TEXT WORLDS: A COGNITIVE-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF *AFTERLIVES*

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Abstract
The study explores how different linguistic tools such as modality, world builders and function advancing propositions, contribute to the construction, development and communication of complex perspective on the effects and aftermaths of colonization in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel Afterlives. Making use of different aspects of Text World Theory (TWT), such as discourse world, text world, sub-worlds, and modality, the study analyzes selected passages based on thematic relevance to demonstrate how interactional, locational, and probability modalities reveal the effects of colonialism on the characters' perceptions and experiences. The study identifies world builders, function-advancing propositions, and semantic predicates by highlighting how frames and inferences are formed and the ways these elements convey the narrative's deeper colonial context. Offering a critique of colonial legacy and practices, the findings show that there is a cognitive lack of harmony due to altered realities experienced by the colonized Africans. Building upon this lack of harmony, the characters manifest ambivalence toward colonization: they assimilated into the culture of colonizers for social acceptance and financial stability while still considering them as their enemies. The colonized Africans' use of outdated ways of businesses and healing rituals are contrasted with those of colonizers' rule-based business and modified medication provided at hospitals. The study contributes to the field of literary studies and cognitive linguistics through the application of TWT to colonial discourse and use of language in constructing narratives.

1. Introduction

Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *Afterlives* takes us on a journey to Zanzibar, a place grappling with the shadows of its colonial past. The novel is set in the early 20th century, when German colonial rule in East Africa caused significant social, cultural, and political unrest. Central to the narrative is the concept of 'afterlives', a metaphorical exploration of how history continues to shape the life of people and how they carry the "afterlife" of history with them. Employing Werth's (1999) text world theory as a theoretical framework, this study examines the narrators' stance on colonization through the narrator's and character's epistemic world. The story, as it unfolds in the novel, reflects the conflicting feelings and attitudes of the characters shaped by colonial experience. Focused on the exploration of 'modality' in the construction of the narrative, this article explores the impact pf socio-political changes on the major characters in *Afterlives* both during and after German colonial control.

Set in colonized East Africa, the novel skillfully portrays the lives of the people as it explores themes of love, loss, displacement, and survival. Gurnah traces the continuing impacts of colonialism, the subtleties of identity formation, and the search for acceptance and forgiveness in the lives of characters. In addition, the novel reflects on the cultural and historical consequences of German colonial control and its aftermath by providing a dense and heartbreaking account of one of the most violent periods in African history.

2. Literature Review

Examining *Afterlives* from a literary perspective, Naz, Lodhi, and Shai (2022) investigated the impact of German colonialism and East Africa's involvement in WWI and WWII. Their work uncovers the psychological effects of colonization on indigenous populations and the violent effects of decolonization. Focusing on Germany's colonial discourse against native Africans in

Tanzania, Asghar, Niaz and Hussain (2022) looked at genocide, oppression, and war, primarily carried out by the German colonizers. The analysis showed how Germans portrayed native Africans as 'others'. *Afterlives* is shown as depicting natives as barbaric, brutal, and inferior, justifying Germany's colonial invasion. Monisha and Robinson (2023) focused on the intense impacts of colonialism and the unfortunate situation of refugees depicted in the novel. Saxena (2021) examined the impact of German colonialism in the present-day Tanzania by focusing on the novel's depiction and evaluation of the harsh colonial rule in relation to atrocities, war, psychological trauma, migration, genocide, rebellion, and the broader colonial influence on the ordinary people of Africa. It uncovers the brutal nature of German colonialism in East Africa during the early 20th century by illustrating its long-lasting effects on the characters' lives. Mengiste (2020) characterizes *Afterlives* as a postcolonial story that explores violence, war, trauma, colonial brutalities, and the experiences of refugees. Referring to The Guardian International Review, Mengiste argues that the novel aligns with earlier research on similar topics within the context of colonialism. In other words, it maintains its postcolonial importance by addressing Germany's colonial history in East Africa.

The interest of researchers and scholars in the novel as a postcolonial text notwithstanding, there is, however, a lack of research on the novel from a linguistic perspective, especially through the lens of Text World theory. The present article therefore aims to bridge this gap by offering a fresh perspective through Werth's Text World Theory by analyzing linguistic features, narrative construction, and world-building elements to analyze the narrator's perspective on colonization as depicted in the novel. Khan, Sajid, & Khan's (2022) study on Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* identify 'world-building' elements and 'function-advancing' propositions which enable the reader to create mental representations of the communicative events in the novel. Khan et.al (2022) concludes that from the perspective of cognitive stylistics, meaning in the novel is created through readers' contribution to the process of meaning-making by exploring the worldviews (of the characters) in the story. Qadus's (2022) investigation of Kamila Shamsie's short story *The Walk* reveals that constructing textual meanings not simply requires further linguistic elaborations but the cognitive involvement of the reader's mental space in the process of creating the text world. Whitely (2011) argues that throughout *The Remains of the Day*, readers make use of the textual cues, making inferences about the mental state of Stevens, the central character. Through perspective-taking projection, the readers understand Stevens' characteristic manner of narrating the story, i.e. readers understand the behavior of Stevens through his narration of the story, having elements of sorrow, regret and frustration because of his experiences. Projection, 'mind-reading', or 'perspective-taking' are related concepts and have their roots in the cognitive scientific research on the 'Theory of Mind' (Baron-Cohen, 1995; Malle and Hodges, 2005). Investigating the role 'mind-reading' plays and the reader's understanding and comprehension of a work of fiction, Palmer (2004) and Zunshine (2006) argue that readers' understanding of a work of fiction is mainly based on inferences or drawing conclusion on reading the mind of a character. Highlighting the relationship between psychological projection and readers' mind-reading capabilities, Stockwell (2009) argues: 'we assume that others are, in basic mechanics, the same as us, and we anticipate their beliefs, motives, speech and actions accordingly by projecting them in their circumstances' (p. 132).

In accordance with the Text World Theory, Whitley (2011), examines colonial themes in literary texts with a focus on readers' psychological projection and inferencing. She provides insight into how readers emotionally connect with characters and narratives. The concept of "world-switches," especially in the context of memories, is significant in examining how colonialism is portrayed in *Afterlives*. This approach is relevant to the study of Abdulrazak

Gurnah's *Afterlives*, where the narrators' beliefs, desires, and obligations shape and influence the narrative.

3. Theoretical Framework

The text-world theory was the focus of Paul Werth's research in several of his publications (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b, and 1999). The theory examines the cognitive processes involved in comprehending and interpreting texts by emphasizing the relationship between the text, the reader, and the constructed mental representations known as text worlds. According to Werth (1999), semantics and pragmatics operate in accordance with a collection of accumulated cognitive domains, or "mental worlds." In other words, everyday use of language is based on stored mental images**.** Every conversation has two main components: the "discourse world" where people communicate and share knowledge; and the "text world(s)" where each person forms their mental images based on what's being said. According to Stockwell (2002), we use language to build a world in our minds, using elements and propositions to convey meaning.

Three worlds comprise Text World Theory: 'text world', 'discourse world' and 'sub world'. A reader's immediate perception of the situation is a discourse world, which is made up of context (both the author's and the reader's world) and the text. By using world builders and story advancers, the text progressively expands the text worlds. Sub worlds, on the other hand, offer a layer of probability to the narrative which allows the writer or speaker to present scenarios, ideas, or perspectives that may not be grounded in the main narrative but serve to create a more comprehensive and exact text world of the narrator or character (s). This means that while the sub world may conflict with the dominant text world, it offers a variety of perspectives and angles to understand the narrative from several dimensions. Based on the investigation of the three worlds as explained above, the Text World Theory is an appropriate analytical tool for examining different socio-cultural worldviews veiled in the mental representations and manifested through language in *Afterlives.*

Text World Theory operates at two levels: World building level and Function Advancing Proposition level. World building belongs to modality i.e. situating information with respect to current context (Werth, 1999:183). There are three levels of modality given by Werth: Interaction, Location, and Probability. World building elements or world builders create a deictic space which constitutes reference to time (verbs of time zone, adverbs of time, temporal adverbial clauses), place (locative adverbs, NPs with locative meaning, locative adverbial clauses) and entities (it constitute characters and objects: noun phrases, concrete or abstract of all structures and in any position) (Werth, 1999: 183). The deictic space makes up the background of the text which serves as frame of the language event (Werth, 1999: 181, Gavins, 2001:86). Frame knowledge refers to the already existing knowledge in schema which is recognized when interfered (when textual knowledge meets the existing schemata) with projected knowledge of the text.

The construction of function advancing propositions which serve as the foreground of the story (Werth, 1999: 185) is the second level. The structure of proposition consists of a semantic predicate (predicate which fits in the situation accurately and logically) accompanied by one or more arguments. Predicates are properties or relations or collective functions. Predications are pathways which propel the narrative, or they can be modifications to the existing text world which either identify the world building process, individuate description-advancing in a sense to broaden and deepen our knowledge of nominated entity or make frames which adds further information about an evoked entity from memory (Werth 1999: 195, 197-199). We make inferences about text world through these propositions.

The present study employs analytical procedures based on Werth's three levels of modality: according to him, modality is situating information (Werth 1999: 184), so that the whole portrayal of narrative is analyzed in context of reference to interaction of entities (interactional modality), reference to location and time (location in space and time modality), and reference to probability in narrative (probability modality). There are occasions when the text world of the novel conflicts with the epistemic sub world of the narrator and characters, reflecting ambivalence toward colonization. This is contrary to the main textual landscape which offers a critique of colonization.
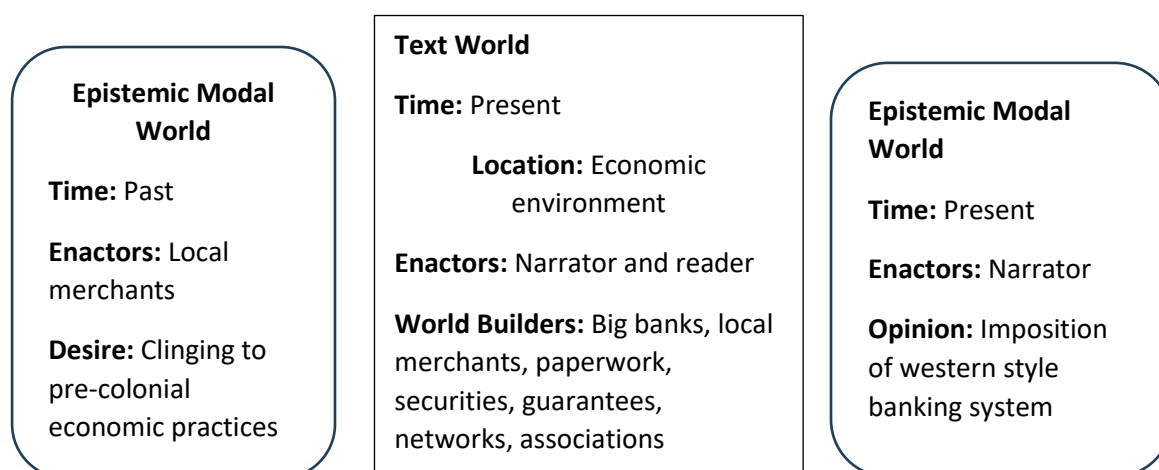
4. Analysis

The cognitive linguistic analysis is discussed in the following three sections:

4.1.Social Interaction Modality

Interactional modality relates to the representation of interactions and relationships between entities within the text world. It allows readers to engage with the dialogic aspects of the text, interpret the intentions and motivations underlying character interactions, and recognize the implications of interpersonal exchanges for the unfolding narrative (Werth, 1999: 184) at discourse world level. At this level interaction modality is evident in the communicative acts, speech acts, and interpersonal relationships between discourse participants. Modal expressions such as modal verbs "can," "may," "must" and modal adverbs "possibly," "necessarily," "probably" shape the interactional strategies by conveying the speakers' attitudes, intentions, and commitments. These modal markers signal the degree of obligation, permission, or possibility associated with the communicative actions performed by the discourse participants. Following are some representative examples of social interaction modality from the novel:
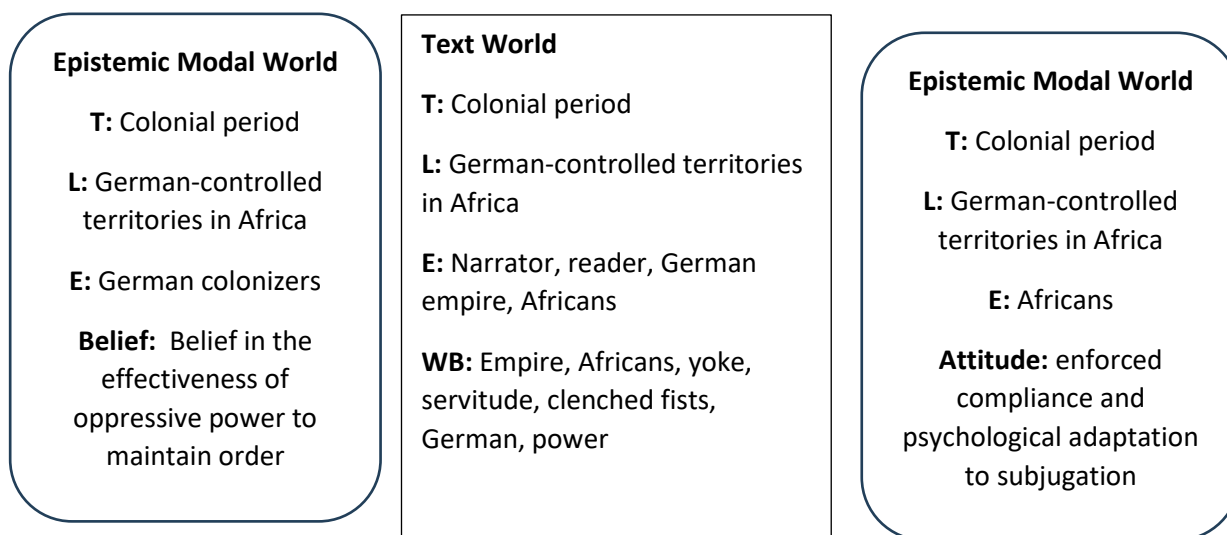
> *The big banks wanted business run by paperwork and securities and guarantees, which did not always suit local merchants who worked on networks and associations invisible to the naked eye. (Chapter 1, p. 3)*

Epistemic Modal World

Time: Past

Enactors: Local merchants

Desire: Clinging to pre-colonial economic practices

Text World

Time: Present

Location: Economic environment

Enactors: Narrator and reader

World Builders: Big banks, local merchants, paperwork, securities, guarantees, networks, associations

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Epistemic Modal World

Time: Present

Enactors: Narrator

Opinion: Imposition of western style banking system

This extract presents the interaction between big banks and local merchants, each operating within distinct business frameworks. In the main text world, big banks are portrayed as proponents of formal business practices reliant on "paperwork," "securities," and "guarantees." In contrast, the epistemic modal sub-world of the merchants highlights their preference for trust-based networks and informal associations. The narrator's epistemic sub-world further shows the likely imposition of Western style banking systems on local African economies.

World-builders such as "big banks," "local merchants," "paperwork," "securities," "guarantees," "networks," and "associations invisible to the naked eye" construct contrasting economic and social realities. The time is implicitly present which indicates current practices, and the location is a general business context likely set in a post-colonial environment. Key function-advancing propositions include: "The big banks wanted business run by paperwork and securities and guarantees," and "which did not always suit local merchants who worked on networks and associations invisible to the naked eye." These statements establish a clear contrast between formal, institutional methods and informal, relational ones, introducing narrative tension between competing business ideologies. Semantic predicates like "wanted," "run by," "did not always suit," "worked on," and "invisible to the naked eye" shows distinct operational modes, i.e. structured procedures for the banks and personal trust networks for the merchants. The interactional modality here reveals this ideological conflict: the banks' procedural preference reflects colonial influence, while the merchants' informal approach signifies resistance and continuity of indigenous practices. Two dominant frames emerge: an economic frame tied to formal business practices, and a social/network frame rooted in informal, trust-based systems. These frames lead to key inferences i.e the banks' inclination toward formal methods, the merchants' reliance on invisible trust networks, and the tension between them. This analysis reflects the cultural and economic friction rooted in colonial impositions, as well as the persistence of pre-colonial economic traditions within local African contexts.

> *In the meantime, the empire had to make the Africans feel the clenched fist of German power in order that they should learn to bear the yoke of their servitude compliantly*
> (Chapter 1, p.16)

Epistemic Modal World

T: Colonial period

L: German-controlled territories in Africa

E: German colonizers

Belief: Belief in the effectiveness of oppressive power to maintain order

Text World

T: Colonial period

L: German-controlled territories in Africa

E: Narrator, reader, German empire, Africans

WB: Empire, Africans, yoke, servitude, clenched fists, German, power

Epistemic Modal World

T: Colonial period

L: German-controlled territories in Africa

E: Africans

Attitude: enforced compliance and psychological adaptation to subjugation

this extract centres on the colonial interaction between the German empire and African people set during the colonial period in German-controlled African territories. The enactors i.e., "the empire" and "Africans" are situated within a clearly oppressive colonial context. World-builders such as "empire," "Africans," "clenched fist of German power," and "yoke of their servitude" construct a setting marked by domination and subjugation. Function-advancing propositions like "the empire had to make the Africans feel the clenched fist of German power"

and "they should learn to bear the yoke of their servitude compliantly" reveal the coercive logic of colonial rule. Semantic predicates such as "had to make," "feel," "learn," "bear," and "compliantly" emphasize the empire's imposition of power and the expected submission of the colonized. The interactional modality conveys colonial power dynamics. The German colonizers' modality is authoritative and violent, focused on enforcing control through physical and psychological means. This reflects their epistemic sub-world, which believes in the necessity and legitimacy of force. Conversely, the Africans' epistemic sub-world is shaped by imposed submission and psychological adaptation to subjugation. Two key frames emerge: the "colonial power frame," evident by terms like "empire" and "German power," and the "subjugation frame," built from "Africans," "clenched fist," and "yoke of their servitude." These frames illustrate a hierarchical system sustained by violence and compliance. Inferences include the colonizers' reliance on coercion, belief in its effectiveness, and the psychological impact on the colonized. Through the lens of Text World Theory, the extract reveals the brutal realities of colonialism by showing how world-builders, interactional modality, and function-advancing propositions collectively expose the deep impacts of imperial dominance on both oppressors and the oppressed.

4.2.Location in Space and Time Modality

Location modality operates at the text world level which represents the mental space constructed by readers to comprehend the narrative. In TWT, the text world encompasses the spatial, temporal, and conceptual dimensions of the narrative world, where events, entities, and situations are mentally represented and structured. Modal expressions such as spatial adverbs ("here," "there," "everywhere") and temporal adverbs ("now," "then," "soon") help situate the events and characters within the text world, establishing their spatial and temporal coordinates. For example, in a descriptive passage depicting a scene in a novel, spatial adverbs like "here" or "there" indicate the relative positions of characters or objects within the narrative space. Similarly, temporal adverbs like "now" or "then" mark the progression of time and sequence of events, guiding readers' mental navigation through the text world. locative modality from the novel is analyzed as under:

> *The mganga brought an assistant with her and made Asha lie down again on the floor. They covered her with a thick marekani sheet and then both began to hum and sing, their faces close to her head. As time passed and the mganga and her assistant sang, Asha shivered and trembled with increasing intensity and finally she burst out in incomprehensible words and sounds. Her outburst reached a climax with a yell and then she spoke lucidly but in a strange voice, saying: I will leave this woman if her husband makes a promise to take her on the hajj, to go to mosque regularly and give up taking snuff. The mganga crowed with triumph and administered a herbal drink, which calmed Asha and sent her into a doze* (Chapter 1, p. 18)

Epistemic Modal World

T: Present, ritual's duration

L: Domestic setting for healing rituals

E: Asha, the spirit speaking through her

Experience: Physical sensations like shivering, trembling and a sudden possession like outburst

Text World

T: Present, ritual's duration

L: Traditional and domestic setting mainly for healing rituals

E: Narrator, reader, Asha, Mganga, Mganga's assistant

WB: Marekani sheet, humming, singing, snuff, floor, hajj, husband, herbal drink, doze

Epistemic Modal World

T: Present, ritual's duration

L: Traditional and domestic setting for healing rituals

E: Mganga, assistant, patient Asha

Goal: Focus on ritual's process and success

Attitude: Symbolic crowing with triumph

extract centres on a traditional healing ritual performed by a *mganga* and her assistant Asha, set in a confined indoor space with an undefined present. The enactors include the *mganga*, her assistant, Asha, and the spirit speaking through Asha. Two epistemic modal worlds emerge: Asha's, shaped by her physical and emotional responses (shivering, trembling, outburst), and the *mganga*'s, defined by her ritualistic actions and confidence in traditional healing methods. World-builders such as "*mganga*," "assistant," "marekani sheet," "herbal drink," "snuff," "promise," and "humming and singing" construct a sensory and cultural ritual space. Function-advancing propositions such as the *mganga* bringing the assistant, making Asha lie down, humming, Asha's trembling, and the final administration of the herbal drink highlight the ritual's process and its impact. Semantic predicates like "brought," "covered," "shivered," "burst out," and "administered" narrate the sequence of ritualistic acts and emotional climax. The locational modality emphasizes the closeness and intimacy of the healing setting, where Asha lies beneath an American (*marekani*) sheet symbolize ambivalence toward colonial influence. While traditional healing is preferred, the use of colonial artefacts in rituals reflects a complex cultural hybridity. This suggests an implicit critique of colonialism by illustrating how indigenous practices endure, adapt and resist the colonial devaluation of local knowledge systems. Two primary frames emerge: a "traditional healing" frame and a "physical-spiritual experience" frame. These allow readers to infer the ritual's cultural depth, the intensity of Asha's experience, and the epistemic worlds that give structure and meaning to the event. Through its portrayal of effective indigenous healing, the extract challenges colonial narratives and validates traditional methods, presenting them as meaningful within a colonially disrupted world.

> The Nubi ombasha told them: My name is Gefreiter Haidar-al-Hamad and I am ombasha to train you bil-askari. You will always behave with manners and you will obey me. I have fought in the north and the south and in the east and the west, for the English, for the Khedive and now for the Kaiser. I am a man of honour and experience. You are swine until I teach you bil-askari. You are washenzi like all civilians until I teach you bil-askari. You will remember every day that you are fortunate to be askari. Respect and obey or wallahi- you will see (Chapter 3, p. 58)

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Epistemic Modal World

T: Past period of colonial campaigns

L: North, East, West, South **E:** Haidar-al-Hamad, english, khedive, kaiser

Goal: Subjugation of the colonized

Text World

T: Present, initial training phase (colonial period in east Africa)

L: Unidentified training camp

E: Haidar-al-Hamad (Nubi ombasha), implied recruits, narrator, reader

WB: Gefreiter Haidar-al-Hamad, ombasha, askari, north, east, west, south, khedive, kaiser, swine, washenzi

Epistemic Modal World

T: Present moment of training

L: Training Camp

E: Recruits, ombasha

Belief: Upcoming harsh training methods and subjugation by the hands of ombasha
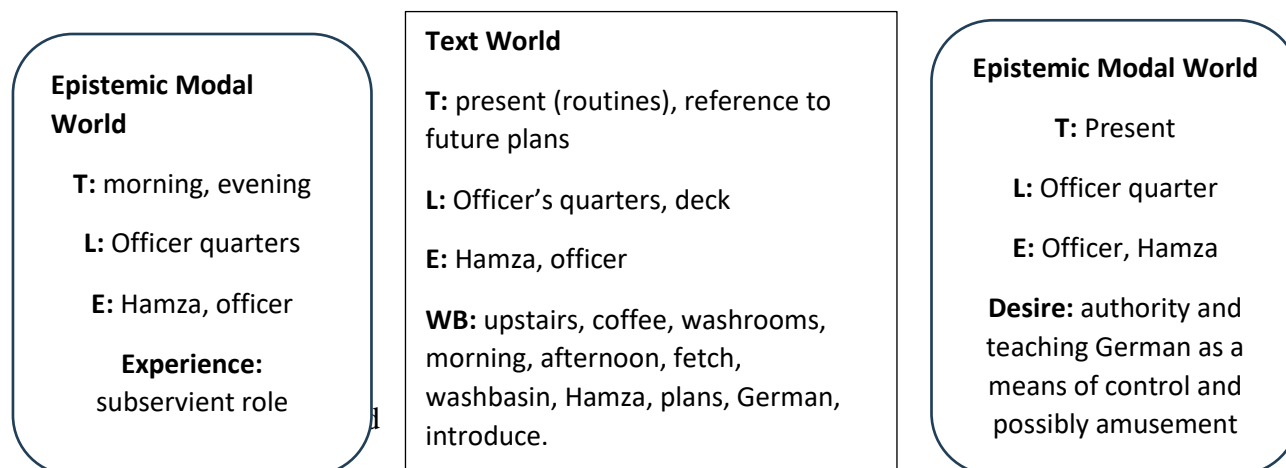
The main text world centres on Gefreiter Haidar-al-Hamad, a Nubi *ombasha* addressing new recruits in a military training camp. The enactors include Haidar-al-Hamad and the recruits, with world-builders such as titles ("Gefreiter Haidar-al-Hamad," "*ombasha*," "*askari*"), geographic references ("north," "south," "east," "west"), and colonial powers ("English," "Khedive," "Kaiser"). Derogatory terms like "swine" and "*washenzi*" further reflect military hierarchy and dehumanization. The time is the present, during initial training, and the location is an unspecified colonial military camp. Function-advancing propositions e.g., "My name is Gefreiter Haidar-al-Hamad… I will train you," "You will obey me," and "I have fought… for the English… now for the Kaiser" establish the *ombasha*'s authority and reveal his shifting allegiances. Semantic predicates such as "told," "train," "obey," "fought," and "respect" reinforce his power and internalization of colonial ideology. Two epistemic modal sub-worlds are evident: Haidar-al-Hamad's, shaped by his past experiences across colonial campaigns and loyalty to various colonial rulers, and the recruits', centered on their present subjugation and exposure to harsh training. The *ombasha*'s world reflects authority built on colonial service, while the recruits' world highlights their vulnerability and dehumanization. Locational modality is conveyed through references to diverse battlefronts by emphasizing the geographical breadth of colonial influence and the reshaping of personal identity. This modality enhances understanding of the *ombasha*'s internalized colonial worldview and the extended impact of empire on individual agency. The dominant frames include a "military training" frame and a "colonial experience" frame. Inferences drawn reveal the *ombasha*'s authority, the recruits' subordinate position, and the enduring, dehumanizing legacies of colonialism. Through interactional and locational modality, the extract critiques the harsh continuities of colonial power embedded within military structures.

4.3.Probability Modality

Probability modality operates at the sub-world level. At this level, probability modality governs the likelihood, uncertainty, or hypotheticality of events, propositions, or states of affairs within individual sub-worlds. Modal expressions such as modal auxiliaries ("might," "could," "should") and modal adjectives ("possible," "probable," "unlikely") indicate the degree of probability or possibility associated with the events or states described in the sub-world. For example, in a speculative scenario presented within a narrative, modal expressions like "it might happen" or "it could be true" convey the speculative nature of the events or

hypotheses being discussed. These modal markers signal the hypothetical or status of the propositions within the sub-world which allow readers to interpret them as potential alternatives or within the broader narrative context. By analyzing these modalities, readers can gain understanding into the social, spatial, and epistemic dimensions of the text world which enhance their understanding of the narrative context and its significance within the framework of discourse comprehension. Probability modality which shows the effect of colonialism in afterlives is analyzed through the following extracts.
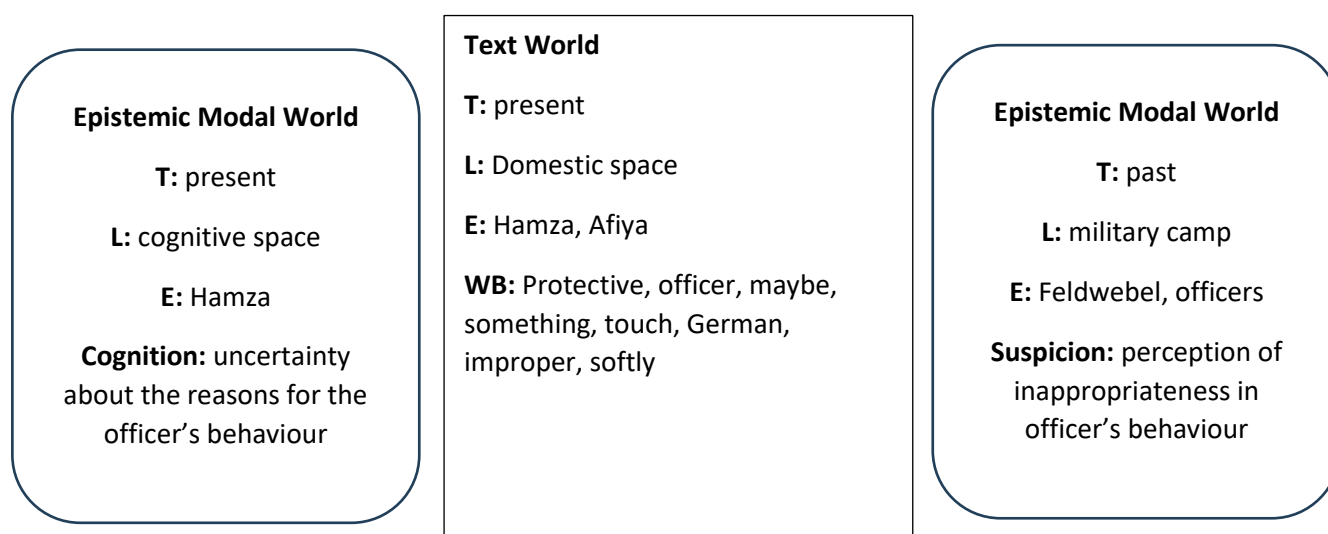
> *The water did not run upstairs, not yet, although there were plans to introduce it, so in the morning Hamza filled the officer's washbasin with fresh water and then went to fetch his coffee. From the beginning, at some point in those afternoon hours, the officer called Hamza in and taught him German, probably to amuse himself at first but because Hamza proved to be such a willing learner. It began with naming things* (Chapter 5, p. 76-77)

Epistemic Modal World

T: morning, evening

L: Officer quarters

E: Hamza, officer

Experience: subservient role

Text World

T: present (routines), reference to future plans

L: Officer's quarters, deck

E: Hamza, officer

WB: upstairs, coffee, washrooms, morning, afternoon, fetch, washbasin, Hamza, plans, German, introduce.

Epistemic Modal World

T: Present

L: Officer quarter

E: Officer, Hamza

Desire: authority and teaching German as a means of control and possibly amusement

centres on Hamza's daily duties within the officer's quarters, showing his subservience in the colonial hierarchy. World builders such as "water," "officer's washbasin," "upstairs," and "coffee" establish a routine colonial domestic setting. Function-advancing propositions like "Hamza filled the officer's washbasin" and "went to fetch his coffee," with semantic predicates such as "filled" and "fetch," highlight the repetitive, menial nature of Hamza's tasks and reinforce his subordination. The enactors in this world include Hamza and the officer whose interactions reflect a relationship defined by control and power imbalance. The passage also reveals epistemic sub-worlds: first, the narrator's world, which speculates on future infrastructural developments i.e "not yet" and "plans to introduce it" reveal both the capability and delay in colonial progress due to reliance on colonized labor. Second, the officer's epistemic sub-world emerges in his decision to teach Hamza German, likely as amusement, reflecting cultural imposition. This is expressed through the probability modality "probably to amuse himself," which hints at multi-layered colonial intentions blending control and courtesy. Probability modality here reflects uncertainty and speculation by illustrating how colonial projects were often marked by shifting motives and experimental authority. The infrastructural development, though envisioned, is withheld, and the teaching of German demonstrates how colonial power shapes even personal interactions. Frames constructed include a "servitude frame" shaped by Hamza's duties and a "colonial education frame" formed through the officer's imposition of language learning. Inferences suggest that Hamza's routine is shaped

by colonial structures, where infrastructure is delayed and learning is dictated. The modality and epistemic sub-worlds expose the speculative and uneven nature of colonial rule and its impact on individual lives.

> *The officer was very protective of me. He wanted me to be close to him. I don't know why... I'm not sure why. He said: I like the look of you. I think some people... the Feldwebel and maybe the other Germans too... thought there was something wrong in this, something improper... something... too much, too fond. 'Did he touch you? ' she asked softly, wanting him to be explicit, wanting him to say what he needed to say* (Chapter 11, p. 201)

Epistemic Modal World

T: present

L: cognitive space

E: Hamza

Cognition: uncertainty about the reasons for the officer's behaviour

Text World

T: present

L: Domestic space

E: Hamza, Afiya

WB: Protective, officer, maybe, something, touch, German, improper, softly

Epistemic Modal World

T: past

L: military camp

E: Feldwebel, officers

Suspicion: perception of inappropriateness in officer's behaviour

is set in the present, where Hamza recounts his past experiences to Afiya, likely in a private space. The enactors include Hamza and Afiya, while the officer and Feldwebel exist within Hamza's epistemic sub-world. The temporal frame spans Hamza's return from the colonial army and his earlier service within a German military camp. World builders such as "officer," "Feldwebel," and references to protection and favor establish the narrative context. Function-advancing propositions such as "The officer was very protective of me" and "I don't know why… I'm not sure why" foreground Hamza's cognitive uncertainty. Afiya's question, "Did he touch you?" serves as a turning point in the narrative, directing the focus toward possible impropriety. Semantic predicates like "protective," "don't know," and "thought" reinforce this uncertainty. The extract is rich in probability modality, evident in Hamza's repeated use of "maybe" and "I don't know," which constructs epistemic sub-worlds shaped by speculation. One sub-world belongs to Hamza, shaped by his ambiguity about the officer's intentions whether affectionate, or exploitative. Another is constructed by the Feldwebel and other officers, who suspect the officer's behavior as "too much, too fond," suggesting possible impropriety within colonial power structures. These epistemic sub-worlds intersect with the main narrative, as Hamza continues to process the officer's behavior. Frames created include a paternalistic frame shaped by the officer's protectiveness, and a social judgment frame informed by the suspicions of others. Inferences include Hamza's psychological conflict and the impact of colonialism which highlight ambiguous relationships that blurred the lines between protection and exploitation. The use of probability modality reflects the psychological

impact of colonial relationships, where ambiguity and control coexist. Hamza's uncertainty and the narrator's cognitive critique emphasize the subtle, internalized effects of colonial power on the colonized subject's understanding of past relationships.

5. Conclusion

The preceding discussion reveals how colonial discourse constructs and reflects agency through interactional, locational, and probability modalities. Interactional modality exposes power imbalances and restricted agency under colonial rule; locational modality illustrates displacement and segregation; and probability modality reveals characters' inner conflicts and uncertain futures, especially through Hamza's cognitive struggles. Together, these modalities highlight how colonialism shaped both internal subjectivities and external realities. Gurnah's narrative, rich in multiple text worlds and epistemic sub-worlds, effectively engages with the complex psychological and social impact of colonialism on lives of the characters. The findings also reveal how ambivalence emerges in characters' conflicting relationships with colonial authority where traditional practices coexist with colonial structures, and moments of protection blur with exploitation. The use of modalities highlights this duality in the use of colonial materials in indigenous rituals or Hamza's uncertainty about the officer's intentions. These findings illustrate how Gurnah constructs a layered narrative that reflects the psychological and cultural confusion resulting from colonial rule and how language functions as a tool of colonial control, a medium of resistance, and a tool for reconstructing agency by deepening readers' understanding of the enduring legacy of imperial power.

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