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**L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle  
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century  
A África e os desafios do Século XXI  
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين**

**(M)Other Tongue, Popular Music and Being Retrieval**

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## **Abstract**

The imperialist project in Anglophone Africa had English as its language of operation. It was the language of power and prestige, the literal and figurative passport into the gains of the Anglo-European world. Beside English, languages of the indigenous population, called “vernaculars”, fared no better than Caliban’s “brutish gabble” that did not know its “own meaning”. The prestige accorded English as the language of colonial Nigeria had the double impact of privileging the British and European way of life, while damaging the psyche of the colonised people of Nigeria with effects that far outweighed the more tangible (measurable) havoc of colonialism which are still to be seen/felt in contemporary times. One salutary outcome of the media-driven nation-space of “postcolonial” Nigeria, however, is the role of orality, orature and the verbal artist, especially those who inhabit the (countercultural) mainstream genre of hip-hop/popular music, in reinscribing indigenous languages and culture into popular acceptance and contemporary history. Emerging mass (youth) culture in the verbal arts, signposting Nigeria’s entry into the postcolonial phase, has helped in creating a site of linguistic identity very much at variance and away from the one imposed by British suzerainty. Such reconstitution of the colonial/indigenous subject/psyche via the “vernacular” medium of popular music is sometimes an unconscious, often decanonical enterprise that displaces English as the language of “high” culture and civilisation, providing in the alternative a *metissage* of languages (English, Pidgin and the so-called vernaculars, particularly the latter) whose ultimate outcome, well harnessed, could be positive for the overall development of society. Framed within cultural studies, and postcolonial theory, a counter-hegemonic political discourse that interrogates the relationship holding between the Anglo-European (Western) metropole and the colonised periphery, this paper explores the theme of national identity implicit in the efflorescence of indigenous languages and dialects in contemporary popular music in Nigeria.

**Key words:** *Postcolon(y)ial, identity, oral(ity) artist, popular music, vernacular, languages.*