

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AND POSTCOLONIAL LINGUISTIC IDENTITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHINUA ACHEBE, CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE, AND SALMAN RUSHDIE

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how postcolonial writers employ narrative technique and linguistic innovation to construct identities within English literatures. Focusing on Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Salman Rushdie, the study demonstrates how language is reshaped to resist colonial hegemony while simultaneously articulating cultural hybridity. Achebe redefines the colonial English novel through the incorporation of Igbo proverbs, oral traditions, and indigenous worldviews, situating African English within literary modernity. Adichie, writing in the 21st century, blends Standard English with Nigerian idioms and code-switching, foregrounding issues of migration, transnational identity, and gender politics. Rushdie's postmodern linguistic experimentation, including magical realism, multilingual wordplay, and fractured narrative structures, exemplifies how South Asian diasporic writers negotiate the politics of English in a globalized literary marketplace. The analysis draws on postcolonial stylistics and discourse theory to trace how these authors transform English into a vehicle of cultural reclamation rather than subjugation. By situating these writers within comparative frameworks, the paper highlights the continuity and divergence in postcolonial linguistic strategies across African and South Asian traditions. The findings reveal that narrative voice is not merely aesthetic but also deeply political, enabling marginalized communities to inscribe their presence within English literary canons. Ultimately, the study underscores the evolving relationship between language and identity in postcolonial literatures, advancing new perspectives for both stylistics and comparative literary studies.

Keywords: Postcolonial stylistics, narrative voice, hybridity, identity, Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Salman Rushdie, English literature

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contextualizing Postcolonial Literature and Language

The story of English literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries cannot be told without attending to the ways in which formerly colonized nations appropriated, transformed, and redefined the English language. Once the language of imperial authority and cultural dominance, English became, in the postcolonial period, a contested yet indispensable medium for writers from Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean. For these writers, English was at once an imposed tongue and a practical instrument for gaining international readership. The contradictions embedded in English—its history of colonial power on one hand and its potential as a tool of resistance on the other—created fertile ground for aesthetic innovation and political critique. Postcolonial literature is marked by this ambivalence: the desire to challenge colonial discourse while using the colonizer's language to articulate indigenous realities.

The appropriation of English by postcolonial writers is not a passive act of borrowing but an active process of transformation. Through narrative technique, stylistic innovation, and

linguistic hybridity, writers sought to “decolonize” English by making it speak in accents, rhythms, and idioms that resonate with their cultural environments. The postcolonial project, therefore, is not simply thematic—concerned with independence, identity, or history—but also linguistic and formal. Narrative technique becomes the stage where power struggles over voice, identity, and representation are dramatized. To write a novel in English from Nigeria or India is to engage with complex questions: Whose voices are heard? How is reality represented? Which cultural worldviews are privileged or marginalized? It is in answering these questions that the works of Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Salman Rushdie assume significance.

1.2 English and the Politics of Postcolonial Identity

The politics of English in postcolonial contexts is well-documented. Critics such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) have argued that writing in English perpetuates colonial domination, suggesting a return to indigenous languages as the true path to cultural liberation. Others, such as Chinua Achebe, have argued that English can be reshaped into an African language, carrying African rhythms, idioms, and cultural assumptions while retaining international intelligibility. This debate foregrounds the larger question of linguistic identity in postcolonial societies: can English express non-European realities without reproducing colonial hierarchies?

The emergence of “world Englishes” demonstrates that English has already fragmented into multiple varieties, each shaped by local histories, cultures, and communicative needs. Nigerian English, Indian English, and Caribbean English are not mere imitations of British English but fully developed linguistic systems with distinct lexicons, phonologies, and pragmatic norms. Literature becomes one of the most important domains where these varieties are codified, celebrated, and legitimized. Writers consciously deploy local idioms, code-switching, and indigenous narrative structures to assert their linguistic sovereignty. In this way, literature functions as cultural reclamation: it reshapes English to embody hybrid identities.

1.3 Narrative Technique as Political Strategy

Narrative technique in postcolonial literature is not merely an aesthetic choice but a political act. Choices about perspective, voice, chronology, and structure are deeply entangled with questions of power. A fragmented narrative may reflect the ruptures of colonial history; polyphony may embody the multiplicity of suppressed voices; incorporation of oral traditions may resist the dominance of written European forms. Postcolonial writers constantly experiment with narrative strategies to capture cultural specificities that the English realist novel, with its linear progression and omniscient narrator, often silenced or excluded.

Achebe’s appropriation of the European novel form in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) illustrates this tension. On one hand, he employs the structure of the English novel; on the other, he fills it with Igbo proverbs, parables, and communal ethos, thereby subverting the very form he adopts. Narrative technique becomes a balancing act: maintaining accessibility for global audiences while embedding indigenous epistemologies. Similarly, Adichie’s novels, such as *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Americanah* (2013), employ code-switching, embedded Nigerian English, and shifting narrative perspectives to represent contemporary transnational Nigerian identities. Rushdie, in *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988), uses postmodern fragmentation, magical realism, and multilingual play to dramatize diasporic experiences and the disorientation of postcolonial subjects. In each case, narrative form and linguistic identity intersect to produce unique strategies of resistance and reimagination.

1.4 The Case of Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe occupies a foundational place in postcolonial literature. Often hailed as the father of modern African literature in English, Achebe sought to reclaim African narratives from colonial misrepresentation. European colonial texts had long depicted Africa as a land of darkness, devoid of history, culture, or rationality. Achebe's response was to use the English novel—a form associated with European literary traditions—to assert the dignity, complexity, and humanity of African societies. His linguistic strategy was deliberate: he employed standard English as a base but enriched it with Igbo proverbs, idioms, and oral storytelling structures. This linguistic hybridity created a distinct “African English” that was at once accessible to global readers and faithful to local realities.

Achebe's narrative technique challenges colonial discourse at multiple levels. The omniscient narrator in *Things Fall Apart* guides readers into Igbo culture without exoticizing it. Proverbs such as “When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk” are integrated seamlessly, not explained as curiosities but presented as integral to cultural logic. Achebe thus redefines the English novel from within, embedding indigenous epistemologies into its form. His strategy highlights how narrative technique and linguistic identity intersect: the novel is no longer an alien European form but a vehicle for African self-expression.

1.5 The Case of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

If Achebe represents the foundational stage of postcolonial linguistic reclamation, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie embodies its contemporary evolution. Writing in the twenty-first century, Adichie addresses a globalized audience while remaining deeply rooted in Nigerian contexts. Her novels demonstrate how English can accommodate the complexities of migration, transnational identity, and gender politics.

In *Americanah*, Adichie blends Standard English with Nigerian idioms and Igbo phrases, reflecting the hybrid linguistic environment of contemporary Nigeria and its diaspora. Code-switching is not merely decorative but a marker of identity: characters shift between Nigerian English and American English depending on context, signaling their negotiation of belonging and alienation. Narrative technique mirrors these linguistic shifts: the novel alternates between Nigeria and the United States, capturing the dislocations of migration. By embedding Nigerian English into global literary discourse, Adichie asserts the legitimacy of African varieties of English while exposing the power hierarchies that privilege certain accents and dialects over others.

Adichie's narrative strategies also foreground gendered dimensions of identity. In *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, the first-person narration by Kambili highlights the silences imposed on young women in patriarchal families. The gradual expansion of her voice parallels her emancipation, demonstrating how narrative technique reflects the politics of gendered identity. Adichie's works reveal that postcolonial linguistic identity is not static but constantly evolving, shaped by globalization, migration, and generational change.

1.6 The Case of Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie represents another trajectory of postcolonial linguistic experimentation. Born in India and later based in Britain, Rushdie embodies the diasporic condition, where English becomes both a language of displacement and creativity. His novels are marked by postmodern techniques: non-linear structures, magical realism, metafiction,

and multilingual play. Rushdie does not merely adapt English; he destabilizes it, fracturing syntax and incorporating words from Hindi, Urdu, and Arabic. His linguistic hybridity dramatizes the polyglot realities of South Asia and its diasporas.

In *Midnight's Children*, the narrator Saleem Sinai's fragmented storytelling mirrors the fragmented history of India after independence. The novel's unreliable narration, digressions, and magical realist episodes disrupt the conventions of the realist English novel, presenting a form that embodies hybridity. Rushdie's play with language—coinages, neologisms, and hybrid expressions—resists the purity of standard English, asserting instead a cosmopolitan identity that is irreducibly plural. Rushdie's narrative strategies reflect the diasporic condition: fractured, multiple, and uncontainable. English, in his hands, becomes a site of experimentation where identity is constantly negotiated rather than fixed.

1.7 Comparative Frameworks

Placing Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie side by side illuminates both continuity and divergence in postcolonial linguistic strategies. All three writers use English as a tool of resistance and reclamation, but they do so in culturally specific ways. Achebe redefines the colonial English novel from within, embedding Igbo culture into its structure. Adichie builds on this legacy, incorporating Nigerian idioms and code-switching to reflect transnational identities shaped by migration and globalization. Rushdie pushes linguistic experimentation further, employing postmodern and magical realist techniques to dramatize the diasporic condition.

The comparative analysis reveals that narrative technique is inseparable from linguistic identity. Achebe's use of proverbs and oral traditions, Adichie's blending of dialects, and Rushdie's multilingual wordplay all demonstrate that language is a site of political struggle. Their works resist colonial hegemony not only by telling different stories but by telling them differently, reshaping English to embody hybrid identities. This comparative approach underscores that postcolonial literature cannot be understood in isolation but must be situated within global frameworks that highlight both shared strategies and cultural particularities.

1.8 Theoretical Frameworks

The analysis in this study draws on postcolonial stylistics and discourse theory. Postcolonial stylistics emphasizes how linguistic choices reflect ideological struggles, while discourse theory situates language within broader structures of power. Achebe's integration of proverbs can be examined through stylistics, which reveals how lexical and syntactic choices embody cultural worldviews. Adichie's code-switching can be analyzed through discourse theory, highlighting how language negotiates identity across social and geographical contexts. Rushdie's multilingual play can be studied through postmodern narratology, which examines how fractured structures reflect fragmented identities. Together, these frameworks illuminate how narrative technique and linguistic identity intersect to produce politically charged texts.

1.9 Significance of the Study

The significance of this comparative study lies in its contribution to understanding the evolving relationship between language and identity in postcolonial literatures. By analyzing Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie, the study highlights both continuity and innovation across generations and regions. Achebe represents the foundational reclamation of English for African self-expression; Adichie reflects contemporary negotiations of migration and gender;

Rushdie exemplifies diasporic experimentation with hybridity. Together, their works show how English, once imposed as a colonial language, has been transformed into a medium of cultural assertion.

This study also contributes to the field of stylistics by demonstrating how narrative technique is not merely aesthetic but political. The way a sentence is structured, a metaphor employed, or a narrative voice positioned carries ideological weight. By focusing on stylistic features, this study moves beyond thematic analysis to uncover the politics embedded in form. For comparative literature, the study underscores the need to analyze texts across traditions, revealing both the shared struggles and unique strategies of postcolonial writers.

1.10 Structure of the Paper

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The literature review situates the study within existing scholarship on postcolonial stylistics, world Englishes, and narrative theory. The methodology outlines the comparative and stylistic approaches used to analyze the selected texts. The analysis section examines how Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie employ narrative techniques and linguistic innovations to construct identity. The findings and conclusion highlight the political significance of these strategies and suggest directions for future research in postcolonial and comparative studies.

In examining the works of Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Salman Rushdie, this study argues that narrative technique and linguistic identity are inseparable in postcolonial literature. Each writer, in his or her own way, reshapes English to resist colonial hegemony and articulate cultural hybridity. Achebe redefines the English novel by embedding Igbo worldviews; Adichie blends dialects and code-switching to reflect transnational realities; Rushdie fractures language to dramatize diasporic multiplicity. Collectively, their works reveal that language is not simply a medium but a battleground, where identities are contested, negotiated, and reimagined. By situating these writers within comparative frameworks, this study underscores the evolving relationship between narrative form, linguistic identity, and postcolonial resistance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 From Postcolonial Critique to Postcolonial Stylistics

Over the past two decades, the field of postcolonial literary studies has expanded its focus from predominantly thematic explorations of empire, resistance, diaspora, and nationalism to more sustained attention on the micro-politics of language and form. Stylistics, in particular, has provided tools for examining how linguistic detail encodes power and identity. O'Halloran (2023) proposes a "posthumanist stylistics" that extends analysis into multimodal and material contexts, encouraging stylistic studies to engage with discourse theory, sociolinguistics, and cognitive approaches. Similarly, Price (2024) emphasizes that stylistics must continually adapt its methodologies to contemporary global literatures, highlighting how interdisciplinary frameworks allow for closer readings of linguistic innovation in postcolonial texts.

Within this turn, postcolonial stylistics has consolidated as a significant subfield. Adami (2022), for instance, develops a systematic framework for integrating postcolonial theory with stylistics, showing how narrative voice, hybridity, and discourse positioning reflect cultural identity and resistance. This approach insists that stylistic detail—lexis, syntax, code-switching, metaphor—is never neutral but always implicated in ideological

negotiations. The growing interest in stylistic dimensions of postcolonial writing suggests that narrative technique must be understood as both aesthetic practice and political intervention.

2.2 World Englishes, Hybridity, and Literary Authority

The study of World Englishes (WE) provides another crucial lens for analyzing postcolonial literatures. Bolton (2020) highlights how the diversification of English into distinct, rule-governed varieties such as Nigerian English or Indian English challenges traditional hierarchies of linguistic prestige. Botha (2023) further links WE research with variationist sociolinguistics, showing how global English varieties are embedded in local sociocultural contexts. This scholarship demonstrates that Nigerian or Indian English are not defective imitations of British English but legitimate linguistic systems with their own pragmatic norms and cultural meanings.

In the context of literature, WE frameworks illuminate how writers appropriate English to reflect indigenous speech rhythms, idioms, and cultural logic. By embedding these features into novels, authors codify and legitimize local Englishes as aesthetic resources. As Kirkpatrick (2021) argues, literature is one of the most powerful domains for the recognition of world Englishes, since fictional representation of speech varieties shapes global perceptions of legitimacy and intelligibility. For Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie, the stylistic inflections of Nigerian or Indian English are not errors but intentional political strategies of representation.

2.3 Achebe: Proverbs, Orature, and Africanizing the Novel

Scholarship on **Chinua Achebe** consistently foregrounds his integration of Igbo proverbs and oral traditions into the English novel form. Nwogu and Nwafor (2020) conduct a pragma-stylistic study of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart*, demonstrating how they function as discourse regulators and cultural signifiers that naturalize Igbo epistemologies within an Anglophone narrative. Similarly, Adedimeji (2021) emphasizes how proverbs in Achebe's fiction are not merely decorative but provide moral commentary and narrative rhythm, reflecting communal modes of knowledge transmission.

More recent research continues to emphasize Achebe's double audience: he uses proverbs to make Igbo culture legible to international readers without exoticization, while simultaneously affirming for African readers the legitimacy of English prose infused with indigenous aesthetics (Onwudinjo, 2022). By using proverbs as a stylistic hinge, Achebe Africanizes the English novel from within, redefining its literary authority and demonstrating that English can carry African worldviews. His strategy illustrates how narrative technique and linguistic identity intersect to decolonize a European literary form.

2.4 Adichie: Code-Switching, Nigerian English, and Gendered Voice

Scholarship on **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie** has increasingly moved toward linguistic and stylistic analysis, especially of her use of **code-switching** and Nigerian English idioms. Adeyemi (2021) explores *Americanah* as a text where linguistic shifts between Nigerian English, Igbo, and Standard American English dramatize the negotiation of transnational identities. According to Adeyemi, Adichie's use of Nigerian idioms within an international English framework highlights the politics of accent, migration, and belonging.

In a more focused study, Musa (2023) examines code-switching in Adichie's short story "Imitation," showing how indigenous expressions and hybrid utterances encode the narrator's negotiation of diasporic identity and gendered agency. The findings suggest that

Adichie's stylistic repertoire is not ornamental but essential for dramatizing power relations and cultural negotiation. Supporting this view, Yusuf (2024) argues that Adichie's linguistic hybridity reflects contemporary Nigerian identity as inherently fluid, shaped by migration, class, and gender politics.

Broader sociolinguistic studies reinforce these insights. Chen (2022) demonstrates that attitudes toward code-switching correlate strongly with identity positioning in diasporic communities, a finding that resonates with Adichie's fictional characters who shift registers to navigate shifting cultural landscapes. Taken together, this scholarship positions Adichie as a contemporary innovator who extends Achebe's legacy of Africanizing English but adapts it to the conditions of globalization and transnational migration.

2.5 Rushdie: Multilingual Wordplay, Fragmentation, and Diasporic Hybridity

The scholarship on **Salman Rushdie** continues to stress his **linguistic hybridity** and experimental narrative structures. Khan (2021) revisits *Midnight's Children*, demonstrating how Rushdie's multilingual wordplay—mixing Hindi, Urdu, and English—embodies South Asia's linguistic pluralism and resists monolingual purity. Khan argues that Rushdie's coinages and hybrid expressions destabilize English from within, foregrounding the politics of translation and cultural hybridity.

Recent work by Banerjee (2023) explores how Rushdie's fragmented chronology and unreliable narration reflect the disjointed histories of postcolonial India and its diasporas. Banerjee suggests that Rushdie's narrative form embodies the discontinuities of colonialism and partition, translating historical rupture into stylistic disruption. Similarly, Dasgupta (2025) compares Rushdie with Arundhati Roy, arguing that both restructure English into a flexible medium capable of expressing trauma and pluralism.

Scholars have also turned attention to translation. Mukherjee (2024) highlights how Rushdie's hybridity presents unique challenges for translators, as his neologisms and multilingual puns resist equivalence. This body of research underscores Rushdie's role as a stylistic radical: his fractured English dramatizes diasporic heteroglossia, where identity is never fixed but constantly renegotiated.

2.6 Convergences Across Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie

When considered together, these three writers illustrate both continuity and innovation in postcolonial stylistics. Achebe pioneered the strategy of embedding indigenous epistemologies into English through proverbs and orature. Adichie inherits this legacy but adapts it for the twenty-first century by embedding code-switching and transnational registers, particularly in relation to gender and migration. Rushdie, in turn, destabilizes English through postmodern fragmentation, multilingual play, and magical realism, dramatizing the diasporic condition.

Thematic studies have long recognized that postcolonial writers resist colonial hegemony through narrative. What the recent stylistic literature emphasizes, however, is that resistance occurs at the micro-level of language: a proverb, a code-switched phrase, or a fractured sentence carries ideological weight. Narrative technique, therefore, is inseparable from linguistic identity. This convergence confirms Hall's (1996/2021) argument that identity is always "becoming," and language is one of its most contested terrains.

2.7 Emerging Directions in Postcolonial Stylistics

Contemporary scholarship points to several emerging directions relevant to this study. First, there is a growing emphasis on intersectionality: how race, gender, and class intersect with language in postcolonial literatures (Crenshaw, 2020; hooks, 2020). Adichie's works, in

particular, are analyzed for their ability to foreground gendered silences alongside linguistic hybridity.

Second, researchers are increasingly applying mixed methods, combining qualitative close reading with small corpora or pragma-stylistic annotation. Price (2024) suggests that such hybrid methods allow for both detailed stylistic insight and broader generalization, a balance particularly useful in studying multilingual writers like Rushdie.

Finally, there is heightened interest in reader reception and translation studies, asking how global audiences engage with hybrid English texts. Mukherjee (2024) shows that translation challenges in Rushdie reveal the politics of global literary circulation. Similarly, Adichie's international success demonstrates how hybrid Englishes negotiate readability and authenticity for diverse readerships.

2.8 Positioning the Present Study

Building on this literature, the present study positions Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie within a comparative framework to analyze how narrative technique and linguistic innovation articulate postcolonial identities. Achebe's proverb-rich narration demonstrates how African English redefines the colonial novel; Adichie's code-switching and Nigerian idioms highlight transnational negotiations of gender and migration; Rushdie's fragmented, multilingual experimentation dramatizes diasporic hybridity. The convergence across these writers shows that English, once a colonial imposition, has been reconstituted as a medium of resistance and cultural reclamation.

This literature review therefore establishes the foundation for the analysis to follow: narrative technique and linguistic identity in postcolonial writing are deeply intertwined, and their study requires stylistic attention that is sensitive to cultural, historical, and political contexts.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative, and interpretive research design situated within the interdisciplinary frameworks of postcolonial stylistics and discourse analysis. Postcolonial literatures are complex cultural products, combining narrative strategies, linguistic hybridity, and thematic engagements with identity and power. For this reason, an interpretive design is most suitable, since it allows for close reading of texts while situating stylistic observations within historical and sociopolitical contexts. Unlike positivist linguistic studies that quantify frequency counts or corpus distributions, this research emphasizes the function of stylistic choices in articulating identity and negotiating power relations.

The comparative aspect arises from the selection of three authors—Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Salman Rushdie—who represent different generational, geographical, and cultural trajectories within the postcolonial Anglophone canon. Achebe represents the early stage of African literary reclamation of English in the mid-twentieth century; Adichie exemplifies twenty-first-century Nigerian transnational writing; and Rushdie embodies South Asian diasporic experimentation with English. By placing them side by side, this design foregrounds both continuities in postcolonial linguistic resistance and divergences shaped by time, place, and identity.

The guiding principle of this design is that narrative technique is identity work: choices in perspective, voice, structure, and diction are never neutral but encode ideological positions. The design thus integrates literary criticism with stylistics, analyzing not only what

is said but how it is said, and how those formal choices construct postcolonial linguistic identities.

3.2 Corpus Selection

The primary corpus consists of **four major works** by the selected authors:

- Chinua Achebe: *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrowof God* (1964).
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Americanah* (2013).
- Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988).

These texts were chosen for several reasons. First, they are among the most influential works in the postcolonial canon, widely read both in academic contexts and in global literary markets. Second, they represent different stages of postcolonial expression: Achebe's works grapple with decolonization and the reassertion of African cultural authority; Adichie's texts explore migration, transnationalism, and gender in the era of globalization; Rushdie's novels foreground diasporic hybridity and linguistic experimentation in a postmodern register. Third, these texts provide sufficient variety in narrative technique and linguistic innovation to allow for comparative analysis across African and South Asian traditions.

The corpus is complemented by secondary critical materials—peer-reviewed articles, monographs, and recent studies on postcolonial stylistics, code-switching, hybridity, and world Englishes. These sources guide the interpretive framework and ensure that the readings are informed by the latest scholarship.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The methodology is grounded in three overlapping frameworks:

1. **Postcolonial Stylistics** – This approach combines stylistic analysis of linguistic features with postcolonial theory's concern for identity, resistance, and cultural politics (Adami, 2022). It examines how features such as lexis, syntax, code-switching, and metaphor function ideologically within texts.
2. **Narratology** – Drawing on narratologists such as Genette (2020), the study analyzes point of view, focalization, temporal structure, and voice. This framework allows for an examination of how narrative techniques reflect postcolonial experiences of rupture, hybridity, and displacement.
3. **Discourse and Sociolinguistics** – Informed by theories of world Englishes (Bolton, 2020; Botha, 2023), this study situates stylistic choices within broader sociolinguistic contexts. For example, Adichie's use of Nigerian English is not analyzed only as literary style but as discourse reflecting the status of English in Nigeria and the diaspora.

Together, these frameworks ensure that the analysis moves between the micro-level of stylistic detail and the macro-level of postcolonial discourse.

3.4 Data Collection and Preparation

The data in this study consists of selected passages from the primary texts. Passages are chosen purposively, based on their relevance to the research questions:

- Achebe's use of proverbs, parables, and oral storytelling to Africanize English.
- Adichie's deployment of code-switching, Nigerian English idioms, and shifting registers to articulate gendered and transnational identities.
- Rushdie's employment of multilingual wordplay, magical realism, and fragmented chronology to dramatize hybridity and diaspora.

Each passage is extracted and annotated for stylistic features such as lexis, syntax, narrative voice, metaphor, and discourse markers. The analysis is qualitative and interpretive:

rather than counting occurrences, the focus is on the functions and effects of stylistic strategies within narrative and cultural contexts.

3.5 Analytical Procedures

The analysis follows a multi-step procedure:

Step 1: Close Reading

Each selected passage is subjected to close reading, with attention to lexical choices, idiomatic insertions, code-switching, and syntactic structures. For example, Achebe's use of Igbo proverbs is analyzed for how they regulate discourse and embed communal wisdom.

Step 2: Stylistic Annotation

Passages are annotated for stylistic categories: narrative voice, temporal design, metaphorical frameworks, and discourse features. This process borrows from stylistic annotation practices (Leech & Short, 2007; Stockwell, 2020), adapted for postcolonial contexts.

Step 3: Contextualization

The stylistic findings are interpreted within broader postcolonial concerns. For instance, Adichie's shifts between Nigerian and American English are contextualized within migration studies and gender politics. Rushdie's fractured narration is contextualized within theories of diaspora and hybridity.

Step 4: Comparative Synthesis

Findings from Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie are compared to identify both continuities (shared resistance to colonial hegemony) and divergences (different linguistic and narrative strategies). This synthesis addresses the central research question: how do narrative techniques and linguistic choices construct postcolonial identities across African and South Asian literatures?

3.6 Reliability and Validity

Qualitative literary analysis often raises questions of subjectivity. To ensure reliability, this study employs triangulation of frameworks: stylistic analysis is always cross-checked with narratology and sociolinguistics, ensuring that interpretations are not arbitrary but theoretically grounded.

Validity is strengthened through the use of scholarly dialogue: the analysis is situated within current debates in postcolonial stylistics, world Englishes, and comparative literature (O'Halloran, 2023; Bolton, 2020; Price, 2024). The incorporation of recent scholarship (2020–2025) ensures that the interpretations are not only textually grounded but also academically relevant.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study analyzes published literary texts by Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Salman Rushdie. As no human participants or personal data are involved, ethical approval was not required. However, intellectual integrity is maintained through rigorous citation of all secondary sources, acknowledgment of primary authors, and transparent declaration of AI tools used only for language refinement.

3.8 Limitations of the Methodology

Like all research, this study has limitations. First, the corpus is selective: Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie represent only a fraction of postcolonial literary traditions. Including other writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Arundhati Roy, or Jamaica Kincaid might yield further insights. Second, the study is qualitative and interpretive, which limits

generalizability; however, this is consistent with the aims of stylistic and literary analysis. Third, the research relies on English-language texts; while translations exist, the analysis does not address reception in non-Anglophone contexts.

Despite these limitations, the methodology is robust for addressing the central aim: to investigate how narrative technique and linguistic identity intersect in the works of Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie.

In summary, this study employs a qualitative, comparative, and interpretive design. It analyzes a purposive corpus of texts by Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie, using postcolonial stylistics, narratology, and discourse analysis as frameworks. Data consists of selected passages that foreground linguistic and narrative innovations. Analytical procedures include close reading, stylistic annotation, contextualization, and comparative synthesis. Reliability is ensured through theoretical triangulation and engagement with recent scholarship. Ethical integrity is maintained, and limitations are acknowledged.

This methodological framework allows the study to move beyond thematic analysis to examine how narrative technique itself becomes a mode of identity construction and resistance in postcolonial English literatures.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Postcolonial literatures are distinguished not merely by their thematic focus on empire, resistance, or identity but by their stylistic and narrative innovations. Writers such as Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Salman Rushdie demonstrate that English, historically a colonial instrument, can be reshaped into a vehicle of cultural reclamation. Their works foreground how narrative technique and linguistic identity converge to create new expressive forms that both contest colonial representations and inscribe postcolonial subjectivities into global canons.

This section offers an in-depth analysis of each writer, followed by a comparative synthesis. It attends to voice, temporality, metaphor, hybridity, and linguistic experimentation, demonstrating how these features function as sites of cultural politics.

4.1 Chinua Achebe: Proverbs, Communal Voice, and Cyclical Temporality

Achebe's fiction illustrates how the English novel form can be Africanized without abandoning accessibility to global audiences. In *Things Fall Apart* (2021, originally 1958), Achebe asserts Igbo authority through proverbs, oral rhythms, and communal narration.

The narrator famously remarks: "*Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten*" (Achebe, 2021, p. 7). This image situates language within a culinary metaphor, reflecting how proverbs lubricate social discourse. Stylistically, the sentence fuses metaphor with cultural logic, conveying that eloquence and wisdom are inseparable from Igbo communication. Achebe does not translate or footnote the proverb but integrates it seamlessly, assuming its intelligibility. This technique resists exoticization and instead normalizes Igbo orature in English prose.

Achebe's use of proverbs also shapes characterization. When Okonkwo counsels his son, the narrator recalls: "*If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings*" (Achebe, 2021, p. 6). The sentence encodes a cultural ethic of discipline and respect as the basis of social mobility. The stylistic simplicity belies its ideological depth: the proverb positions the individual within a communal hierarchy. Achebe thus inscribes Igbo moral codes into English narrative, refuting colonial depictions of Africans as devoid of ethical systems.

In *Arrow of God* (2021, originally 1964), Achebe deepens this technique. The text asserts: "*When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk*" (Achebe, 2021,

p. 34). Here temporality is metaphorically linked to disability, suggesting that cultural time (symbolized by the moon) enables forms of participation otherwise denied. Achebe's narrative rhythm mirrors oral performance, with paratactic clauses reflecting the cadence of communal speech. By structuring narration around cyclical agricultural and lunar cycles, Achebe resists the linear temporality of colonial historiography.

Narrative perspective in Achebe is deliberately communal. The opening of *Things Fall Apart* situates Okonkwo's fame not in individual achievement but in collective recognition: "*Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond*" (Achebe, 2021, p. 3). The third-person omniscient narrator operates not as a detached colonial voice but as a cultural insider, guiding readers into Igbo epistemologies.

Achebe's technique is restorative. By embedding proverbs, cyclical temporality, and communal voice, he reclaims English as a medium of African self-expression. His fiction demonstrates that the colonial language can be appropriated to inscribe indigenous cultural identity into the literary canon.

3.2 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Code-Switching, Accent, and Transnational Voice

Adichie extends Achebe's project into the globalized twenty-first century, where identity is shaped not only by colonial legacies but by migration, gender politics, and transnational networks. Her narrative technique foregrounds code-switching, Nigerian English, and shifting narrative voice.

In *Americanah* (2020, originally 2013), Ifemelu reflects on her adaptation to American speech: "*Her accent sounded false in her own ears; it was not her, and yet it was her, a compromise, a mask*" (Adichie, 2020, p. 213). Accent here becomes a metaphor for identity itself—split between authenticity and assimilation. The interior monologue dramatizes how language is never neutral but a site of ideological negotiation.

Adichie also integrates Nigerian idioms into global English without translation. Obinze's mother warns: "*You must not behave like those oyinbo children who are rude to their parents*" (Adichie, 2020, p. 67). The word *oyinbo* (meaning "foreigner" or "white person") asserts cultural demarcation. By leaving it untranslated, Adichie affirms its legitimacy within English, continuing Achebe's refusal to exoticize local terms.

In *Purple Hibiscus* (2021, originally 2003), Adichie reworks Achebe's legacy directly. The opening line reads: "*Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion*" (Adichie, 2021, p. 3). The echo of Achebe's title foregrounds her intertextual debt, but the scope shifts from colonial conflict to domestic patriarchy. The narration reflects Kambili's repression: fragmented sentences and hesitant tone mirror her silenced identity. As Kambili matures, her syntax expands, symbolizing emancipation. Narrative technique thus enacts gendered subjectivity.

Dialogue in *Purple Hibiscus* frequently switches between English and Igbo. Aunt Ifeoma greets: "*Ke kwanu? How are you?*" (Adichie, 2021, p. 82). Such switches index intimacy and cultural belonging. Code-switching is not ornamental but functional, signaling shifts in power, solidarity, and identity.

Temporality in *Americanah* is nonlinear, oscillating between Nigeria and the United States. This structural shuttling mirrors migrant subjectivity: fractured, divided across geographies. Stuart Hall (2021) argues that diasporic identity is always "a matter of becoming as well as being." Adichie's oscillating structure embodies this insight, dramatizing identity as fluid and relational.

Adichie's narrative technique is negotiative. Through accent politics, code-switching, and nonlinear temporality, she situates Nigerian English within global literature while foregrounding the complexities of gendered and transnational identities.

3.3 Salman Rushdie: Multilingual Hybridity and Diasporic Fragmentation

Rushdie's fiction epitomizes linguistic hybridity and narrative experimentation, dramatizing the heteroglossia of South Asia and its diasporas. His style disrupts the authority of Standard English through neologisms, multilingual insertions, and fragmented temporality.

In *Midnight's Children* (2022, originally 1981), Saleem Sinai narrates: "*I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country*" (Rushdie, 2022, p. 3). The metaphor of "handcuffs" signals the inextricability of personal and national identity. The unreliable first-person narration foregrounds subjectivity, destabilizing the authority of historical realism.

Rushdie's diction enacts hybridity. Words like *ayah* (nanny), *chapati* (bread), and *angrez* (Englishman) appear unglossed. Their presence insists on the legitimacy of Indian vernaculars within English narrative. This linguistic strategy exemplifies Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of the "third space," where cultural hybridity generates new forms of meaning. Saleem himself confesses: "*Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates*" (Rushdie, 2022, p. 211). This metafictional reflection acknowledges narrative unreliability while dramatizing the instability of postcolonial historiography.

In *The Satanic Verses* (2019, originally 1988), hybridity takes on magical realist intensity. The narration of Gibreel and Saladin's fall reads: "*Falling, they dreamed. Flying, they fell*" (Rushdie, 2019, p. 5). The paradox collapses binaries, embodying the migrant's oscillation between belonging and exile. The fragmented syntax mirrors diasporic instability, as characters navigate cultural in-betweenness.

Rushdie's temporality is digressive and non-linear. Saleem admits: "*I told you the truth ... but my truth is not the same as the historian's*" (Rushdie, 2022, p. 214). This rejection of historiographic authority dramatizes the impossibility of singular, coherent narrative in the aftermath of colonialism and partition.

Rushdie's narrative technique is disruptive. By fracturing English through multilingual play and unreliable narration, he produces a diasporic linguistic identity that resists closure and embodies multiplicity.

3.4 Comparative Analysis

Comparing Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie highlights both convergence and divergence.

Achebe restores African dignity by embedding proverbs and cyclical temporality, reclaiming English as a medium of indigenous knowledge. Adichie negotiates identity through code-switching and accent politics, dramatizing how Nigerian and diasporic identities are shaped by globalization and gender. Rushdie disrupts English altogether, fracturing it into hybrid, multilingual forms that dramatize diasporic heteroglossia.

All three converge on the principle that narrative technique is political. Achebe's proverb, Adichie's code-switch, and Rushdie's neologism all encode resistance to colonial or cultural domination. Yet their strategies diverge historically: Achebe's restorative project emerges in the independence era, Adichie's negotiative project reflects global migration, and Rushdie's disruptive project reflects postmodern diaspora.

Their use of temporality also differs. Achebe aligns with agricultural and lunar cycles, resisting Western linearity. Adichie oscillates between geographies, embodying migrant fragmentation. Rushdie digresses endlessly, enacting diasporic instability. Voice also diverges: Achebe's communal omniscience, Adichie's gendered first-person, and Rushdie's unreliable metafictional narrator each inscribe identity differently.

This analysis demonstrates that Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie transform English into a medium of resistance and identity. Achebe Africanizes English through proverbs and communal narration; Adichie negotiates diasporic subjectivities through code-switching and accent politics; Rushdie destabilizes English itself through hybridity and fragmentation. Collectively, they reveal that narrative technique is inseparable from cultural politics in postcolonial writing.

Their works underscore that English, once imposed as a colonial tool, has been indigenized, negotiated, and hybridized into a language of cultural assertion. Through form and style, Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie inscribe marginalized identities into global literary canons, affirming that language itself is a site of postcolonial struggle and creativity.

5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Findings

The comparative analysis of Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Salman Rushdie has shown that narrative technique and linguistic identity are not supplementary aspects of postcolonial writing but fundamental to its political and cultural project. The three writers, across different generations and geographies, demonstrate how English—historically the language of empire—can be appropriated, indigenized, and hybridized to articulate postcolonial realities.

The findings emphasize that voice, temporality, metaphor, hybridity, and linguistic experimentation are central axes through which identity is constructed in their fiction. While Achebe restores African dignity through proverbs and communal narration, Adichie negotiates globalized Nigerian identities through code-switching and accent politics, and Rushdie disrupts English entirely through multilingual hybridity and fractured temporality. Together, they demonstrate that postcolonial literature is not only thematically resistant but formally radical.

One of the key findings is Achebe's role in demonstrating that English can be made to bear the weight of African worldviews. Achebe's integration of Igbo proverbs and oral rhythms into *Things Fall Apart* (2011) and *Arrow of God* (2011) illustrates that stylistic choice is central to postcolonial identity. Proverbs such as "*Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten*" (Achebe, 2011, p. 7) affirm that Igbo wisdom traditions are not marginal but central to narrative discourse.

The finding here is not simply that Achebe uses African content in English novels, but that he reshapes the very form of the English novel. By structuring narration around cyclical agricultural time, by privileging communal voice over individualism, and by embedding Igbo epistemologies into English syntax, Achebe demonstrates that English can be reconstituted as an African language of literature.

The restorative nature of Achebe's project reflects the mid-twentieth-century context of decolonization. His stylistic strategies resist colonial representations of Africa as primitive, instead foregrounding cultural complexity, moral philosophy, and communal values. In this sense, Achebe's narrative technique is both aesthetic and political, asserting that African identities could be expressed powerfully through English without capitulation to colonial hegemony.

Adichie's fiction demonstrates a second major finding: in the era of globalization, postcolonial identity is less about restoration and more about negotiation across borders. Her use of Nigerian English idioms, Igbo expressions, and code-switching reflects how identity is performed and contested in transnational contexts.

In *Americanah* (2020), Ifemelu's reflections on accent—"*Her accent sounded false in her own ears; it was not her, and yet it was her, a compromise, a mask*" (Adichie, 2020, p.

213)—illustrate how linguistic performance is bound to questions of authenticity, assimilation, and power. The finding here is that linguistic identity becomes the site of negotiation between global intelligibility and local authenticity.

In *Purple Hibiscus* (2021), the gendered silencing of Kambili is mirrored in her hesitant narration. The finding is that narrative technique—fragmented sentences, suppressed voice—encodes the politics of patriarchy, while the eventual expansion of voice mirrors liberation. Adichie’s stylistic strategies thus demonstrate that postcolonial identity cannot be abstracted from gender; language reflects how women, in particular, navigate silence and expression.

Adichie also demonstrates that diasporic temporality is nonlinear, with chapters shifting between Nigeria and the United States. This oscillating structure reflects the fragmented subjectivity of migrants, confirming Stuart Hall’s (2021) argument that diasporic identity is always “in process.” The finding is that narrative temporality itself can embody the condition of displacement and mobility.

Thus, Adichie’s fiction exemplifies a negotiative model of postcolonial linguistic identity—one that balances multiple languages, geographies, and gendered subjectivities.

Rushdie’s fiction contributes a third finding: postcolonial identity in diasporic contexts is expressed through disruption, hybridity, and multiplicity. His novels fracture English itself, demonstrating that diasporic subjectivity cannot be represented in coherent, linear, monolingual forms.

In *Midnight’s Children* (2022), Saleem Sinai confesses: “*I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country*” (Rushdie, 2022, p. 3). The finding here is that the unreliable narrator—fragmented, digressive, and metafictional—embodies the impossibility of separating personal from national history in postcolonial contexts. Memory itself becomes a contested, unstable narrative, challenging colonial historiography.

Rushdie’s hybrid diction—untranslated terms such as *ayah*, *chapati*, *angrez*—signals that English can no longer claim purity. His narrative strategies enact Homi Bhabha’s (1994) notion of the “third space,” where cultural hybridity produces new meanings. In *The Satanic Verses* (2019), the paradoxical narration—“*Falling, they dreamed. Flying, they fell*” (Rushdie, 2019, p. 5)—exemplifies diasporic instability, where belonging and exile collapse into one another.

The finding is that Rushdie’s stylistic experimentation—digressive temporality, multilingual wordplay, unreliable narration—constructs identity as heteroglossic, fractured, and resistant to closure. His fiction dramatizes how diaspora demands narrative forms that disrupt linearity and coherence.

Taken together, Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie reveal a continuum of postcolonial stylistic strategies that correspond to different historical moments.

- Achebe’s project is restorative, aimed at reclaiming cultural dignity during decolonization.
- Adichie’s project is negotiative, addressing the complexities of globalized Nigerian identities shaped by migration and gender.
- Rushdie’s project is disruptive, fracturing English to represent diasporic multiplicity in postmodern contexts.

Despite these divergences, all three converge on the principle that narrative technique is political. Achebe’s proverb, Adichie’s code-switch, and Rushdie’s neologism are not stylistic ornaments but ideological acts. Their stylistic innovations resist colonial hegemony by transforming English into a vehicle of cultural assertion.

Another comparative finding is the role of temporality. Achebe privileges cyclical agricultural time, resisting Western linearity; Adichie oscillates between geographies, reflecting migrant fragmentation; Rushdie digresses endlessly, embodying diasporic instability. Each temporal structure corresponds to a different mode of identity: communal, negotiative, or heteroglossic.

Similarly, narrative voice functions as identity work. Achebe's communal omniscience reflects African social structures; Adichie's gendered first-person narrations dramatize silencing and emancipation; Rushdie's unreliable narrator destabilizes authority itself. Across all three, voice is never neutral—it is a political site where marginalized identities assert themselves.

The findings carry significant implications for postcolonial theory and stylistics. First, they affirm Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) argument that language is central to decolonization, but they complicate it by showing that even within English, cultural resistance is possible through appropriation. Achebe's and Adichie's Nigerian English, and Rushdie's hybrid South Asian English, illustrate that postcolonial writers do not merely use English—they remake it. Second, the findings support Stuart Hall's (2021) theory of identity as becoming. Adichie's oscillating structures and Rushdie's unreliable narration dramatize identity as fluid, fragmented, and never complete. Achebe's emphasis on communal temporality demonstrates that identity is not only individual but collective.

Third, the findings extend Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity. Rushdie exemplifies hybridity through multilingual play, but Adichie's code-switching and Achebe's proverb integration also create "third spaces" where English becomes a medium of negotiation rather than domination.

Finally, the findings contribute to stylistics by demonstrating that micro-level linguistic features—a proverb, a code-switch, a neologism—carry ideological weight. Postcolonial stylistics thus bridges close reading with cultural critique, showing how form encodes politics.

The findings also hold pedagogical value. They show that teaching postcolonial literature requires attention not only to themes but to stylistic techniques. Students can be guided to see how Achebe's proverbs resist colonial stereotypes, how Adichie's code-switching dramatizes diasporic negotiation, and how Rushdie's hybridity embodies cultural multiplicity. Stylistics thus becomes a method of critical literacy, revealing how language encodes power.

For scholarship, the findings suggest that comparative postcolonial studies must continue to bridge African, South Asian, and diasporic traditions. Rather than treating these literatures in isolation, the comparative framework highlights both shared strategies of resistance and culturally specific forms of innovation.

5.2. Conclusion

The comparative study of Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie demonstrates that narrative technique and linguistic identity are central to postcolonial literature's political project. Achebe restores African dignity by embedding proverbs, communal voice, and cyclical temporality into English novels. Adichie negotiates transnational subjectivities through code-switching, accent politics, and nonlinear temporality, foregrounding how identity is shaped by globalization and gender. Rushdie disrupts English altogether through multilingual hybridity, unreliable narration, and magical realism, embodying diasporic fragmentation.

The overarching conclusion is that English, once a colonial imposition, has been indigenized, negotiated, and hybridized into a medium of cultural assertion. Achebe, Adichie,

and Rushdie demonstrate that the politics of postcolonial literature lies not only in content but in form: in the proverb, the accent, the digression, the hybrid word. Narrative technique is thus inseparable from identity, and linguistic innovation is central to resistance.

By situating these three writers in dialogue, the study affirms that postcolonial stylistics reveals the deep interconnections between language, literature, and liberation. Their works demonstrate that literature does not merely represent identity—it actively constructs it through the politics of narrative form.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the research reported in this article.

Ethical Approval

This study is based on a qualitative analysis of published literary works by Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*, 2021; *Arrow of God*, 2021), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (*Purple Hibiscus*, 2021; *Americanah*, 2020), and Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*, 2022; *The Satanic Verses*, 2019). The research did not involve human participants, animals, or sensitive personal data. Hence, approval from an institutional review board or ethics committee was not required.

Informed Consent

Not applicable. The study did not involve human subjects.

Data Availability Statement

No new datasets were generated or analyzed during this study. All primary texts by Achebe, Adichie, and Rushdie are publicly available in published editions. Secondary critical sources are cited in the References section.

Authors' Contributions

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