

---

| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## The Concept of Identity in Postcolonial Contexts

Abdalhadi Nimer Abdalqader Abu Jweid<sup>1</sup> ✉ and Saif Raed Nafia Fakhruddin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor of English literature, Faculty of Educational Sciences & Arts / FESA / UNRWA, Amman-Jordan

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer of English literature, Department of Translation, College of Arts, University of Wasit, Kut, Wasit, Iraq

**Corresponding Author:** Abdalhadi Nimer Abdalqader Abu Jweid, **E-mail:** [abdulhadiabujweid@gmail.com](mailto:abdulhadiabujweid@gmail.com)

---

| ABSTRACT

This paper is a review of the concept of postcolonial identity and its relative ethnic attributes. It follows a thematic scrutiny of the concept of identity in various postcolonial contexts. The main objectives of the study is to unravel and explain the role of identity in shaping the traditional meaning of the relationship between metropolitan cultures and postcolonial cultures. The main body of the reviews rely on my previous studies conducted on the concept of identity within the board context of post-colonialism. Consequently, the discussion attempts to scrutinize the thematic and cultural attributes of postcolonial identity in order to offer a comprehensive idea about the formation and development of ethnic identity in postcolonial societies. Furthermore, the discussion aims at revealing the social peculiarities of identity and its pertinent aspects of ethnicity.

| KEYWORDS

Culture, Ethnicity, Identity, Post-colonialism, Review, Society

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

**ACCEPTED:** 15 May 2025

**PUBLISHED:** 19 June 2025

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2025.8.6.14

---

### 1. Introduction

Post-colonialism is a decisive factor which imprints the typical life of the colonized people. It represents many themes and many associations of socio-cultural reality. Among these themes are ethnicity, modernity, imperialism, racism, and culture that exemplify the factual impression of the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized nations. It posits several premises for the sake of identifying the gradual process of adopting new and foreign customs and traditions reflecting the whole aspects of the colonized nations where culture and society intersect with each other. The traditional nature of post-colonialism is associated with the inherited notions about the East and West represented by the postcolonial society because "postcolonialism is used most obviously and simplistically to demarcate the transition from colonialism to self-determination among formerly colonized nations" (Darian-Smith, 1996, p.292). Therefore, post-colonialism involves the vital dichotomy between the colonized native identity and the imperial culture.

This dichotomy represents the essential cultural schism between the native original conventions and the foreign culture that attempts to impress and change the nature culture in order to create a social equilibrium between them via "the connotative attributes of thematic traits expressed in avant-garde formal techniques" (Abu Jweid, 2023b, p.22). That is, post-colonialism tries to construct a balance between the native inherited social traditions and the new imperial traditions by appropriating them within the broad context of culture and identity. By the same token, post-colonialism combines pre-colonial culture and the new imperial culture through mutual view of "postcolonialism as symbolic of a liberating emancipation for new nations, despite these new states' participation in the trappings of western modernity by institutionalizing such things as citizenship, nationalism, legal codes, and cooperation in international bodies" (Darian-Smith, 1996, p.292). In this sense, the symbolic nature of post-colonialism renders it a multidisciplinary feature i.e., it incorporates many thematic peculiarities and presents them in the form of literary symbols standing for the native religious and postcolonial society. These symbols are

differently deduced by the receptive audience that seeks to explore new implied meanings regarding, for example, religions, identity, ethnicity, society, and culture “which elevate contemporary literary forms as well as empowering their effective use in different generic contexts” (Abu Jweid, 2023b, p.26). This study, therefore, will be a review of the concept of postcolonial identity and its relative ethnic attributes. It follows a thematic scrutiny of the concept of identity in various postcolonial contexts.

## **2. The Concept of Identity in Postcolonial Contexts**

The concept of identity is used within the broad context of post-colonialism. As the concept suggests, it refers to the original national and cultural traits connected with the ancestors’ preserving of conventional social norms. However, the traditional attributes of the concept of identity would be violated by foreign colonial or imperial interference. In Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, it is associated with the symbolic depiction of the protagonist. That is, the protagonist’s suicide exemplifies the Western imperial influence upon the native identity because “the deterioration in national identity symbolically correlates to the protagonist’s personal irresolute experience which is at first physically powerful but in the end spiritually weak” (Abu Jweid, 2016, p.529). Hence, Achebe portrays the cultural interaction between the English culture and the Nigerian native culture through the notions of hegemony, subaltern, aboriginality, and identity which represent the integral implication of national identity tackled in the novel.

The concept of identity is also tackled from a textual perspective. As a rule of thumb, the text typically incarnates the authorial insights projected in the course of the work. It implies the authorial view of reality and life in the way by which readers and the receptive audience can infer the projected themes or ideas in the work’s episodes. The relationship between the author and the text is considered as a dialogic affinity combining the author’s voice and the text. As a postcolonial concept, identity signifies the concomitant relationships between slave and master via the authorial dialogic voice employed to depict reality outside the text. Consequently, the author-text duality connects the core conceptual implication of the social peculiarities of the previous colonized nations because “postcolonial identity is dialogic i.e., it exemplifies the author’s implied message in the narrative text and the characters’ explicit voice which describes the social state of affairs in the master and slave circumferences” (Abu Jweid, 2022, pp.7-8). In this sense, the concept of identity refers to the stereotypical relationship between the colonized slaves and their masters. It takes its postcolonial aspects from the social circumstances which govern the formation of ethnic identity in the context of narratives discourses. These discourses are, therefore, created by the authorial dialogic voice projected in the text.

As a rule of thumb, the concept of identity has postcolonial traits. This is due to the fact that it is appropriated with the wide scope of social and cultural changes brought of colonialism and its residuals left after its disappearance from the colonized lands. Consequently, the concept is accentuated as the core essence of these changes which inherently imprint the typical characteristics of the colonized lands’ native identity. In this case, the colonial hegemony, or the metropolitan identity leaves its massive influence upon the colonized lands because “post-colonialism perceives the concept of identity in terms of the metropolitan influence upon the colonized nations. It highlights such influence through cultural and social transformation of the colonized nations” (Abu Jweid, 2023b, p.17). Therefore, the concept of identity includes the notion of cultural transformation caused by colonial hegemony which stands for the dominant culture that gradually imposes its social and cultural peculiarities upon the colonized nations. As such, it is appropriated within its transformational attributes since post-colonialism brings about new cultural traditions in the colonized nations.

Post-colonialism, furthermore, the concept of identity approaches self-other relationship. The typical relationship between the imperial agendas and the previously colonized territories. On the one hand, the imperial culture is the hegemonic “self” which spreads its cultural norms and traditions upon the colonies. On the other hand, these colonies are the authentic place of the dominated “other” which is the subject of imperial influence. As a result, identity begins to take its cultural forms by being immersed in the cultural amalgamation between the imperial culture and its related colonies; whereby self-other “relationship must create its own other; because of this other it can strengthen its own identity and superiority” (Abu Jweid, 2020a, p.4). As such, self-other relationship becomes an integral part of the typical life of the colonies and their imperial counterparts. By time, the ethnic intersection between the former colonies and imperialism yields in the formation of identity in an imperial atmosphere in which the traditional attributes of identity dissolve and formulate the essence of self-other relationship.

The postcolonial attributes of the concept of identity also entails the notion of displacement. As a matter of fact, displacement refers to the forced or compulsory movement of the colonized people from one place to another. In this case, the displaced people get affected by the culture and identity of the foreign land. Their identity, consequently, mixes and interacts with the new identity on the grounds of mutual cultural amalgamation: “post-colonialism posed several critical issues and questions about displacement. It also questioned the conditions of people who were; and still, affected by its colonial

consequences. Such consequences comprise the identity of nations and individuals" (Abu Jweid, 2020b, p.17). In this sense, the concept of identity is shaped by the cultural conditions brought by displacement.

The concept of identity, furthermore, relates to the issue of language. This is because language is inherently influenced by the identity and its colonial circumstances. Consequently, identity plays a crucial role in constructing the core conceptual peculiarities of language spoken by the colonizers. In turn, the colonized nations' language gets some of its linguistic manners. Identity, as a result, leads to basic changes in language conventions and "these changes include ways of life, language, conventions and social manners. They are limited and controlled by the colonizers' ability to create drastic changes to the colonized vernacular identity" (Abu Jweid, 2021, p.27). The colonizers' language, in this respect, mixes with the vernacular language and they form new aspects of national identity. The vernacular nature of language refers to the native origins of the colonized people's language that are influenced by colonial domination.

Liberal humanism is also a pertinent theme of the concept of identity. The thematic nuances of liberal humanism are connected with its inclusion of culture as a central essence of identity which gets its cultural attributes from the inherited cultural traditions and conventions. Liberal humanism implies culture for the sake of creating an ethnic sense of identity; whereby the natives develop perceive "implication of liberal humanism" as "the opposing dimensions and perceptions concerning a certain culture. In essence, liberal humanism exemplifies a cultural duality representing the colonized other's dichotomy of identity" (Al-Khamisi and Abu Jweid, 2024c, p.54). Being so, the duality of the concept of identity and liberal humanism are appropriated by the notions of culture that unites both identity and society in tandem. Hence, identity is formulated by the culture and society per se.

Race, moreover, is a decisive factor of enhancing the concept of identity. The concept of race emanates from the postcolonial transformation of the concept of identity due to the hegemony of the metropolitan culture. As a rule of thumb, the metropolitan culture is dominant and it spreads its norms and customs in the colonies. This metropolitan culture is the imperial hegemony which takes its basic traits from its historical and cultural backgrounds. By time, the metropolitan culture transforms into being imperial since it is created and sustained in a postcolonial atmosphere: "the human race is a vital pivotal point in studying the concept of cultural identity; and it reinforces critical analyses with genuine postcolonial transformations in both the imperial culture and its metropolitan and spatial variations" (Abu Jweid, A. N. A., Al-Khamisi, 2024a, p.492). Human race of the colonized nations, therefore, is empowered by the development and maturity of the concept of identity in postcolonial societies where it acquires its ultimate ethnic attributes.

Colonial migration is another feature of the concept of identity. Migration leads to ethnic amalgamation between two or more ethnic groups. It is a continual process of mixing several cultures on the same regional scale. That is, colonial migration is a movement from one region to another region. In this way, people who migrate and leave their homeland encounter new ethnic backgrounds because they might meet multi-cultural regions where people from different racial background co-exist. For this reason, they begin to settle down in the new regions and take some of these regions' cultural traits because identity and migration intermix to produce a new sense of colonial immigration" (Abu Jweid and Ghanem, 2024b, p.7). Migration, therefore, results in new identity which radically differs from the original or nation identity before migration. In this sense, they meet on diverse cultural encounters; and they begin to develop their own identity which is primarily a mixture of the original, or national identity and the foreign one.

### 3. Conclusion

This study tackled the concept of identity within postcolonial contexts. The study was a review of my previously published works on the concept of identity and how it acquires its ethnic traits in the colonized nations. For this reason, the discussion of the concept of identity depended on the social and cultural characteristics of identity for the sake of delving deep into the influence of post-colonialism on the colonized people's inherited traditions. In this respect, both culture and society were accentuated in terms of the metropolitan hegemony in the colonized nations where identity is profoundly affected. Hence, the selected reviews pinpoint the thematic attributes of the concept of identity and how it gets its ethnic status by immersing in the colonies whose identity had changed as a result of metropolitan imperialism.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

### References

- [1] Abu Jweid, A. N. A. (2020a). Aversion and desire: The disruption of monolithic ambivalence in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 21(1), 1-10.
- [2] Abu Jweid, A. N. A. (2020b). Caribbean displacement and the question of oppression and cultural changes of post-colonialism in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River*. *Canadian Social Science*, 18(2), 17-24.
- [3] Abu Jweid, A. N. A., and Al-Khamisi, F. A. (2024a). History and the problem of dead identity: Theorising the revival of Zulu's extinct culture in Zakes Mda's *The Zulus of New York*. *International Journal of Religion*, 5(6), 492-499.
- [4] Abu Jweid, A. N. A., and Ghanem, H. K. A. (2024b). Caribbean narrative genre and its pertinent contemporary literary traumatic avant-gardism in Caryl Phillips' writings. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 29(3), 6-10.
- [5] Abu Jweid, A. N. A. (2023a). Narcissistic Pastiche: Towards exploring the concept of "cras es noster" through nostalgic postmodernism in John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 13(1), 21-32.
- [6] Abu Jweid, A. N. A. (2022). Reversed identity, the problem of fake Identity, and counter-identity in selected novels by Nadine Gordimer. *Canadian Social Science*, 18(3), 6-10.
- [7] Abu Jweid, A. N. A. (2021). The duality of magic and memory as the structure of narrative repetition in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 20(2), 25-32.
- [8] Abu Jweid, A. N. A. (2023b). The ethnic intersection between culture and identity in selected postcolonial works. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 27(1), 17-20.
- [9] Abu Jweid, A. N. A. (2016). The fall of national identity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *PERTANIKA*, 23(5), 529-540.
- [10] Al-Khamisi, F. A., and Abu Jweid, A. N. A. (2024c). Theoretical insights of history, morality, and society as the literary trio of the author-reader relationship. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 7(3), 53-58.
- [11] Darian-Smith, E. (1996). Postcolonialism: A brief introduction. *Social and Legal Studies*, 5(3), 291-299.