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EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE: A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract
This paper explores the role of educational discourse in shaping the construction of knowledge, particularly through policies and constitutions related to the English language in Nigeria. It highlights the historical, cultural, and socio-political factors that have shaped the status of English in Nigeria, analysing the ways in which educational policies and constitutional provisions have positioned the language as both a tool for national integration and a site of power dynamics. Drawing from philosophical perspectives on knowledge and language, such as those of Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas, the paper investigates how policies and constitutions related to the English language are not neutral but embedded with power relations and ideological assumptions that influence both teaching and learning. Through a critical discourse analysis, this paper reveals the ways in which these policies and constitutions related to the English language reflect societal values, reinforce certain epistemological frameworks, and marginalise alternative ways of knowing. In sum, the paper uncovers the underlying assumptions about language, identity, and knowledge construction embedded in these policies and constitutional mandates, and the implications of these frameworks on educational access, equity, and the formation of knowledge in a multilingual society. The paper, ultimately, aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on language, education, and power, offering insights into the complex interplay.
Keywords: Educational Discourse, Constitutional Provisions, Language Policies, Linguistic diversity, Epistemologies

Introduction

The role of language in education is fundamental, as it serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a powerful force that shapes knowledge, identity, and social structures. In post-colonial societies like Nigeria, language holds particular significance due to its complex relationship with colonial history, cultural dynamics, and socio-political power. In Nigeria, the status of the English language is deeply entwined with the country's historical legacy of British colonialism, its post-colonial struggles, and its educational policies. English was imposed as the official language during colonial rule, a practice that established a lasting linguistic and cultural divide that persists in Nigerian society today (Oladosu, 2015). The British colonial government utilised English to govern and administer a vast and diverse region, positioning the language as a symbol of power, control, and modernity (Afolabi, 2004). The imposition of English created a lasting structure within Nigeria's educational system, which continues to shape how knowledge is produced, disseminated, and valued.

English is not only the official language of instruction in schools but also the lingua franca that bridges Nigeria's over 520 living languages (Ethnologue, 2023). While English was promoted as a tool for national unity, it has also created an imbalance where proficiency in the language becomes synonymous with access to educational opportunities and socio-political advancement. As such, the role of English in Nigeria's education system is both

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enabling and exclusionary (Ogundele, 2011). In this context, English serves as both a means of national integration and a site of power. While it fosters communication across Nigeria's diverse ethnic and linguistic communities, it also reinforces socio-economic and political divisions. Access to English-language education often determines an individual's social mobility, particularly within the formal sector, government, and academia (Banjo, 1995). As Egbokhare (2011) notes, the dominance of English in Nigerian educational policies has marginalised indigenous languages, leading to debates about the cultural consequences of such policies and their impact on knowledge production. The tension between fostering national integration and promoting linguistic diversity is central to the ongoing discourse on language and education in Nigeria.

This paper examines how educational discourse and the construction of knowledge are shaped by policies and constitutional provisions concerning the English language in Nigeria. Using a philosophical framework, this analysis explores the historical, cultural, and socio-political factors that have shaped the status of English, positioning it as both a tool for national integration and a vehicle for power dynamics. The paper seeks to understand how language policies, embedded in Nigeria's constitutional and educational frameworks, influence educational access, social equity, and the construction of knowledge. These frameworks allow for a critical examination of the philosophical underpinnings of Nigeria's language policies and their implications for education in a multi-ethnic society. The analysis presented in this paper considers key educational policies, such as the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004, 2013) and the constitutional provisions in the National Language Policy (2022) that have entrenched English as the official language of governance, education, and legal affairs. By critically assessing these documents, the paper explores the complex relationship between language, identity, and power in shaping the educational experiences of Nigerians and the broader implications for national development.

Educational Discourse as a Vehicle for Knowledge Construction

Educational discourse refers to the ways knowledge is framed, communicated, and legitimised in educational contexts, such as in curricula, textbooks, classroom discussions, and assessments. This language not only conveys academic content but also reflects the values and power structures embedded within the educational system. According to Bernstein (2000), the language used in education is central to how knowledge is categorised and communicated. In his theory of pedagogic discourse, Bernstein highlights how different forms of communication within the educational system (e.g., specialised language in science or mathematics) influences the way students understand and engage with content. The structure of this discourse can either open or close opportunities for students depending on their social and cultural backgrounds. In post-colonial contexts like Nigeria, the educational system continues to be shaped by the influences of colonial powers, particularly the British. This influence is especially evident in the language of instruction, the curriculum, and the types of knowledge that are valued. Freire (1970) critiques this "banking model" of education, where students passively receive knowledge from authority figures, and the persistence of educational models where the language of education often limits student agency and critical engagement with the material.

English as the official language of instruction in Nigeria can create barriers for students who speak indigenous languages at home. Moreover, the content of curricula often prioritises

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Western knowledge systems and perspectives, which may marginalise indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing. Foucault (1972) argued that knowledge is constructed through historical, cultural, and social processes. In Nigeria, colonial legacies and local contexts intertwine, where Western epistemologies imposed during colonial rule have marginalised indigenous knowledge systems. Despite independence, the Nigerian educational system still largely follows a model established during colonial rule. This includes the use of British-style curricula, pedagogical methods, and even examinations, such as the O'level and A'level system, which are modeled after the British educational structure. Fafunwa (1974) highlights how British colonial influence reinforced Western ideals and sidelined African cultural and knowledge systems, and this has continued to shape contemporary educational practices.

The dominance of Western knowledge systems in Nigerian education continues to overshadow alternative epistemologies, as discussed by Smith (1999), Spivak (1988) and Fafunwa
(1974) perpetuating a narrow view of knowledge. Foucault's theory of knowledge and power is relevant to Nigerian education, where power dynamics influenced by colonialism determine what knowledge is legitimate. Nigerian educational discourse perpetuates political and social inequalities by reinforcing elite dominance with the elites benefiting from a system that favours their children and their access to power. The structure of the educational system largely reflects the interests and needs of the elite. The dominance of English as the medium of instruction, the emphasis on a Western-based curriculum, and the reliance on academic qualifications that often require access to resources and elite institutions have all contributed to maintaining social and political hierarchies. Akinpelu (1981) and Oduaran (2010) in their critique of Nigerian education discusses how the system tends to reward students from wealthier and more urbanised backgrounds, while rural and lower-class students often lack access to quality education. This further deepens the social divide, as children of the elite receive superior education, ensuring that they are equipped to maintain their positions of power.

To address these issues, scholars like Giroux (1988) advocate for a shift toward a more inclusive and critical pedagogy that integrates African cultural traditions, challenges colonial narratives, and fosters active participation in knowledge construction. An imagined educational discourse that incorporates indigenous knowledge and critiques the dominance of Western epistemologies is essential for creating a more equitable and transformative educational experience in Nigeria.

Historical, Cultural, and Socio-Political Influences on the Status of English in Nigeria

The status of English in Nigeria has been shaped by a combination of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. Historically, English became the official language during British colonial rule (1865–1960), where it served as a tool for governance and administration. This legacy has persisted post-independence, with English continuing to dominate in education, government, and legal affairs (Oladosu, 2015). Culturally, Nigeria's rich linguistic diversity, with over 500 languages spoken (Ethnologue, 2023), creates a complex backdrop for English, which serves as a unifying medium. However, this has led to the marginalisation of indigenous languages, raising concerns about cultural erosion (Egbokhare, 2011). Socio-politically, English became a symbol of modernity and social mobility, particularly in an education system where proficiency in English has been crucial for political and economic

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advancement. The Nigerian National Policy on Education has entrenched English as the medium of instruction, solidifying its dominance (Ogundele, 2011). However, this focus on English has also perpetuated power dynamics, where access to English-language education often correlates with socio-economic status (Banjo, 1995). These factors reflect the dual role of English as both a tool for national integration and a marker of power and privilege in Nigerian society (Afolabi, 2004; Blench, 2020).

The next section highlights the theoretical frameworks drawn from philosophical perspectives on knowledge and language, such as those of Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas, to investigate how constitutional language in relation to education is not neutral but embedded with power relations and ideological assumptions that influence both teaching and learning. These scholars offer distinct but complementary viewpoints on how knowledge and language interact within educational contexts, and how power dynamics shape both what is taught and how students engage with knowledge.

1. Michel Foucault: Knowledge and Power in Curriculum Language

Michel Foucault's work on the relationship between knowledge and power offers a critical lens for examining the ways constitutional language is not neutral but shaped by power relations. According to Foucault (1972), knowledge is always intertwined with power. He argues that what is considered "legitimate" knowledge in any society is constructed through discursive practices, ways of speaking, writing, and thinking that are defined by those in power. This discursive formation determines what is acceptable as knowledge, who gets to produce knowledge, and how it is disseminated. In educational systems, particularly those shaped by colonial histories such as in Nigeria, the language used in curricula reflects the ideological dominance of certain groups. For example, the use of English as the language of instruction in Nigerian schools privileges Western knowledge systems, while marginalising indigenous languages and knowledge frameworks.

The curricular language, therefore, embodies power relations, as it creates a boundary around what can be known and taught. Foucault's theory also suggests that the structure of knowledge is maintained through institutions like schools, where certain discourses are legitimised while others are silenced. The curricular language is thus not a neutral medium but an instrument of control, shaping the way students perceive the world and their place in it.

2. Jürgen Habermas: Communicative Action and Ideology in Curricular Language

Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action (1984) can help explain how the language used in education reflects ideological assumptions and influences both teaching and learning. Habermas argues that communication is not just a means of conveying information but is deeply embedded in social practices and power structures. In the context of education, the language of the curriculum represents a form of communicative action that both reflects and reinforces social norms, values, and power relations. According to Habermas, for communication to be emancipatory, it must be free from domination and allow for critical dialogue and participation. In contrast, when the language of the curriculum is shaped by dominant ideological forces such as colonial or neoliberal ideologies, it limits the potential for genuine communication and understanding. The language becomes a tool for socialisation into the dominant worldview, and students may not be encouraged to question or challenge the knowledge they are receiving. In Nigeria, for instance, the language of the curriculum

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often reflects the values and ideologies of the ruling class or former colonisers. Habermas notes that the language of education often serves to reproduce social inequalities rather than challenge them. Curricular language that fails to engage students in genuine communicative action perpetuates the status quo and limits the possibilities for more inclusive, diverse, and democratic forms of knowledge.

When the language of the curriculum reflects only the perspectives of those in power, whether colonial, political, or economic, it prevents critical engagement and instead promotes passive acceptance of the status quo which not only limits students' understanding of the world but also reinforces a hierarchical educational system that positions certain knowledge as superior to others.

The language of education plays a central role in shaping both what is taught and how students are taught to understand the world. Foucault and Habermas highlight how language in educational contexts is never neutral; it is shaped by ideological forces that determine which knowledge is considered legitimate and which is marginalised. In Nigeria, for instance, the continued use of English in the curriculum not only privileges Western knowledge systems but also reinforces socio-economic inequalities, as students from rural areas or disadvantaged backgrounds often struggle to learn in a language that is not their mother tongue. The curriculum thus reflects the power dynamics that exist between those who control the educational system and those who are subjected to it. These power relations shape the educational outcomes of students, influencing not only what knowledge they are exposed to but also how they engage with that knowledge.

Foucault's idea of knowledge as a form of power and Habermas's emphasis on communicative action offer valuable insights into how the language used in education is embedded with power relations. By analysing the national policy on language through these philosophical perspectives, we can better understand how educational systems reproduce social inequalities and ideological assumptions. Furthermore, these theories provide a foundation for imagining a more inclusive and critical educational system, one that recognises the power of language in shaping knowledge and seeks to challenge, rather than reinforce, dominant power structures. The next sections analyse key components of the educational policies and constitutional provisions that have shaped the role of English in Nigeria, offering a critical examination of their philosophical underpinnings and implications. Through this analysis, the paper highlights the ways in which language policies influence the construction of knowledge, the formation of identity, and the socio-political realities of education in Nigeria.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach that examines how language reflects, shapes, and perpetuates social power, ideologies, and inequalities (Fairclough (1995); Van Dijk (2001). It focuses on the relationship between language, power structures, and social context, analysing how texts (spoken or written) contribute to the construction of social norms and power dynamics. CDA aims to uncover hidden meanings in discourse, often to challenge dominant social structures and promote social change. Through a critical discourse analysis of educational texts, we can uncover the subtle and overt ways in which societal values, certain epistemological frameworks, and alternative ways of knowing are maginalised,

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reflected and reinforced. CDA, as a method of analysis, focuses on the relationship between language and power, emphasising how language shapes and is shaped by social and political contexts. When applied to educational texts, CDA reveals how the construction of knowledge is not neutral but is instead influenced by societal structures and ideologies. In the following section, the principles of CDA will be used to analyse specific sections of the National Education Policy and National policy on Language of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the National Policy on English Language

English has been entrenched in Nigerian society as both the official language and the medium of instruction in schools, despite the existence of over 500 indigenous languages in the country. This dominance is evident in the curriculum, where textbooks, assessments, and academic resources are overwhelmingly in English. The National Policy on Education (NPE) in Nigeria, revised periodically by the government (2013), section 2 (20)9d states that "The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years in monolingual communities. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject; (e)- From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment and French and Arabic shall be taught as subjects."

This offers an opportunity to explore how language, power, and social identity are negotiated within the Nigerian education system, particularly with regard to the role of English, local languages, and foreign languages in the curriculum. These policies reflect linguistic hegemony, cultural priorities, social stratification, and political ideologies as discussed next.

1. Language and Power Dynamics

The NPE makes a clear distinction between the language of instruction and the language taught as a subject, signaling the unequal status of various languages in Nigerian education. For the first three years of primary education, the local language of the immediate environment is the medium of instruction, but English is introduced as a subject. Starting in the fourth year, the policy shifts to using English progressively as the medium of instruction, signaling a transition toward English as the dominant language of formal education and governance.

This policy aligns with Fairclough's (1995) concept of linguistic hegemony, where English is positioned as the primary language of power, academic achievement, and upward mobility, even though local languages are allowed to serve as the medium of instruction for the early years. By making English the language of instruction from the fourth year onward, the policy reinforces the idea that proficiency in English is essential for social and academic success, while local languages are considered secondary or transitional. The shift from the local language to English in the fourth year reflects an entrenched societal structure where English is viewed as the language of power and modernity, while local languages are relegated to serving educational functions that are considered less sophisticated or less important.

2. Linguistic Ideology

This policy reflects an ideology that privileges English and sees it as the language that facilitates access to national and global opportunities. According to Phillipson (1992), this constitutes a form of linguistic imperialism, where the global language (English) is promoted

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over local or indigenous languages, often at the expense of local identity and culture. In this ideology of Language Superiority, the policy clearly prioritises English by ensuring it becomes the medium of instruction from the fourth year onward, signaling that it is the "real" language of education, while local languages are confined to the first three years. The inclusion of French and Arabic as subjects, though allowing some diversification, does not challenge the primary position of English as the language that drives the formal curriculum and national discourse.

By placing local languages only in the first three years of education (only in books, not a reality in the nation), the policy subtly conveys an ideological preference for English over indigenous languages, suggesting that the latter are only necessary for early education, after which English is considered more suitable for higher-level academic work. The introduction of French and Arabic as subjects also suggests that global and regional languages are viewed as valuable, but they are still treated as supplementary, not as primary mediums of instruction. In the example pointed out, the policy outlines a hierarchy of languages where English occupies the highest tier, followed by French and Arabic as foreign languages, and local languages are relegated to the foundational years of schooling. However, English is being used in most parts of the nation.

3. Cultural Identity and Linguistic Diversity:
The policy's focus on English and foreign languages (French and Arabic) as subjects, while relegating indigenous languages to the first three years of primary school, has implications for cultural identity and linguistic diversity in Nigeria. According to Van Dijk (1993), discourse about language can reflect and reinforce societal values and power structures, and in this case, the policy reflects the broader societal trend in many post-colonial nations of prioritising global languages over local ones. The NPE's approach to language use can be seen as a marginalisation of indigenous languages and cultures, positioning English as the language that carries prestige, intellectualism, and the ability to interact in global spaces.

By limiting the use of indigenous languages to the first few years of schooling, the policy risks undermining the cultural significance of indigenous languages and may diminish the role they play in fostering local identities. Children may grow up feeling disconnected from their cultural heritage, as the language that connects them to their community is increasingly excluded from formal education (Fairclough, 1995). The transitional use of local languages in the first three years of primary school could be seen as a tokenistic gesture, with the real educational value placed on English. Over time, this diminishes the status of local languages, potentially leading to a generation of students who are less connected to their cultural roots.

4. Social Stratification and Educational Access
The NPE's language policy also reflects a form of social stratification in terms of educational access. The shift to English as the primary medium of instruction from the fourth year places a premium on English proficiency. Children who come from monolingual English-speaking homes or who have access to English-based educational resources will likely have an advantage in transitioning to English as the primary medium of instruction. Conversely, children from rural or non-English-speaking backgrounds may face difficulties in the transition, especially if they do not have the same level of exposure to English outside of school. This can lead to significant educational inequalities, where children who are less

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proficient in English might struggle academically, reinforcing existing socioeconomic divides and educational disparities between different regions and communities in Nigeria (Van Dijk, 1993).

The policy can exacerbate linguistic inequality by privileging English, thus entrenching the gap between those who are proficient in English and those who are not. As Phillipson (1992) points out, such policies often serve to consolidate the power of those who already control English and associated educational resources, while marginalising those who do not have the same access.
The policy's approach to using English progressively from the fourth year may disadvantage children from non-English-speaking communities, as they must rapidly acquire proficiency in English to keep up with the academic curriculum. This further entrenches educational inequality.

According to Adegbite (2008), English is a marker of social status in Nigeria, and those who are proficient in it are often able to access higher educational opportunities and better-paying jobs. However, this dominance also perpetuates linguistic inequality. Students who come from homes where English is not the first language often struggle with academic performance due to a lack of early exposure to English. This is compounded by the fact that many Nigerian children are taught in English before they have adequate proficiency, resulting in difficulties in comprehension and communication (Akindele & Adegbite, 1999). This not only reflects the dominant societal values but also perpetuates them, reinforcing a particular worldview and hierarchy of knowledge.

Additionally, indigenous knowledge systems often emphasise holistic, context-dependent, and forms of knowledge typically presented in Western curricula. For instance, in many African societies, knowledge about the environment, health, or governance is passed down through oral traditions, storytelling, and communal practices. These ways of knowing are deeply rooted in local languages, cultural contexts, and spiritual beliefs. However, educational curricula often fail to incorporate these forms of knowledge, which are seen as "informal" or "non-scientific. This exclusion is not simply a matter of academic preference but is rooted in historical and political power structures.

The marginalisation of indigenous knowledge can be seen as a continuation of the colonial project, which sought to suppress indigenous cultures and languages while promoting Western knowledge systems as superior. For example, the dominance of English as the language of instruction in schools in Nigeria means that indigenous languages and their associated knowledge systems are often not valued or even understood by students. The curricular texts, therefore, reflect a larger ideological assumption that Western knowledge is superior and that other forms of knowledge, such as indigenous or oral traditions, are inferior. The process of marginalisation may be subtle, with indigenous knowledge not explicitly rejected but instead ignored.

5. Language and Political Power:
The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), updated with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd Alterations (2010), 4th Alteration (2017) and 5th Alteration (2023) in Chapter 5, Part 1, Section 55. Languages: "The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in

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English, and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made therefor". The clause in the Nigerian Federal Constitution that allows for the use of the three major Nigerian languages in legislative houses "when adequate arrangements" are made, otherwise English reflects a political decision that acknowledges the importance of Nigeria's indigenous languages while still positioning English as the ultimate language of power in governance. This runs through the National Language Policy, chapter 4 (104 -124 and even the Judiciary (125-136). According to Fairclough (1995), CDA explores how language constructs power relations, and in this case, the the constitution and policy privilege English, positioning it as the language of authority, while placing the indigenous languages in a conditional and subordinate role. The phrase "when adequate arrangements have been made therefor" suggests that the use of indigenous languages is not considered feasible unless the states invest heavily in resources like translation and education, thus reinforcing English's dominance in formal political settings.

English is implicitly portrayed as the "default" language of the legislative houses, while indigenous languages are granted a secondary status, contingent on resources. This reinforces the dominance of English and suggests that Nigeria sees it as a necessary tool for national governance (Van Dijk, 1993). The conditional nature of indigenous languages being used in legislative settings highlights the structural importance of English in governance, further emphasising its entrenched role in national power relations (Fairclough, 1995).

Additionally, the constitution's position on language use reflects a form of linguistic hegemony that privileges English over indigenous languages in formal political discourse. As noted by Van Dijk (1993), ideological structures often shape how certain groups or languages are perceived as more authoritative or legitimate. The constitution's stipulation that indigenous languages may only be used when adequate provisions are made implies that these languages are not yet viewed as sufficiently "official" for political use, unless the states invest significantly in their infrastructural support. This ideological stance supports the view that English is the language of modernity, governance, and power, while local languages are seen as secondary or incomplete. The clause demonstrates the ideological stance that English is inherently more suited for formal political discourse, reflecting a long-standing post-colonial ideology where English is tied to global power structures and governance (Fairclough, 1995).

The conditional use of indigenous languages in legislative houses suggests a political and cultural exclusion. While the three major Nigerian languages are recognised as significant, their conditional use in governance underlines the marginalisation of these languages in formal political discourse. The policy underscores a broader societal issue where English continues to dominate, reflecting linguistic and cultural inequalities (Fairclough, 1995). This reinforces social divisions, where speakers of indigenous languages may feel excluded from meaningful participation in governance unless extensive resources are allocated.

By making the use of indigenous languages dependent on the provision of resources, the policy indirectly devalues them in comparison to English. This reflects a broader tendency in many post-colonial contexts to prioritise the colonial language (in this case, English) over local languages, a process described as linguistic imperialism by Phillipson (1992). The marginalisation of indigenous languages in formal political discourse, unless substantial

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provisions are made, mirrors colonial-era policies where indigenous cultures were often sidelined in favour of colonial languages and systems of governance (Phillipson, 1992).

The policy's emphasis on English as the primary language of governance, with the potential for indigenous languages only when "adequate provision is made," reinforces existing social stratifications. According to Fairclough (1995), language use in political settings often reflects broader social inequalities. English, as the dominant language, is associated with access to power, wealth, and education, while indigenous languages are associated with lower socio-economic status and regionalism. This clause underscores the socio-economic divide, where those proficient in English (often from elite, urban, or privileged backgrounds) are more likely to succeed in political arenas, while those who speak only indigenous languages are more likely to face exclusion from the political process.

The conditionality of indigenous language use further entrenches a system of linguistic inequality, where only those with the resources (education, translation, technology) can effectively use their native languages in formal political spaces. This reflects a broader pattern of social exclusion based on linguistic ability (Van Dijk, 1993). By requiring "adequate provision" for indigenous languages, the policy indirectly privileges those who already have access to the resources necessary to use English effectively in governance, thus exacerbating social and linguistic inequalities (Fairclough, 1995). By making indigenous languages conditional, the policy appears to offer a token acknowledgment of linguistic diversity, but it ultimately reinforces English's central role in governance. This intertextuality, where the current policy draws on past colonial ideologies, is a form of continuity that maintains the power dynamics established during colonial rule (Fairclough, 1995).

The policy's emphasis on English as the "default" language, even in the face of linguistic diversity, reflects how colonial legacies continue to influence modern educational and political systems (Van Dijk, 1993). A CDA of the clause in the federal constitution regarding the use of English and indigenous languages in legislative houses reveals how power, ideology, and social stratification are embedded in language policy. By examining these power dynamics, we see how language policies reflect and reproduce social inequalities and historical continuities. By analysing policies and constitutions related to the use of English language in Nigeria, CDA enables us to uncover these hidden power dynamics and offers the possibility of reshaping education to be more inclusive, diverse, and reflective of multiple ways of knowing.

Conclusion

To conclude, the status of English in Nigeria's educational and socio-political landscape is the product of a complex interplay between historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. English, introduced as the official language during British colonial rule, has since become a powerful tool for national integration, fostering communication across Nigeria's diverse linguistic communities. However, this unifying function has come at the cost of marginalising indigenous languages and reinforcing socio-economic inequalities, as proficiency in English has increasingly become a key determinant of access to educational opportunities and social mobility. Through a critical discourse analysis of educational policies and constitutional provisions, it becomes clear that English is not merely a medium of instruction but also a symbol of power, prestige, and modernity. While language policies have sought to promote

national cohesion, they have also entrenched a system where linguistic capital, embodied by English, dictates access to political and economic power.

The tension between fostering national unity through a shared language and preserving Nigeria's rich linguistic heritage remains a critical issue in the country's educational discourse. Looking forward, it is essential to reconsider Nigeria's approach to language policy. A more inclusive educational framework that recognises and promotes indigenous languages alongside English could lead to a more equitable and culturally rich educational system. The philosophical implications of such a shift would be profound, offering a more balanced approach to knowledge production and access. Ultimately, the role of English in Nigeria's educational system must be carefully navigated, ensuring that it continues to serve as a tool for progress without undermining the nation's diverse linguistic and cultural identity.

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