of Odenigbo in a graduating gown, and Ugwu shouted, '*Egbukwala!* Don't kill it!' 'What?' She turned to glance down at him from the chair she was standing on. 'If you kill it you will get a stomachache,' he said. She found his Opi dialect funny, the way he seemed to spit the words out. 'Of course we won't kill it. Let's hang the photo on that wall'. 'Yes, mah,' he said, and then began to tell her, in Igbo, how his sister Anulika had suffered a terrible stomachache after killing a gecko. (Adichie 48)

The reason why Ugwu starts to speak Igbo with Olanna and why this change starts in the situation described above is twofold. On the one hand, an important reason for Ugwu's use of Igbo with Olanna is that the relationship between Olanna and Ugwu is not a master-servant relationship anymore, albeit it always was harmonious, but has grown into a friendship. Before the "gecko scene" it is reported that Ugwu and Olanna buy groceries together, that she buys

him clothes and teaches him some cooking essentials and that Ugwu tells her about his family. Hence, they are spending time together and share activities which arguably let them get to know each other better and benefit the development of mutual trust. The impact of their increased intimacy on Ugwu's language choice is further supported by the fact that shortly before the "gecko scene" Olanna had given Ugwu "some scented powder for his armpits and asked him to use two capfuls of Dettol in his bath water" because she "had noticed his body odour" (Adichie 48). This is clearly an action that addresses a very intimate topic and requires the existence of certain level of trust. Hence, in this situation Ugwu's use of Igbo with Olanna can be interpreted as a symbol of their increased emotional proximity. Because of their friendship the class differences between Ugwu and Olanna do not determine Ugwu's language choice anymore. In this scene, the superior social status of Odenigbo and Olanna is symbolized by the picture of Odenigbo "in a graduation gown" which points towards his university education. On the other hand, Ugwu's belief that killing a gecko can have negative health consequences probably derives from his socialisation in the Igbo culture. Since Ugwu's family language is Igbo, his memory of his sister's "terrible stomachache after killing a gecko" is closely connected with the Igbo language and traditional beliefs. Hence, in the same way, as Odenigbo prefers English for the discussion of academic and political topics, Ugwu might simply be more accustomed to use Igbo in a situation that is closely connected to his Igbo cultural knowledge.

Overall, the analysis of the scenes in this section has demonstrated that English and Igbo are used to express very different emotions and are conditioned through very different emotional atmospheres. English, on the one hand, is used to express negative feelings and in situations that are characterized by negative emotions in which the speakers aim for a certain emotional distance between themselves and the interlocutor(s). Igbo, on the other hand, is used to express love and affection and is used in situations in which the speakers want to establish an atmosphere of emotional warmth and proximity.

3. Individual level

In this chapter the complex relationship and interplay amongst the collective, interpersonal and individual level becomes especially evident as I will discuss how the status and functions of a language affect the characters' language attitudes and their motivations to use and learn a language. And I will demonstrate the connection between the (mis)recognition of a character's proficiency in a language and his/her social, cultural or ethnic identity. In the novel, especially

for two characters, namely Ugwu, whose first language is Igbo, and Richard, whose first language is English, the recognition of their proficiency in the additional language they have acquired, English and Igbo, respectively, has an import impact on their social and cultural identity and their self-esteem. Therefore, this chapter will mainly focus on Ugwu's and Richard's language attitudes and the connection between their languages use and their identification with a certain community.

3.1. Ugwu's positive attitudes towards English

In the first chapter of the analysis part ('Collective level') I have demonstrated that various domains of power are dominated by English. The high symbolic capital of English and its connection to power is also reflected by Ugwu's language attitudes and language choices. In various scenes Ugwu's admiration for people who speak English fluently, especially with a posh English accent is demonstrated. In this section, a selection of these scenes will be discussed in detail but the following observation applies to all these scenes: in Nigeria the admiration of English and particularly an accent that resembles the accent of the upper class or the elite is closely linked to the prestigious functions of English. It can be argued that Ugwu is a character whose attitudes towards English represent the language attitudes of the working class or those who have no or only limited English proficiency.

Ugwu's awareness of the status and high symbolic capital of English becomes evident in several scenes in which he is clearly fascinated by Odenigbo's English. For example, in the following scene Ugwu clearly enjoys and feels proud about having, what he considers, "deep conversations" in English with Odenigbo: "[y]es, sah," Ugwu replied, and in the midst of his worry about his mother, he felt a twinge of pride because he knew his aunty would have her eyes wide in wonder at *the deep conversations he had with Master. And in English, too.*" (Adichie 89; emphasis added). However, Odenigbo and Ugwu are not really having a conversation with each other, instead Odenigbo expresses his thoughts on issues such as the political situation of Nigeria and Ugwu only repeatedly expresses his approval with "Yes, sah", his typical form of agreement. It is, nevertheless, significant that Ugwu believes that these "deep conversations" will impress his aunty because they are conducted in English.

However, Ugwu is not only impressed by Odenigbo's English in "deep conversations". Even when Odenigbo only uses isolated words or phrases in English, this is detected by Ugwu: "You

could be anything from twelve to thirty.’ Master narrowed his eyes. ‘Probably thirteen.’ He said *thirteen* in English.” (Adichie 5). In fact, Ugwu’s awareness of the power of English becomes evident the first time he hears Odenigbo speak English when he arrives at Odenigbo’s house: “Ugwu could see the white curtains behind the door. *A voice said, in English, ‘Yes? Come in’*” (Adichie 4). This passage does not only show that Ugwu consciously takes notice of the use of English but the “white curtains” indicate that Ugwu associates English with “whiteness” and, consequently, power. Ugwu seems to be so fascinated with English that when Odenigbo rejects Ugwu’s plan of planting a garden, Ugwu is pleased because “he loved the sound of *Division of labour, my good man*, spoken in English” (Adichie 17). This example already suggests that Ugwu especially enjoys the *sound* of English. This is illustrated even more explicitly in the following scene: “Master’s Igbo felt feathery in Ugwu’s ears. It was Igbo coloured by the sliding sounds of English, the Igbo of one who spoke English often” (Adichie 4). This scene shows that Ugwu detects an English influence in Odenigbo’s Igbo and therefore regards it more favourably. The almost poetic use of adjectives in this passage, “feathery”, “coloured”, “sliding (sounds)” that describe how Ugwu perceives the influence of English on Odenigbo’s Igbo, does not only clearly indicate Ugwu’s positive attitude towards the sound of English but also makes the narrative tone a bit teasing.

In fact, there are several scenes in which the pleasure that Ugwu derives from being addressed in English creates rather comic situations. For example, Odenigbo repeatedly calls Ugwu “my good man” in English (Adichie 7, 22, 88, 90). Ugwu seems to be so pleased to be called this way that he even dreams that “Master was calling him – *Ugwu, my good man* [sic]!” (Adichie 9). Of course, it could also be argued that Ugwu is charmed by this form of address as it suggests Odenigbo’s appreciation of Ugwu and his work. However, the following scene leaves no doubt that Ugwu is simply pleased to be addressed in English even, or maybe because, he does not fully understand the meaning of the phrases: Odenigbo calls Ugwu ““You stupid ignoramus”” (Adichie 14) because Ugwu burnt his socks through ironing. However, Ugwu does not realize that Odenigbo is annoyed and is pleased to be called “Stupid ignoramus” as it “slid out of his [Odenigbo’s] mouth like music” (Adichie 14).

The previous paragraphs have focused on Ugwu’s admiration for Odenigbo’s English. However, Ugwu’s fascination with Olanna’s English is even greater. When Ugwu first meets Olanna his impression of her English is described in the following way:

Then he heard her voice. He stood still. [...] Master's English was music, but what Ugwu was hearing now, from this woman, was *magic*. Here was a *superior* tongue, a *luminous* language, the kind of English he heard on Master's radio *rolling out with clipped precision*. It reminded him of slicing a yam with a newly sharpened knife, the easy *perfection in every slice*. (Adichie 22; emphasis added)

The description of Olanna's way of speaking as "magic", as a "superior tongue, a luminous language" clearly demonstrates Ugwu's fascination with Olanna's British accent and indicates that Ugwu considers this accent as extremely powerful. At the same time, it can be argued that also here the narrative tone is a bit mocking. Not only is the comparison of Olanna's English with "slicing a yam" extremely comic but the abundant use of extremely positive adjectives and nouns (superior, luminous, precision, perfection) makes fun, though in an affectionate way, of Ugwu's fascination with Olanna because of something as superficial as her English accent.

Ugwu's awareness of the powerful status of English and his desire for social mobility has a powerful influence on Ugwu's everyday language use. His use of English to raise his status is especially evident in his conversations with members of the educated elite, particularly Olanna and Odenigbo, who are exceptionally fluent in English. For example, Ugwu repeatedly uses "sah" (his pronunciation of "sir") to address Odenigbo but also to mention him in conversations with other people: "I can make that, sah" (Adichie 22), "We'll bring your mother here and have Patel take a look at her.' 'Yes, sah.'" (Adichie 88). Further examples of Ugwu's use of "sah" can be found on page 11, 13, 17, 22, 23, 87, 88, and 99. Although Odenigbo tells Ugwu that he prefers to be called Odenigbo, Ugwu nevertheless continues to call him "sah" because he "really preferred *sah*, the crisp power behind the word" (Adichie 13). Correspondingly, Ugwu frequently addresses Olanna as "mah": "I'm going to organize classes here in the yard. [...] Ugwu. You will teach a class.' 'Yes, mah.' The thought excited and flattered him [Ugwu]. 'Mah?'" (Adichie 286). Further examples of Ugwu's use of "mah" can be found on page 23, 47, 48, and 90. Ugwu does not only insist to address Olanna and Odenigbo on his uses of "mah" and "sah" but Ugwu also constantly speaks English with Olanna despite his limited English proficiency and Olanna's proficiency and frequent use of Igbo. Ugwu's constant use of English with Olanna can be interpreted as upward convergence. Ugwu uses English in order to increase his similarity with Olanna because he wants to be liked by her. This notion is supported by the following passage in which it becomes clear that Ugwu hopes to impress Olanna with his English skills: "I serve now, sah,' Ugwu said, in English, and then he wished he had said I am serving now, because it sounded better, because it would impress her more" (Adichie 23).

This section has shown Ugwu's admiration of English proficiency and his constant use of English to communicate with members of the elite. In the following section, I attempt to explain the reasons for Ugwu's constant use of English and his serious effort to improve his English proficiency.

3.2. Ugwu's use of English to increase his status

The discussion of the previous scene has indicated that an important reason for Ugwu's use of English is that he hopes to impress people with his English skills. In this section I will further explore this notion and argue that Ugwu's eagerness to enhance his English proficiency can be interpreted, according to *Social Identity Theory*, as a strategy of individual mobility. The following scene shows Ugwu's efforts to extend his English vocabulary and indicates his belief that an improvement of his English skills will increase his status: "Ugwu would sit on the same chair and imagine himself speaking swift English, talking to rapt imaginary guests, using words like *decolonize* [sic] and *pan-African* [sic], moulding his voice after Master's, and he would shift and shift until he too was on the edge of the chair" (Adichie 20). This passage shows that Ugwu is aware of the power of formal vocabulary as he is clearly impressed by Odenigbo's way of speaking. And, since Ugwu also tries to imitate Odenigbo's way of speaking, Ugwu seems to believe that, if he could talk in a similar "swift" fashion as Odenigbo, he would gain access to Odenigbo's world of sophisticated discussions and enjoy a similar status as Odenigbo. It can therefore be argued that an important reason for Ugwu's desire to improve his English is the belief that English proficiency will increase his social status in conversations. The following scene emphasises the notion that Ugwu's constant use of English with members of the elite is due to his notion that English is the language of power and the intellect.

The first thing she [Olanna] did after he [Odenigbo] left was throw away the red and white plastic flowers on the centre table. Ugwu looked horrified. 'But mah, it [plastic flowers] still good.' [...] 'Yes, but these are better, fa makali,' Olanna said. 'How better, mah?' *'He always responded in English to her Igbo, as if he saw her speaking Igbo to him as an insult that he had to defend himself against by insistently speaking English.'* (Adichie 47; emphasis added)

In this scene it is suggested that Ugwu's use of English is a way "to defend himself against" when Olanna is speaking Igbo to him. In fact, because of his awareness of the symbolic power of English in many domains, Ugwu might believe that speaking English increases his status and makes his opinion worthier of consideration. So, in this case it is likely that he has expressed his disapproval about the plastic flower in English because he believes that using English makes his argument more convincing. However, the omission of the verb in his statement and the use

of “it” instead of “they” to refer to the flowers (“But mah, it still good.”) immediately reveals his limited knowledge of English. It is important to note that, even though Ugwu is aware of the symbolic power of English, this does not mean that Ugwu always consciously and purposefully decides to use English; in the theory part, it has been discussed that such language choices are determined by the linguistic habitus and are therefore usually not based on conscious calculation.

So far it has been shown that an important motivation behind Ugwu’s efforts to improve his English and his constant use of English is his hope that speaking “proper” English improves his status and results in more favourable evaluations by people in superior positions like Olanna and Odenigbo. However, as the analysis of the following scene will show, Ugwu also hopes that his increased English proficiency will result in increased respect and attention by people in similar or inferior social positions as himself, particularly his family and Nnesinachi, a girl with whom he is in love. It is important to note that in the following passage, in addition to English, Ugwu also mentions other status symbols of whiteness that he expects to spark admiration such as a certain type of car, clothing, food and hygiene products.

“But he [Ugwu] was pleased that he had mentioned the festival to Mr Richard, because it meant an opportunity to see Nnesinachi before she left for the North. To think how impressed she would be when he arrived in a white man’s car, driven by the white man himself! She would certainly notice him this time, he was sure, and he could not wait to *impress Anulika and his cousins and relatives with this English*, his new shirt, his knowledge of sandwiches and running tap water, his scented powder.” (Adichie 86; emphasis added)

It is significant that all the status symbols, including English, mentioned by Ugwu in this passage are associated with whiteness. This is made explicit when Ugwu describes the car and Richard as “a white man’s car, driven by the white man himself” (Adichie 86). But also “his new shirt, his knowledge of sandwiches and running tap water, his scented powder” are symbols of belonging to the elite which seem to be considerably influenced by British culture. Most importantly, however, the juxtaposition of these status symbols and English in this passage clearly indicates Ugwu’s awareness of the value of speaking “proper” English, hence that it functions just as any other status symbol. So, on the one hand, Ugwu considers English as a status symbol that relates to wealth and prosperity and as a marker of belonging to the elite. And on the other hand, Ugwu hopes that his increased English proficiency functions as a tool that serves to increase his status and helps him to gain his family’s and Nnesinachi’s respect and attention: “[s]he would certainly notice him this time” (Adichie 86). This section has explored Ugwu’s awareness of the status of English and his motivation to improve his English

proficiency. In the following section, the discussion of Richard's motivations to learn Igbo shows that his reasons for learning a language are quite different.

3.3. The connection between Igbo proficiency and Richard's social identity

Richard, a writer who is originally from the UK, learns to speak Igbo fluently through the course of the novel. Since Richard's first language is English, he is, of course, exceptionally fluent in this language which in Nigeria serves as a powerful cultural capital. Unlike Ugwu, Richard is already in command of the status symbol and symbolic capital that English proficiency represents. Therefore, his eagerness to develop Igbo proficiency, is certainly not motivated by hopes for social mobility and increased chances for socio-economic success. In one scene Richard's use of Igbo is described as "Igbo speaking whiteness" (Adichie 428) which suggests that in a country where English is the official language, it is rather unusual that a white person speaks Igbo.

The most significant factor for Richard's motivation to learn Igbo is certainly his romantic relationship with Kainene, an Igbo woman. Due to their relationship Richard identifies with the Igbo community and wants others, in-group as well as out-group members, to recognize his claim of belonging to this community. For Richard's claims of membership with the Igbo community to be legitimate, speaking Igbo and the recognition of others of his proficiency in the language, is essential as the Igbo language is a salient dimension of the ethnic group's identity and an important group boundary marker. Hence, the demonstration of Igbo proficiency is an essential prerequisite for the recognition of Richard's social and cultural identity as part of the Igbo community. Subsequently, several scenes are going to be analysed in which Richard's Igbo proficiency and his identification with the Igbo community are either recognized or misrecognized. However, before that, the next section is dedicated to the analysis of a scene which indicates the complexity of Richard's social and cultural identity. It becomes evident that Richard does not exclusively identify with the Igbo community and the Igbo language but also with British English which stands for his country of origin, the United Kingdom.

Richard clearly identifies with the Igbo community and positions himself as a supporter of Biafra. It is therefore not surprising that it is "his greatest pleasure" to meet "his Excellency" (Adichie 306), the leader of Biafra during the civil war. Arguably Richard would have been flattered to meet "his Excellency" no matter the language in which the conversation between

them had taken place. Nevertheless, the effect that “his Excellency’s” way of speaking has on Richard is significant: “The solid handshake, the ‘Thank you for the good work you’re doing’ in that *soft, Oxford-accented voice* had filled Richard with equanimity” (Adichie 306; emphasis added). Certainly, Richard is also flattered by the Excellency’s expression of gratitude for his work. But it is striking that Richard, who has made the effort to learn Igbo, is “filled [...] with equanimity” by the “soft, Oxford-accented voice” (Adichie 306). It is important to note that in this case Richard does not experience the use of English as a misrecognition of his Igbo skills and Igbo identity. Quite the contrary, Richard’s sense of self as an important member of Biafra and the Igbo community seems to be strengthened through the demonstration of “his Excellency’s” very British accent. It can also be argued that this suggests that Richard still very much identifies with English, his first language. At the same time this scene demonstrates the powerful status of English and particularly English spoken with a “soft, Oxford-accented voice”. That also “his Excellency”, the leader of Biafra, speaks with a posh English accent shows that in Biafra the positions of power and status are reserved for those with exceptional English proficiency.

3.3.1. Misrecognition of Richard’s Igbo proficiency and identification with the Igbo community

Various scenes show Richard’s desire to demonstrate his Igbo proficiency and his frustration when people, no matter whether they are foreigners or Igbos, do not recognize his Igbo skills which serve as a symbol of his identification with the Igbo community. The following scene, in which Richard is annoyed because Biafra’s directorate has sent two interpreters to his meeting with two foreign (American) journalists, illustrates how important it is for Richard that his ability to speak Igbo is recognized: “[i]t was true that idioms and nuances and dialects often eluded him in Igbo but the directorate was always too prompt in sending interpreters” (Adichie 370). Richard admits that his Igbo proficiency has some limitations but he believes that he speaks Igbo well enough to get along without interpreters (Adichie 370). It can be argued that the fact that interpreters are sent without his request annoys Richard because this does not only suggest the misrecognition of his Igbo proficiency but, since the language is such a strong symbol of group membership, that his identification with the Igbo community is not recognized by the directorate.

Another scene that exemplifies Richard's frustration caused by the misrecognition of his ability to have a conversation in Igbo, is an encounter between Richard and Major Madu. In this situation, Major Madu repeatedly refuses to speak Igbo with Richard. Although Richard starts the conversation with Madu in Igbo, Madu's response is in English: "He [Richard] joined them, shook hands with Madu. 'How are you, Madu? *A na-emekwa?*' he asked, eager to speak first. 'How is life in the North?' 'Nothing to complain about,' *Madu said in English*" (Adichie 136; emphasis added). The conversation between the two men, which Kainene joins after a short time, goes on in English for a while until Richard makes another attempt to change the language of conversation to Igbo. However, Madu's response to Richard's statement in Igbo is, again, in English: "Richard tightened his hold on her hand. 'I went to Zaria last week and it seemed that all everybody was saying was second coup, second coup. Even Radio Kaduna and the New Nigerian,' *he [Richard] said in Igbo*. 'What does the press know, really?' *Madu replied in English*" (Adichie 136; emphasis added). Not only does Major Madu disagree with Richard but he, again, uses English to express his disagreement. It can be argued that Major Madu's persistence to speak English is not only an expression of his disagreement with Richard's statement but also indicates his disapproval of Richard's use of Igbo to signal his identification with the Igbo community. Richard's use of Igbo is closely related to Madu's relationship with Kainene; Madu and Kainene are very good friends and Richard perceives him as a threat to his relationship with Kainene which is indicated by the way "Richard tightened his hold on her [Kainene's] hand" (Adichie 136) when Madu continues to speak in English. Consequently, Madu's refusal to speak Igbo with Richard can be read as a symbol of his refusal to accept Richard as part of the Igbo community and his disapproval of his relationship with Kainene.

The following comment, immediately after the conversation discussed above, makes clear that the previously discussed incident is not the first time Madu refuses to have a conversation with Richard in Igbo: "He always did that [reply in English]; since Richard's Igbo had become near-fluent, Madu insistently responded to it in English so that Richard felt forced to revert to English" (Adichie 136). That Madu's refusal to communicate in Igbo with Richard is apparently systematic further supports the impression that he disregards Richard as a member of the Igbo community and, most importantly, as Kainene's partner. It is significant that apparently, as can be inferred from the comment quoted above, as long as Richard's Igbo was not near-fluent Madu *did* talk to Richard in Igbo. The reason for this might be that, as long as it was evident that Richard was learning the language and therefore not a member of the Igbo community, Madu was in a dominant position due to this superior Igbo proficiency. In fact, it can be argued

that Major Madu's language use in the discussed scene, his insistence to speak English, works almost like a weapon. The explanatory comment that Richard "felt forced to revert to English" and that the conversation in the end always takes place in the language, English, that Major Madu imposes, clearly indicates Madu's dominant position.

3.3.2. Recognition of Richard's Igbo proficiency and identification with the Igbo community

The previous scenes have shown Richard's disappointment and frustration when his Igbo proficiency, and consequently his claim to belong to the Igbo community, are not recognized. Accordingly, Richard is extremely pleased when his membership with the Igbo community is recognized, as the following passage shows:

Now, weeks later, after more articles, he felt a part of things. He found pleasure in the new *respect in the driver's eyes*, jumping out to open the door although Richard told him not to bother. He found pleasure in how quickly the civil defenders' *suspicious glances* at his special duties pass *changed to wide grins* when he greeted them in Igbo, in how *willing* people were to *answer his questions*. He found pleasure in the *superiority he adopted with foreign journalists*, speaking vaguely about the background to the war-the implications of the national strike and the census and the Western Region chaos-*knowing all the while they had no idea what he was talking about*. (Adichie 306; emphasis added)

This passage is characterized by the following two semantic fields: pleasure (underlined text sections) and (the expression of) belongingness and cooperation based on the recognition of shared group membership (italicised text sections). The anaphora "He found pleasure" which is repeated three times in three consecutive sentences, emphasises the pleasure Richard derives from the situations that are subsequently described. The first two situations are characterized by the sense of belonging to the same group, the Biafra community that here is not only desired by Richard but is recognized by others which, for example, is suggested by the "respect in the driver's eyes". The beginning of this passage, "Now, weeks later, after more articles, he felt a part of things", clearly indicates that Richard's increased sense of social and cultural identity and the changed attitudes towards him are due to his work as a journalist. However, it is also indicated that people's positive attitude towards Richard is also due to his use of Igbo. When the civil defenders see his special duties pass, they are suspicious, they do not trust him. It is the use of Igbo ("he greeted them in Igbo") which signals Richard's identification with the Igbo community and is rewarded with "wide grins" and cooperation. The recognition of Richard's Igbo identity is also at the centre of the third situation. However, here Richard's pleasure is not based on the recognition of him as an in-group member by Igbo but by

Richard's experience with foreign journalists. In the quoted passage Richard successfully presents himself to the foreign journalist as not one of them but as a member of the Igbo community and a local expert. It is suggested that Richard is aware that the journalists recognize his expertise as he is "knowing all the while they had no idea what he was talking about" (Adichie 306). His insider knowledge and his Igbo skills ultimately confer Richard a superior position ("the superiority he adopted with foreign journalists") which he apparently enjoys as the stylistic device "[h]e found pleasure" suggests. To conclude, the analysed passage illustrates that Richard derives pleasure, which might also have a positive effect on his self-esteem, from experiences in which he, due to his use of Igbo, is recognized, both by in-group members (Igbos) and out-group members (foreign journalists), as a member of the Igbo community.

Richard's use of Igbo to indicate his social and cultural identity and the pleasure that he derives from the recognition of his belonging with the Igbo community is demonstrated in one more scene. The following scene takes place at an airport where Richard meets a nun and greets her, using both English and Igbo: "'Good evening. *Kee ka I me?*'" (Adichie 373); "*Kee ka I me*" means "How are you?" (Awde & Wambu 92). The use of both languages allows Richard, on the one hand, to signal his identification with the Igbo community and Biafra and, on the other hand, to indicate his powerful connections with the United Kingdom. The nun's reply reflects the identity statement encoded in Richard's greeting. The nun calls Richards "the onye ocha who speaks Igbo". "Onye ocha" means "white man" (Echeruo 272). However, this does not suggest that the nun views Richard as an out-group member but might point toward her knowledge of his Igbo proficiency. In fact, the nun explicitly expresses her appreciation of Richard's Igbo skills which indicates that she recognizes Richard's identification with the Igbo community. Furthermore, after the greeting the nun expresses her respect for Richard's work: "'You are the one who is writing wonderful things about *our* cause. Well done'" (Adichie 373; emphasis added). The use of the possessive pronoun "our" emphasises the nun's recognition of Richard identification with the Igbo community. But it can also be argued that the nun regards Richard's work as especially significant since his whiteness allows him to reach a greater audience than a reporter who is not an "onye ocha".

The analysis of Richard's use of Igbo in this section and in section 1.4. ('The symbolic power of languages in life-threatening situation') has revealed three important insights. Firstly, Richard uses Igbo as a symbol of identity to indicate his identification with the Igbo community. Secondly, Richard's use of Igbo is not always but usually noticed and often positively evaluated

by others (Igbos and foreigners). Thirdly, Richard, derives pleasure from the positive recognition of his Igbo skills. Correspondingly, the misrecognition of his Igbo proficiency frustrates Richard.

3.3.3. Richard's "Igbo speaking whiteness" is not noticed

Since Richard's use of Igbo is usually recognized, even though it is not always positively evaluated, it is significant that in the following scene Richard's "Igbo-speaking whiteness" (Adichie 428) is not noticed at all. The scene describes an encounter between Richard and the aunt of Eberechi, a girl Ugwu was in love with:

The building [a centre for displaced persons] was empty. Nearby, a bomb crater gaped unfilled. He [Richard] drove around for a while before he found the address Ugwu had given him. The elderly woman he greeted looked completely indifferent, as though it was often that an Igbo-speaking white man came in to ask about her relative. It surprised Richard; he was used to his Igbo-speaking whiteness being noticed, being marvelled at. (Adichie 428)

This passage describes that Richard is not used to his "Igbo-speaking whiteness" not being "noticed, [not] being marvelled at". It is unlikely that the reason for the woman's indifference towards the Igbo skills of a white man is that she is accustomed to an "Igbo-speaking white man [come] in to ask about her relative" (Adichie 428). The description of the "bomb crater" at the beginning of the passage suggests that the level of destruction caused by the civil war has reached a point at which notions of ethnic identity, which are at the very core of the civil war, have lost their significance. The impression is created that the woman doesn't and cannot care about Richard's use of Igbo due to her apparent lack of mental and physical strength. The description of her wound on her head indicates that her physical health has been affected by the violence of the civil war: "Eberechi's aunty had a white scarf tied around her head a soiled wrapper around her chest" (Adichie 428). But not only her body is suffering. The fact that she is only able to talk very quietly about Eberechi's death reveals her emotional suffering: "[S]he spoke so quietly that Richard had to ask her to repeat herself" (Adichie 428).

Richard's reaction to the woman's account of her loss is to share his own pain, although he "did not know why". So, he tells the woman that his "wife went on *afia attack* [sic] some days before the war ended, and [that] [they] have not seen her since" (Adichie 428). Arguably, the mutual sharing of the tragic experiences creates a sense of shared experience. The wounds and suffering that the civil war has left, which are represented in this scene by the bomb crater in the street, the woman's physical and mental suffering as well as Richard's concern about Kainene, are

what, tragically, unites people now. Richard's usual expression of shared social and cultural identity through the use of Igbo has become insignificant in the light of the destruction and death caused by the civil war. In the end, the only thing that remains is pain and suffering.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion of the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* has explored the connection between the use of different languages, particularly English and Igbo, and issues of power, identity and belonging. As stated in the introduction, my aim was to show that in the novel language frequently does not only serve a communicative purpose but is also an instrument of power. The analysis has demonstrated that in many situations characters can obtain a symbolic profit through their English proficiency and that in domains of power such as the media, science and education English is in a clearly dominant position. The dominance of English in these domains stands in contrast to the use of Igbo to refer to traditional rituals and concepts of the Igbo culture. Thus, I have demonstrated that in the novel a clear division of domains between English and Igbo exists.

Despite the clearly dominant position of English in all domains of power and its function as a powerful form of linguistic capital in many situations, the analysis has revealed that English is not the most powerful linguistic capital in all situations. In fact, one of the key insights of my analysis is that in the novel the acceptability and power of a specific linguistic form depends on the structure of the situation. This notion is most explicitly demonstrated in my analysis of life-threatening situations during the civil war where speaking the ‘right’ language decides between life and death.

My analysis, however, was not only concerned with the status and use of language in extreme situations during the civil war but I also investigated the status, function and use of languages in everyday situations. In this regard, I have demonstrated that in the novel in interpersonal relationships language functions as a powerful tool because it has an impact on the dynamics and the quality of the relationships between the characters. I specifically focused on the impact of the emotional climate on language choices and the use of languages to express emotions: the analysis revealed that the characters in the novel tend to use Igbo to express love and affection and to decrease the distance with their interlocutor whereas the use of English is related with formality and emotional distance.

Another important insight is that in the novel English proficiency and speaking with the ‘right’ accent, namely Received Pronunciation, are closely related to whiteness, high socioeconomic status and chances of social mobility. My analysis revealed that the recognition of the

legitimacy of the symbolic power of English and Received Pronunciation and those who exercise it has a significant impact on the language attitudes and the language behaviour of Ugwu, a character who represents the working class. It has been discussed that Ugwu firmly believes that the improvement of his English skills and especially his accent will increase his social status. This is also the reason why Ugwu, despite his limited English proficiency, initially always speaks in English to Olanna. By contrast, Olanna and other members of the elite speak English and Igbo fluently and frequently engage in codeswitching between the two languages. I have argued that these patterns of language use indicate that the characters perceive themselves as multidimensional persons.

Finally, the analysis has shown that proficiency in a language and the (mis)recognition of a character's language proficiency has an important impact on characters' identification with a social, cultural, or ethnic identity. For example, I have demonstrated that Richard's efforts to learn Igbo are motivated by his identification with the Igbo community. However, the analysis has also shown that, while languages are closely connected with the characters' social, cultural or ethnic identities, it is extremely problematic when language is perceived as the only salient dimension of a group. In my discussion, I have argued that the novel critically engages with the essentialist notion of ethnicity that is at the centre of the civil war. The analysis of scenes in which people are brutally killed because the killers identify them as Igbo clearly demonstrated how problematic it is to ascribe a social, cultural or ethnic identity to people based on the languages they speak.

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Appendix

Abstract

The novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie is set in Nigeria, one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries in the world. Considering the complex multi-ethnic and multilingual context and the ethnically motivated power struggles during the Nigerian civil war (1967-70), this thesis examines how in *Half of a Yellow Sun* the status and function of different languages as well as the relationship between language and social, cultural or ethnic identity is represented. The aim of this thesis is to investigate which factors determine the language choices of characters in different situations and what consequences the use of specific languages has for the speakers. Based on Bourdieu's notion of language as a form of capital and language as symbolic power, it is argued that in the novel language serves not only communicative purposes but is also a form of symbolic capital that can be used to obtain a certain benefit.

Zusammenfassung

Der Roman *Half of a Yellow Sun* (*Die Hälfte der Sonne*) von Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie spielt in Nigeria, einem Land, dessen ethnische und sprachliche Diversität zu den größten weltweit zählt. In Anbetracht dieses komplexen multiethnischen und multilingualen Kontextes sowie der ethnisch motivierten Machtkämpfe des nigerianischen Bürgerkrieges (1967-70) untersucht die vorliegende Diplomarbeit wie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* der Status und die Funktion verschiedener Sprachen sowie die Beziehung zwischen Sprache und sozialer, kultureller und ethnischer Identität dargestellt wird. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es zu erforschen, welche Faktoren die Sprachwahl der Charaktere in verschiedenen Situationen bestimmen und welche Konsequenzen die Verwendung bestimmter Sprachen für die Sprechenden hat. Ausgehend von Bourdieus Konzept von Sprache als Kapitalform und Sprache als symbolische Macht wird dargelegt wie im Roman Sprache nicht nur dem Zweck der Kommunikation dient, sondern auch eine Form von symbolischem Kapital ist, dessen Einsatz einen bestimmten Vorteil verschaffen kann.