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**SOUTHERNIZING MULTILINGUALISM: RETHINKING LANGUAGE,
PHILOSOPHY, AND PEDAGOGY IN GHANAIAN CLASSROOMS**

A Dissertation in
Applied Linguistics with a Dual Title in African Studies

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Abstract

This study examines multilingual communication practices in Ghanaian primary school classrooms to rethink the “language problem” in African education as a fundamentally ideological issue rather than technical or policy driven one. It is situated within a Southernizing multilingualism framework that challenges dominant assumptions of language as a neutral medium of instruction and instead conceptualizes it as a socially and historically embedded practice through which knowledge, identity, personhood, and meaning are produced.

Drawing on Southern epistemologies, African philosophical traditions of personhood, and Fanon’s account of colonial subjectivity and the psychopolitics of language, the study approaches classroom language practices as both a relational practice of knowledge construction and a site shaped by enduring linguistic and epistemic inequalities. Within this framework, this research examines how multilingual practices are enacted in primary classrooms and how they are shaped by teachers’ beliefs, ideologies, and broader socio-institutional contexts.

A qualitative case study design was employed across selected public and private primary schools in Ghana. Data were generated through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and school officials, and field notes to examine the relationship between language ideology and classroom practice.

The findings reveal a persistent ideological hierarchy in which English is associated with academic legitimacy, mobility, and future-oriented aspiration, while indigenous languages such as Twi are linked to identity, relationality, and present-oriented social life. However, this hierarchy is unsettled in practice. Classroom interaction demonstrates that teaching and learning depend on continuous multilingual mediation, with teachers and students drawing on multiple linguistic resources to support comprehension, participation, and knowledge construction. This produces a structural tension between languages valued for institutional recognition and those required for epistemic access, such that English dominance is sustained symbolically but depends in practice on the multilingual resources it marginalizes.

The study advances a relational and hybrid model of classroom multilingualism which conceptualizes language use as a recursive system in which ideology, interaction, and epistemic

practice are mutually constituted. From this perspective, the privileging of English as a language of academic legitimacy is not a fixed ideological condition but one that is continuously produced and reworked through classroom interaction. This shift in perspective reconceptualizes multilingual classrooms as stable yet internally dynamic systems in which linguistic authority, pedagogical necessity, and epistemic access are continuously negotiated. Within this reconceptualization, multilingualism emerges as both enabling and constrained: enabling because it sustains learning in practice and constrained because it remains subordinated to English within institutional regimes of validation and aspiration.

On this basis, this study develops Southernizing multilingualism as an analytical framework that recenters ideology, epistemology, and lived practice in the study of language in education. In doing so, it calls for a shift beyond implementation-focused approaches toward a rethinking of how language, knowledge, and legitimacy are conceptualized in African education and, more broadly, in multilingual and culturally diverse educational contexts.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Chapter

This study examines multilingual classroom practices in Ghanaian basic schools, alongside teacher interviews focusing on teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and ideologies regarding language use in teaching and learning. It is situated within a broader tension in Ghana's educational system, where English is officially positioned as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards and is widely associated with academic success, yet classroom interaction is often sustained through fluid multilingual communication.

The study conceptualizes this tension not as a policy deviation, but as a constitutive feature of pedagogical reality. It argues that classroom learning is fundamentally shaped by the interaction between colonial linguistic hierarchies and the multilingual repertoires of teachers and students. Drawing on Afro-communitarian thought and Fanon's account of colonial subjectivity and the psychopolitics of language, the dissertation project frames classroom communication as a relational and epistemic process in which knowledge is co-constructed through multiple linguistic resources.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

I grew up and was educated in post-colonial Ghana, where language functioned as a medium of instruction while also operating as a mechanism through which discipline, legitimacy, and hierarchy were enacted in everyday classroom life. One of my earliest and most formative encounters with this reality occurred during my elementary schooling. In the absence of a teacher, students were typically instructed to remain quiet and read their books, both to maintain order and to avoid disturbing nearby classrooms. To enforce this expectation, class leaders were routinely tasked with recording the names of those who talked in class. These records were often organized into two categories: "Names of Talkatives" and "Names of Twi Speakers." While both forms of "misconduct" were punishable, speaking in Twi, a widely spoken Ghanaian language, incurred a double penalty, one for talking and another for using a Ghanaian language. This practice embedded a form of peer-mediated surveillance in which language use itself became a site of monitoring and disciplinary distinction.

This practice was justified through a pedagogical rationale. If we (students) spoke at all, we were expected to do so in English in order to improve our proficiency. English was thus positioned as the language of discipline, academic legitimacy, and future mobility. Yet this logic was marked by a persistent contradiction. Teachers themselves frequently relied on Ghanaian languages to explain concepts, manage the classroom, and ensure comprehension. However, when we drew on those same linguistic resources in our peer interactions, we were sanctioned. Thus, a paradox emerged in which Ghanaian languages were both necessary for learning but illegitimate within the formal order of schooling.

This contradiction produced in me a lasting sense of linguistic ambivalence. Ghanaian languages were central to how we made meaning and related to one another, yet they were framed as incompatible with academic success. At the same time, English, though institutionally privileged, remained unevenly accessible as a medium for genuine understanding and expression. What this produced was not bilingual fluency, but a constrained communicative space shaped by surveillance, discipline, and hierarchy.

At the time, I did not understand these dynamics in structural or policy terms. I experienced them instead as a persistent, unresolved tension: we relied on our own languages to think and connect, yet we were punished for using them. What I carried was not a critique of policy, but a question: why were the very resources that enabled our learning treated as wrong?

My subsequent academic training in applied linguistics, Black studies (black radical thought), and African philosophy fundamentally reshaped how I interpret these experiences. Engaging Black radical thought enabled me to see how the regulation of language in the classroom is connected to longer histories of colonial domination and the ongoing production of racialized and hierarchical orders of knowledge. It foregrounded how seemingly ordinary institutional practices, such as disciplining students for speaking Ghanaian languages, participate in broader projects of shaping subjectivity, value, and belonging.

African philosophical traditions, particularly Afro-communitarian perspectives, further reoriented my understanding of language itself. Instead of viewing language as a bounded system or neutral medium of instruction, these perspectives emphasize its relational, social, and epistemic dimensions. Language, in this sense, functions as a tool for conveying pre-existing

knowledge as well as a practice through which knowledge is collectively produced, negotiated, and made meaningful within specific social contexts.

These intellectual traditions enabled me to reinterpret the classroom experiences of my childhood as expressions of a deeper ideological formation in which language is central to the organization of knowledge, power, and legitimacy. The privileging of English and the marginalization of Ghanaian languages are therefore part of an enduring coloniality of language that continues to shape what counts as valid knowledge and who is recognized as a legitimate knower and person in the classroom.

This intellectual reorientation directly informs my engagement with a Southernizing multilingualism framework in this study. In educational spaces, I conceptualize multilingualism as an ideological and epistemic phenomenon, not a technical issue of policy or implementation. My focus is therefore not only on which languages are used in Ghanaian classrooms, but on what language is understood to be, what it is expected to do, and how these assumptions are historically produced and institutionally sustained.

In examining multilingual practices in Ghanaian primary classrooms, I am guided by both my lived experiences as a student and my academic training, which together position language as a site of tension between colonial ideologies and epistemic access. This dual grounding enables me to attend the ways in which classroom interaction both reproduces and unsettles linguistic hierarchies, revealing multilingualism as a practice that is at once enabling and constrained.

My positionality, therefore, operates at both biographical and epistemological levels. It reflects a trajectory from experiencing the regulation of language in Ghanaian classrooms to critically interrogating the foundations upon which such regulation rests. By bringing Black radical thought and African philosophical perspectives into conversation with classroom practice, this study seeks to rethink language as a socially embedded practice through which knowledge, personhood, and power are continuously negotiated in post-colonial educational contexts.

These experiences and intellectual commitments inform my perspective as a researcher and bring into focus the analytical problem that motivates this study. The persistence of English dominance in Ghanaian classrooms is often addressed in the literature through questions of policy

implementation, teacher preparedness, or resource constraints (Appiah & Ardila, 2020; Davis & Agbenyega, 2012; Mfum-Mensah, 2005; Rosekrans et al., 2012). However, my lived experience and subsequent intellectual training highlight that these explanations do not fully account for how language operates within everyday classroom life as both an ideological and epistemic force. My dual perspective foregrounds the need to examine how multilingual practices are actively produced, constrained, and negotiated across classroom interaction and teacher ideologies.

It is within this context that my positionality contributes to the rationale of the study. It allows me to recognize multilingualism not as an exception to an English-dominant educational system, but as constitutive of how teaching and learning actually occur in Ghanaian classrooms. Consequently, it foregrounds the need to move beyond purely policy-oriented or deficit-based accounts of language use in education. By situating multilingual practices within broader ideological and epistemic formations, this study responds to a gap in the literature and prevailing conceptualizations that tend to separate language policy from classroom interaction and to overlook how philosophical assumptions and language ideologies are actively produced, negotiated, and enforced within everyday classroom practice. In doing so, it justifies an approach that treats classroom multilingualism as a site where knowledge, legitimacy, and subjectivity are actively produced and contested.

1.3 Background of the Study

Language plays a central role in education, functioning as a medium of instruction and as a mechanism through which learners are positioned as competent or deficient within educational systems. In multilingual societies such as Ghana, this function is particularly complex due to the coexistence of English with widely spoken indigenous languages such as Twi (Ansah, 2014).

Ghana is a linguistically diverse country with over 80 indigenous languages spoken across its regions, alongside English, which functions as the official language and primary medium of instruction in formal education (Dakubu, 1988; Eberhard et al., 2020). In elementary school classrooms, this multilingual reality is not abstract but lived. Teachers and students routinely draw on multiple linguistic resources to facilitate communication, learning, and social

interaction. These practices reflect the dynamic interplay between local linguistic repertoires, national language policies, and global educational expectations.

Post-independence language-in-education policies have consistently privileged English as the dominant medium of instruction beyond the early years of schooling (Owu-Ewie, 2006). English is positioned as the language of academic achievement, standardization, and global competitiveness. While indigenous languages are formally acknowledged within early-grade instruction, English becomes the dominant medium from Primary 4 onward, shaping both instruction and assessment practices (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015). However, classroom realities often diverge from these policy assumptions, as multilingual communication remains central to teaching and learning.

Although English is formally established as the medium of instruction at the upper primary level in Ghanaian schools, classroom interaction consistently shows that meaningful teaching and learning depend on multilingual practices, particularly the use of Twi alongside English (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). This creates a persistent tension between language-in-education policy and pedagogical reality. Policy frameworks privilege English as the legitimate language of academic success, yet classroom interaction demonstrates that comprehension, participation, and conceptual understanding are frequently achieved through fluid multilingual practices that are not formally recognized within institutional discourse.

This mismatch suggests that language in education cannot be fully understood through policy frameworks alone. Instead, it must be examined as it is enacted in practice, where linguistic resources are dynamically mobilized to bridge gaps between institutional expectations and communicative realities. Multilingualism, in this sense, is not an exception to instruction but a structural condition of its possibility in Ghanaian classrooms. Moreover, these classroom realities are shaped by broader social and ideological understandings of language that extend beyond individual schools and policy documents. Understanding multilingual education in Ghana therefore requires attention to both classroom practice and the wider ideologies that influence how language is valued within educational systems.

Beyond the classroom, multilingualism in African contexts is often shaped by broader ideological tensions. In many African societies, multilingualism is deeply embedded in everyday life and widely regarded as a normative social reality (Fardon & Furniss, 1994). However, this ordinariness can contribute to its devaluation within formal education systems, where multilingualism is frequently constructed as a pedagogical problem rather than a resource. Wiredu (2008) attributes this tendency to the privileging of foreign cultural norms and the corresponding undervaluing of local linguistic practices. Within this framing, monolingualism in English is often idealized as modern and prestigious, while multilingualism is associated with disorder or lack of academic discipline (Benson, 2010).

These broader ideological orientations are also evident in Ghanaian educational contexts. It is not uncommon for teachers to argue that the presence of African languages alongside English complicates instruction, leading to advocacy for English-only approaches (Appiah & Ardila, 2020). Such perspectives shape classroom practices in ways that marginalize the multilingual repertoires of students, despite their centrality to learning. As a result, classroom language use often reflects a tension between institutional expectations and lived communicative realities. These dynamics position multilingual classrooms in Ghana as sites where language policy, ideology, and practice intersect in complex ways. They also raise important questions about how particular linguistic practices become legitimized or marginalized within educational settings and how these processes shape teaching and learning.

A substantial body of African scholarship has addressed how learners' linguistic resources are valued and utilized within educational settings by challenging monolingual assumptions embedded in formal education systems and documenting the educational benefits of multilingual language policies and mother-tongue-based education (Milligan et al., 2016). Across the continent, studies consistently demonstrate that instruction grounded in learners' linguistic repertoires and home languages improves participation, literacy development, academic achievement, and educational continuity (Fafunwa, 1974; Heugh et al., 2007; Tambulukani & Bus, 2012; Trudell, 2016; Benson, 2017; Milligan et al., 2016). Research in Ghana similarly shows that multilingual practices are integral to everyday classroom interaction and that learners' linguistic resources play a central role in teaching and learning (Mfum-Mensah, 2005; Opoku-

Amankwa, 2009; Yevudey, 2016; Appiah & Ardila, 2020). Collectively, this body of work demonstrates that learners' multilingual repertoires play a central role in supporting participation, literacy development, academic achievement, and educational equity in African contexts.

Yet despite the strength and consistency of this evidence, multilingual practices remain marginal within many educational systems and continue to be positioned as supplementary to English-medium instruction (Benson, 2017). The persistence of English-dominant educational structures despite substantial evidence supporting multilingual approaches suggests that debates surrounding multilingual education cannot be explained solely as linguistic, pedagogical, or policy problems. They point instead to deeper questions concerning how particular forms of knowledge, language, and communicative practice come to be recognized as legitimate within schooling.

Although, extensive scholarship on language-in-education policy in Ghana and other multilingual African contexts, much of the existing literature continues to frame the “language problem” primarily in terms of policy implementation, teacher preparedness, or resource constraints (Appiah & Ardila, 2020; Davis & Agbenyega, 2012; Mfum-Mensah, 2005; Rosekrans et al., 2012). While these studies provide valuable insights into structural and institutional challenges, they tend to treat classroom language practices and ideologies as secondary outcomes of policy rather than as central sites of knowledge production in their own right. As a result, existing scholarship has provided important accounts of what multilingual policies prescribe and how they are implemented, but comparatively less attention has been paid to how language ideologies shape everyday classroom practices and interpretations of multilingualism.

These limitations have prompted scholars to look beyond questions of language policy and instructional effectiveness toward the broader ideological and epistemic conditions that shape educational practice (Bonney, 2022; Owoo, 2022). A growing body of scholarship argues that multilingual education research has often remained focused on language itself as the primary explanatory variable for educational inequality, emphasizing questions of language choice, policy implementation, and medium of instruction (Dartey, 2025). While these concerns remain

important, such approaches may leave broader ideological, philosophical, and epistemic dimensions underexamined. From Southern and decolonial perspectives, language is a site through which histories of colonialism, power, identity, and knowledge production are negotiated, rather than a neutral vehicle for transmitting knowledge (Makoni & Pennycook, 2019). The continued marginalization of multilingual practices despite overwhelming evidence of their educational value therefore raises questions that extend beyond language policy alone. It invites investigation into the beliefs, ideologies, and assumptions that shape how multilingual classroom practices are interpreted, valued, and enacted within educational settings.

In addition, existing work has often maintained an implicit separation between policy discourse and classroom interaction, where multilingual practices are frequently interpreted as deviations from official language policies rather than as constitutive features of teaching and learning. This framing overlooks the language ideologies that sponsor and structure these interpretations and shape multilingual practices in classroom settings. It risks obscuring how multilingual communication is actively mobilized by teachers and students to sustain participation, comprehension, and meaning-making within instructional spaces.

Furthermore, although there is growing recognition of translanguaging and multilingual pedagogies in educational research (May, 2014; Erling et al., 2022), fewer studies have examined how these practices are shaped through classroom interaction and through the beliefs, ideologies, philosophies, and interpretive frameworks that teachers bring to and enact within their practice. As a result, the relationship between observed multilingual practices and teachers' own accounts of language use remains under-theorized in the Ghanaian context.

This study addresses these gaps by examining multilingual classroom practices alongside teacher interviews in order to understand how language ideologies and pedagogical practices mutually constitute one another. In doing so, it shifts attention from viewing multilingualism as a problem of implementation to understanding it as an epistemic and ideological condition of classroom life in Ghanaian schools.

1.4 Research Questions

Main Research Question:

How are Southern multilingual practices enacted in elementary school classrooms in Ghana, and how are these practices shaped by teachers' beliefs, ideologies, and broader socio-institutional contexts?

Sub-Questions:

1. What Southern multilingual practices can be observed in classrooms?
2. What beliefs and ideologies do teachers and school officials hold?
3. How do these beliefs align with or diverge from observed practices in the classroom?

The research questions guiding this study are designed to address a limitation in the literature on language-in-education in Ghana and other multilingual African contexts, where the “language problem” is often framed primarily in terms of policy implementation, teacher preparedness, or resource constraints. While this body of work has generated important insights into the structural and institutional conditions of schooling, it tends to separate policy from practice and to treat classroom language use as a secondary outcome of policy rather than as a central site where knowledge, meaning, and participation are actively produced, and where language ideologies and philosophical assumptions about knowledge, personhood, and communication are continuously constructed, contested, and enacted.

The main research question therefore provides an overarching analytical frame for the study by asking how Southern multilingual practices are enacted in elementary school classrooms in Ghana, and how these practices are shaped by teachers' beliefs, ideologies, and broader socio-institutional contexts. This question brings together three dimensions that are often treated separately in existing research: classroom practice, teacher ideology, and institutional structure, in conversation with the philosophies that underpin them. In doing so, it positions multilingualism as an integral feature of pedagogical reality shaped by multiple and interacting forces, rather than a deviation from policy expectations.

The first sub-question focuses on identifying the multilingual practices observable in classrooms. This is necessary to establish a detailed account of how multilingualism is enacted in everyday instructional settings. By attending to the specific ways in which English, Twi, and other linguistic resources are mobilized in teaching and learning, this question builds an empirical foundation for understanding multilingualism as a structured and routine feature of classroom interaction rather than an exception to monolingual policy norms.

The second and third sub-questions extend this analysis by focusing on teachers' beliefs and ideologies, and on the relationship between these beliefs and observed classroom practices. Together, they examine how educators' interpretations of language shape pedagogical choices, and how these interpretations align with or diverge from actual classroom practice. By bringing ideology and practice into direct relation, the study is able to show how multilingual classrooms are shaped by both colonial language regimes and the interpretive frameworks of actors within them, revealing multilingualism as a site of ongoing negotiation rather than a fixed or fully regulated system.

In sum, the research questions are structured to move beyond fragmented approaches that treat policy, practice, and ideology as separate domains of analysis. Instead, they establish an integrated framework for examining multilingualism as it is lived and enacted in Ghanaian elementary school classrooms. By beginning with the documentation of classroom practices, extending to the exploration of teacher beliefs and ideologies, and culminating in an analysis of the relationship between the two, the study is able to capture both the material and interpretive dimensions of multilingual education.

This structure makes it possible to examine the dynamic relationship between language ideologies and everyday classroom interaction. It also allows for a more nuanced understanding of multilingualism as neither a problem to be managed nor a deviation from policy, but as a constitutive feature of teaching and learning in multilingual contexts. Through this approach, the study contributes to rethinking how language, knowledge, and legitimacy are produced within Ghanaian educational spaces.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and educational policy studies by providing an empirically grounded account of multilingual classroom practices and the beliefs and ideologies of teachers in Ghana. It challenges monolingual assumptions embedded in policy frameworks and demonstrates the central role of Southern multilingualism in sustaining learning.

Its significance lies in three key areas. First, it shows how language ideologies shape classroom interaction and influence learner positioning. Second, it contributes to theoretical debates on multilingualism by integrating Afro-communitarian thought and Fanon's account of colonial subjectivity to explain the relational and psycho-political dimensions of language use. Third, it offers practical implications for teachers and policymakers by demonstrating that multilingualism is not peripheral but fundamental to effective pedagogy in multilingual contexts.

Beyond these contributions, the study advances a more integrated understanding of the relationship between language policy, classroom practice, and lived educational experience. By bringing together classroom observation and teacher accounts, it highlights how multilingual practices are simultaneously structured by institutional expectations and shaped by everyday pedagogical decision-making. This integrated approach challenges research traditions that treat policy and practice as separate domains and instead foregrounds their mutual constitution in everyday schooling.

The study also contributes to broader debates on epistemology and knowledge production in education. By situating multilingualism within Southernizing and decolonial perspectives, it shifts attention from language as a medium of instruction to the production and contestation of knowledge, identity, and legitimacy. It extends current understanding of multilingual education by showing how linguistic practices are embedded within wider historical and ideological formations that continue to shape educational inequality and possibility in postcolonial contexts.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on multilingual classroom practices in selected basic schools in Ghana where English is the official medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards. It examines how English and Twi are used in everyday teaching and learning, with particular attention to translanguaging

practices and the ways in which these practices support classroom communication and understanding.

The empirical focus is limited to classroom observations and semi-structured teacher interviews. Classroom interaction provides the primary site for analyzing multilingual practices, while teacher interviews are used to examine beliefs, ideologies, and interpretations of language use in pedagogy. While broader institutional factors such as curriculum frameworks, assessment regimes, and language policy histories are acknowledged as part of the wider context shaping classroom practice, they are not the central focus of analysis.

Student perspectives are examined indirectly through interactional classroom data rather than through separate interviews. As such, the study prioritizes observable communicative practices and teacher accounts as key sources of insight into how multilingualism is enacted and understood in classroom settings.

The findings are therefore context-specific and are intended to provide an in-depth understanding of multilingual practices in the selected classrooms, rather than broad generalizations about all Ghanaian schools.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Multilingualism:

The use of more than one language within a social or educational context. In this study, multilingualism is understood not only as the coexistence of languages, but as a dynamic and socially embedded practice through which meaning, identity, and knowledge are constructed in interaction.

Southern multilingualism:

A perspective on language use that foregrounds how multilingual practices in the Global South are shaped by colonial histories, social inequalities, and local epistemologies. It conceptualizes multilingualism as both a communicative resource and an ideological formation embedded in unequal linguistic and educational structures.

Translanguaging:

The flexible and integrated use of multiple linguistic resources within interaction to make meaning, communicate understanding, and construct knowledge. It emphasizes the fluidity of linguistic repertoires rather than the separation of named languages.

Language-in-education policy:

Official guidelines and institutional frameworks that regulate the languages used for instruction, assessment, and classroom communication within educational systems.

English Medium Instruction (EMI):

An educational approach in which English is designated as the primary language of teaching and learning, often functioning as the dominant language of instruction beyond the early years of schooling.

Multilingual education:

An educational approach that incorporates more than one language in teaching and learning processes. It recognizes students' linguistic repertoires as resources for learning and may range from additive models that maintain multiple languages to transitional models that prioritize a shift to a dominant language.

Early-exit transitional bilingual education:

A language-in-education model in which learners are initially instructed in a familiar or indigenous language alongside a second language (often English), with a planned and relatively early transition to English as the sole medium of instruction. In the Ghanaian context, this typically refers to the shift from Ghanaian languages in early primary years to English from Primary 4 onward.

Language ideology:

Beliefs, assumptions, and value systems about language that shape how languages are understood, evaluated, and used in social and institutional contexts. In this study, language ideology is central to understanding how English and Ghanaian languages are positioned in classrooms.

Afro-communitarianism:

A philosophical perspective that conceptualizes personhood, knowledge, and identity as fundamentally relational and socially constituted, emphasizing community, interdependence, and shared meaning-making.

Fanon's colonial subjectivity and psychopolitics of language:

A framework derived from Frantz Fanon that explains how colonial languages shape subjectivity, self-perception, and perceived intellectual legitimacy, particularly through processes of linguistic hierarchy, racialization, and internalized valuation.

Linguistic repertoire:

The range of linguistic resources (languages, varieties, registers, and styles) that individuals draw upon in communication. It highlights language use as flexible and context-dependent rather than fixed.

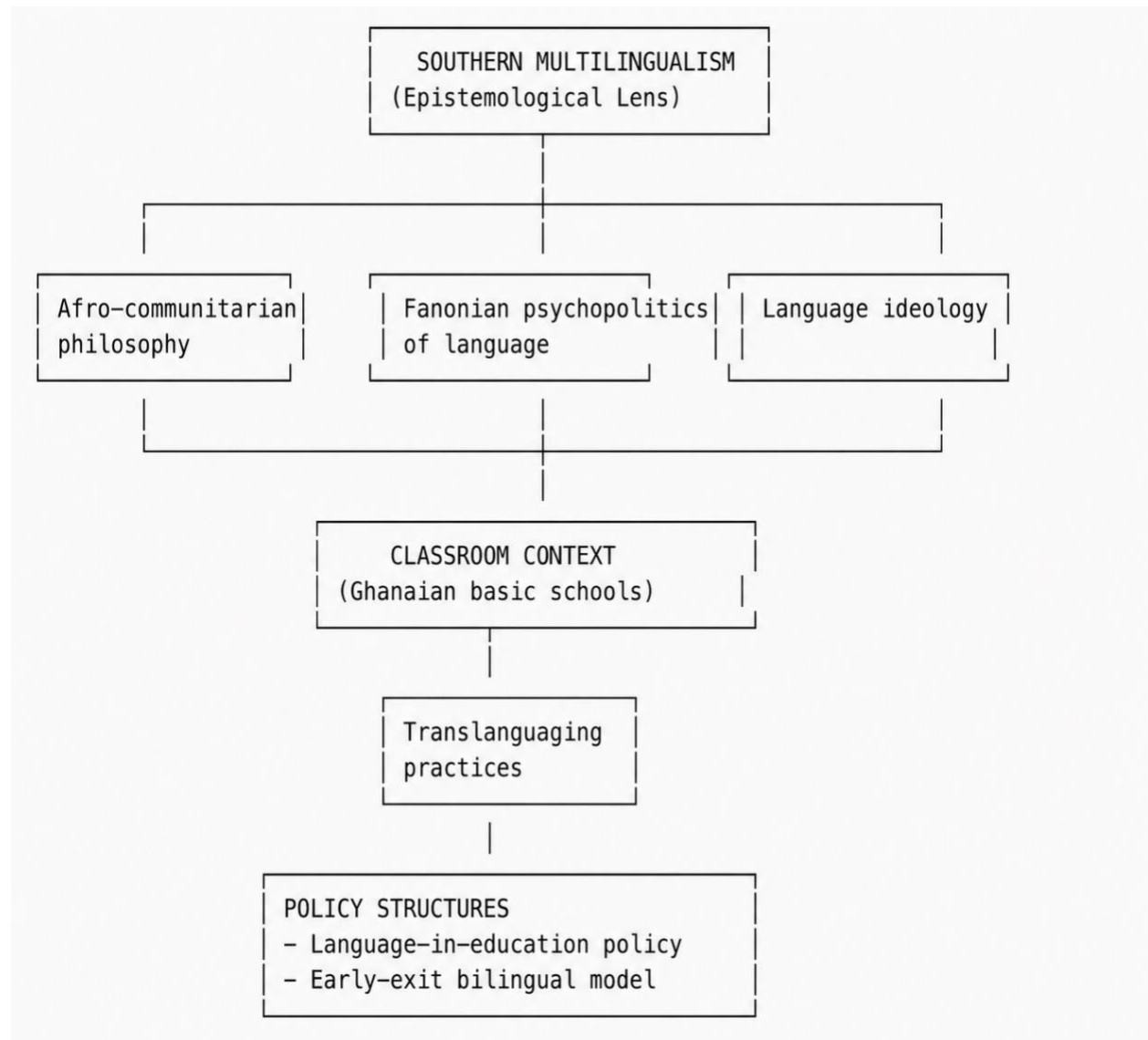
Classroom discourse:

The structured patterns of communication that occur in classroom interaction, including teacher–student talk, instructional language use, and peer communication during learning activities.

A diagram depicting some of the concepts used in this study can be found in Fig. 1

Figure 1

Conceptual Diagram of Key Concepts Used in This Study



1.8 Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters that progressively develop the theoretical, empirical, and analytical dimensions of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. It situates the study within existing scholarship on multilingualism, language philosophy, and pedagogy in Ghana and globally. It critically engages with key debates in translanguaging, language ideology, and language-in-education policy, identifying gaps that this study addresses.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework. This chapter presents the conceptual foundations guiding the study. It draws on Southern epistemologies of multilingualism, Afro-communitarian philosophy of personhood, and Fanon's account of colonial subjectivity and the psychopolitics of language to conceptualize language as both epistemic practice and ideological formation.

Chapter Four: Methodology. This chapter outlines the research design, data collection procedures, and analytical methods used in the study. It explains the qualitative approach adopted, including classroom recordings and semi-structured interviews with teachers and school officials.

Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis. The chapter presents and interprets the empirical data from Ghanaian classrooms, focusing on patterns of multilingual interaction, knowledge construction, and ideological positioning in classroom discourse.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion. The chapter synthesizes the findings in relation to the literature and theoretical framework. It discusses implications for policy and classroom practice, summarizes key insights, reflects on limitations, and offers recommendations for future research and pedagogy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines multilingual education and language policy from global, African, and Ghanaian perspectives, drawing on scholarship across applied linguistics, education policy, postcolonial studies, development studies, comparative education, among other disciplines. It situates multilingual education within broader interdisciplinary debates on language, knowledge, and power in formal schooling systems, and considers how these debates inform understandings of educational equity, access, and learning.

Across most educational contexts, language functions as a medium of instruction and a key site through which access to knowledge and participation in schooling are regulated (Benson, 2017). Decisions about language in education are therefore closely tied to broader questions of power, legitimacy, and inequality. These decisions are rarely purely pedagogical, but are shaped by historical, ideological, and political forces that determine which languages are legitimized in formal education and which are rendered invisible within schooling systems.

In postcolonial contexts, these dynamics are further complicated by the enduring influence of colonial language hierarchies that continue to structure education systems. These hierarchies have shaped assumptions about what counts as legitimate knowledge and have influenced how multilingual realities are addressed within policy and practice. As a result, language-in-education policies often reflect tensions between official recognition of linguistic diversity and the continued dominance of a small number of privileged languages.

Within applied linguistics, recent theoretical developments have challenged traditional ways of understanding language as fixed and separable systems (May, 2014; Kubota, 2022). Instead, language is increasingly understood as a dynamic and socially situated practice, with speakers drawing on flexible linguistic resources in context. This shift has informed new ways of thinking about multilingual education, although educational systems have been slower to reflect these conceptual changes in practice.

Against this background, this chapter provides the contextual grounding for the study. It brings together global debates, African scholarship, and Ghanaian policy discussions to show how

multilingual education is shaped by both enabling arguments and persistent structural constraints. It also highlights the importance of understanding language policy not only as an educational tool, but as part of broader ideological frameworks that shape how knowledge and learning are organized in schooling systems.

2.2 Multilingual Education and Language Policy: Global Perspectives and Theoretical Framing

Multilingualism is a widespread feature of most societies globally, yet in educational research it is often treated as a challenge requiring management through policy and pedagogical intervention. Within much of the literature, language is positioned as the central variable influencing access to knowledge, academic achievement, and educational equity. This framing has shaped language-in-education policies that regulate which languages are used for instruction, particularly in contexts of linguistic diversity (Heller, 2007).

In postcolonial contexts, including African societies, these policy orientations are deeply shaped by colonial histories that continue to structure contemporary education systems. Formal schooling systems inherited from colonial administrations were not designed to accommodate linguistic plurality (Benson, 2017; Heugh, 2002). Instead, they were organized around monolingual ideologies that privilege European languages as legitimate media of instruction and knowledge production. As a result, educational language policies have often reinforced the dominance of colonial languages such as English while marginalizing indigenous African languages (Tupas 2003, 2016). Within this framing, multilingualism is frequently positioned not as a normal social condition but as a pedagogical problem requiring regulation (Tupas, 2023).

Within applied linguistics, the emergence of the “multilingual turn” (May, 2014) has challenged these monolingual assumptions by arguing that traditional language policies and pedagogical models are theoretically and practically inadequate for understanding how language actually functions in multilingual societies. This shift has encouraged a reconceptualization of language not as a set of discrete, bounded systems, but as fluid and socially embedded practices.

Nevertheless, research also shows that educational systems in many Global South contexts continue to be structured by monolingual norms that marginalize indigenous languages and constrain their use in formal education (Odugu & Lemieux, 2019).

Across socio- and applied linguistics, multilingualism is widely understood as the global norm rather than the exception (Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). However, dominant ways of conceptualizing multilingualism remain heavily shaped by monolingual ideologies, often described as a “monolingual habitus” (Gogolin, 2002) or a “monolingual mindset” (Clyne, 2005). These frameworks influence how language is categorized in educational policy, frequently leading to the treatment of multilingual speakers as users of separate, bounded linguistic systems (Heller, 2007), rather than as individuals drawing flexibly on integrated linguistic repertoires.

From this perspective, the central issue is not multilingualism itself, but the ideological frameworks through which it is interpreted and regulated. The multilingual turn (May, 2014) therefore foregrounds the need to rethink language as socially situated and continuously negotiated practice, rather than as a fixed system of codes. This reconceptualisation extends beyond education to broader social domains, including how language is valued and operationalised in everyday institutional and community contexts.

The implication of this body of work is that language policy and educational practice are deeply shaped by underlying ideological assumptions about what language is and how it functions. In particular, it highlights how monolingual frameworks continue to structure the representation and regulation of multilingual realities, limiting more expansive ways of understanding learning, communication, and inequality in education systems. At the same time, a growing body of literature highlights the benefits of multilingual education across cognitive, academic, and sociohistorical dimensions, pointing to cognitive and academic advantages associated with multilingual instruction (Canagarajah, 1995; Clegg & Afitska, 2011; Cummins, 1981), as well as decolonial and sociohistorical arguments that position multilingual education as a means of challenging linguistic hierarchies and epistemic inequality (García, 2019; Prah, 2018). However, despite these well-documented advantages, Phyak et al. (2023) observe that many countries that formally recognize linguistic rights in their constitutions and education policies continue to struggle with implementation, largely due to entrenched ideologies that continue to prioritize colonial languages in practice.

2.3 Multilingual Education in African Contexts: Evidence, Debates, and Policy Tensions

Building on critiques of monolingual ideological frameworks in applied linguistics, African scholarship has extensively engaged with and challenged these assumptions through both empirical research and policy-oriented debates. Within this body of work, several studies advocate for multilingual educational language policies that are more closely aligned with sociolinguistic realities, particularly through mother-tongue-based bilingual education as an alternative to abrupt transitions from indigenous languages to English, which are often seen as undermining learning outcomes (Benson, 2017; Milligan et al, 2016).

Empirical evidence from across the continent strongly supports the pedagogical value of mother tongue instruction. Heugh et al. (2007), for example, demonstrate that learners in Ethiopia who receive instruction in their mother tongue outperform their monolingual counterparts in all subjects, including English. Similarly, the widely cited Yoruba (Ile-Ife) project in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1974) shows that learners taught in Yoruba achieved higher academic performance than those taught in English. The study further indicates that Yoruba-medium instruction supported longer retention of literacy skills compared to English-medium instruction. These findings suggest that sustained use of indigenous languages in education can strengthen both academic achievement and long-term literacy development.

Further supporting this position, research argues that education in the mother tongue should be understood as a fundamental human right (Benson & Kosonen, 2013). Many studies on mother tongue-based education propose a minimum of six years of instruction in the mother tongue as essential for both pedagogical effectiveness and the protection of language rights in education systems.

Additional empirical studies reinforce these claims. Trudell (2016), in a study of early-grade reading in Kenya, found that children's oral reading rates in English improved when their home language was used as a foundation for instruction. Similarly, Tambulukani and Bus (2012) found that pupils in Grades 1 and 2 in Zambia made greater progress in word-reading fluency in both a Zambian language and English when instruction began in a familiar language. Matafwali (2010) also reports that oral fluency in the language of instruction is a strong predictor of reading

fluency in early-grade learners, further highlighting the importance of linguistic familiarity in early education.

Despite this strong body of evidence, resistance to bilingual education remains common across African contexts, including Ghana. Many parents prefer English-medium education, believing that immersion in English provides faster access to economic opportunity and social mobility (Norton, 2014; Probyn, 2009; Trudell & Piper, 2014). A study by Davis et al. (2015) similarly shows that Ghanaian students and parents often prefer English as the medium of instruction for subjects such as mathematics, even when learners struggle with comprehension and expression in English.

At the same time, classroom-based studies complicate this preference by showing that mother tongue use can enhance teaching effectiveness. Ankohmah et al. (2012) observed that teachers in communities where English is not widely used often have limited English proficiency, and that using the mother tongue in instruction improves pedagogical confidence and subject delivery. Teachers trained with support for mother tongue instruction are more likely to develop appropriate technical and pedagogical vocabulary, and their use of local languages reduces reliance on rote learning practices such as memorization and “safe talk” (Afitska et al., 2013).

Further research highlights the broader consequences of early transition to English-only instruction. Milligan et al. (2016) argue that such transitions are not beneficial for learners because they do not allow sufficient time for literacy development in the home language or effective transfer to English literacy (Kamanda, 2002). Bamgbose (2003) similarly finds that low literacy in indigenous languages constrains literacy development in English-medium education. Bamgbose (2003) further argues that English-medium instruction has failed to achieve its goal of widespread literacy in African societies due to patterns of social exclusion. In this context, individuals who are excluded from participation in national life through English are also often excluded through indigenous languages, reinforcing cycles of marginalization.

Research on multilingual education in African contexts consistently highlights that multilingual language practices can contribute to improved learning outcomes and greater educational equity (Milligan et al., 2016). By enabling learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoires, classroom interaction is strengthened in ways that support both content learning and language development,

particularly for learners with limited proficiency in the language of instruction. This approach also challenges restrictive monolingual assumptions about learning by recognising linguistic diversity as a pedagogical resource rather than a limitation.

A growing body of research further highlights the cognitive, social, and linguistic benefits of translanguaging for multilingual learners (Rajendram, 2021). In doing so, learners enhance comprehension, develop metalinguistic awareness, and construct meaning across languages and modalities. This process is particularly significant in contexts where learners encounter barriers in the language of instruction, as translanguaging facilitates access to prior knowledge and enables more meaningful engagement with academic content.

Research in African multilingual classrooms demonstrates similar outcomes. When teachers strategically incorporate learners' home languages alongside the language of instruction, students are better able to understand complex concepts and participate in classroom interaction (Probyn, 2015; Makalela, 2015). Multilingual education (i.e. translanguaging in this case) also enhances affective engagement, as the recognition of learners' linguistic and cultural resources fosters participation and a stronger sense of belonging in the classroom (García & Wei, 2014; Heugh, 2005).

Across this body of literature, multilingual education is consistently associated with improved academic performance, stronger literacy development, and greater educational inclusion. At the same time, it is increasingly framed as a means of addressing both pedagogical and social inequalities in African education systems.

However, despite these advances, a consistent pattern emerges in the literature. Whether the focus is on mother tongue instruction, bilingual/multilingual education, or translanguaging practices, language remains the central explanatory category through which educational challenges and solutions are understood. Even when multilingualism is framed positively as a pedagogical resource, the dominant concern remains how language can be optimized to improve learning outcomes, comprehension, and access to curricular knowledge (Bonacina-Pugh, 2021).

What remains less developed in this body of work is a sustained interrogation of how language practices are embedded within broader systems of knowledge production and institutional

authority in education. As a result, language often carries the explanatory burden for issues that may also be shaped by deeper structural, epistemic, and curricular factors within schooling systems.

Overall, the research on multilingual education in African contexts reveals both strong pedagogical and rights-based arguments in favour of sustained mother tongue instruction, alongside persistent sociopolitical and ideological tensions that shape policy implementation. While empirical studies consistently demonstrate the academic benefits of bilingual and mother-tongue-based approaches, language-in-education policies continue to be influenced by perceptions of English as the primary gateway to socioeconomic mobility (Odugu & Lemieux, 2019). This tension reveals the persistent centrality of language as the dominant framework in educational discourse, which constrains alternative ways of understanding learning, inequality, and educational change beyond linguistic categories.

2.4 The Language Problem in African Contexts

The period between the mid and late 20th century marked a major political transition across Africa, as nationalist movements led to the independence of most African states. Despite political independence, many countries retained colonial languages as official languages, and these choices were institutionalized in constitutional and state governance structures (Roy-Campbell, 2006). Alongside this continuity, language policy discourse has often perpetuated the colonial assumption that African languages lack the linguistic complexity required for formal education, particularly at higher levels of schooling (Whitehead, 1995). This assumption has had long-term consequences for language policy and planning, reinforcing the dominance of colonial languages in formal schooling systems.

However, the privileging of colonial languages has not resolved the educational challenges it was intended to address. Kamwangamalu (2018) argues that instruction through colonial languages, including English-medium education, has not consistently delivered the expected educational outcomes across African contexts. Instead, language planning remains highly complex and often produces unintended consequences, particularly in multilingual societies where linguistic diversity is extensive and socially embedded.

One of the central explanations for the continued preference for colonial languages in African education systems is the persistence of an ideology of linguistic homogenization. There is an incontrovertible emphasis on linguistic uniformity, where language planning is driven by the assumption that national cohesion requires linguistic homogeneity (Bamgbose, 1999). Within this framework, the multilingual repertoires of learners are often undervalued or treated as obstacles to effective education, rather than as resources for learning. Odugu (2011) traces this orientation to 19th-century European nation-state ideologies, which promoted the idea of one people, one culture, and one language. In African postcolonial contexts, this has contributed to the construction of linguistic diversity as a problem to be managed rather than a reality to be embraced.

Similarly, Fardon and Furniss (1994) argue that language planners have historically viewed linguistic diversity as a barrier to socio-economic and political development, thereby privileging monolingual models of nation-building. This orientation has contributed to what is widely referred to as the “language problem” in postcolonial Africa (Fardon & Furniss, 1994; Odugu, 2011). Within this framing, multilingualism is not recognized as a normal condition of African societies but is instead constructed as a developmental challenge requiring reduction or simplification.

Defenders of linguistic homogenization often argue that selecting a colonial language as an official language is pragmatic and neutral. Bamgbose (1999) notes that proponents of this view see colonial languages as ethnically neutral tools capable of unifying linguistically diverse societies into coherent nation-states. Tollefson and Tsui (2004) similarly observe that in many African contexts, education in colonial languages is associated with social prestige and economic advancement. Indigenous African languages, by contrast, are frequently devalued and excluded from domains of formal knowledge production (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004).

The consequences of these ideological orientations are significant. Kamwangamalu (2018) demonstrates that the dominance of colonial languages has shaped the unequal distribution of linguistic resources across African societies. Martin-Jones (2000) further emphasizes that language practices are deeply embedded in economic, political, and social structures, with direct implications for life chances and the reproduction of power relations. Several scholars have

therefore expressed concern about the persistent mismatch between language policies and the linguistic realities of African societies (Odugu, 2011; Kamwangamalu, 2018).

Fardon and Furniss (1994) capture this paradox by arguing that Africa's language problem is not a problem of scarcity, but of ideological framing:

“Africans are not starved for words or the capacity to use them with skill and purpose, Africa's language problem like its problem of ‘tribalism’, is imagined at the extreme condition of plenty, when Africa is not thought to suffer from undersupply, its fate is to suffer from oversupply, in short Africa seems to be marked by dearth or glut, but never an appropriate measure” (p. 1).

From this perspective, Africa's multilingualism is not inherently problematic. Rather, it is the ideological interpretation of linguistic diversity that produces the “problem.” Colonial and postcolonial language ideologies have repeatedly framed diversity as excess, disorder, or underdevelopment, despite the fact that multilingualism is a normal and functional feature of African social life.

2.5 Reframing the Language Problem

Building on this critique, I argue that the so-called “language problem” in African education is not primarily a technical or logistical issue, but an ideological one (Dartey, 2025). While educational language planning is often framed in terms of implementation challenges, resource limitations, or policy design, the deeper issue lies in how language, knowledge, and identity are conceptualized within education systems. This ideological dimension helps explain why multilingual realities persist in practice even when policy frameworks promote monolingual or tightly regulated bilingual models.

In the Ghanaian context, several studies have examined different dimensions of multilingual education and educational language policy. Opoku-Amankwa (2009) explores parental and classroom discourses around language use in education, while Appiah and Ardila (2020) focus on teacher and student perspectives. Mfum-Mensah (2005) examines community leaders' perceptions of language policy, Davis and Agbenyega (2012) analyze school principals' experiences of policy implementation, and Rosekrans et al. (2012) highlight the role of political actors and government officials in shaping language-in-education decisions. Collectively, these

studies tend to locate language primarily within institutional and policy-bound spaces such as classrooms, schools, and formal governance structures. However, when read together, they also point to the ways in which language practices are shaped by broader social, political, and ideological forces that extend beyond the classroom and into everyday life.

Within this body of work, multilingual education has often been presented as a potential response to these challenges. Several studies (e.g., Milligan et al., 2016; Erling et al. 2021) in African contexts suggest that leveraging learners' full linguistic repertoires can improve both learning outcomes and educational equity. By recognizing multiple languages as resources for meaning-making, multilingual pedagogies can support content learning, particularly for students who struggle with the language of instruction. This highlights the pedagogical and social value of multilingual education and underscores the need for further research in African educational contexts

However, despite growing recognition of its benefits, multilingual education in practice often remains constrained by the same monolingual ideologies it seeks to challenge. Even when multilingual policies are introduced, they are frequently implemented in ways that do not fully disrupt dominant assumptions about language hierarchy and academic legitimacy. As a result, multilingual education can become a surface-level adjustment rather than a fundamental shift in how language and knowledge are understood within education systems (Heugh 2013).

This dissertation project therefore argues that addressing the “language problem” requires more than improved policy implementation or pedagogical adjustment. It requires a rethinking of the ideological foundations that shape how language is valued, regulated, and used in education. In particular, it calls for theoretical perspectives that move beyond narrow applied linguistics or policy frameworks to engage more deeply with questions of epistemology, identity, and the emancipation of thought in African contexts.

2.6 Multilingual Education and Language Policy in Ghana

2.6.1 Sociolinguistic Context and Historical Foundations

Ghana is a multilingual country with approximately 80 indigenous languages spoken across its regions (Owu-Ewie, 2006), while English functions as the official language. Since independence,

successive governments have implemented educational language policies that have consistently privileged English over indigenous Ghanaian languages (Ansah, 2014). These policies have provided ideological justification for the dominance of English in schooling, while simultaneously contributing to the marginalization of local languages. As a result, educational language policies have reinforced English as the language of power and knowledge, thereby undermining linguistic diversity (Ansah, 2014).

Colonial education, which laid the groundwork for formal language legislation in Ghana, was shaped by a Western civilizing ideology that positioned African societies and their languages as objects of reform rather than legitimate systems of knowledge (Albaugh, 2014). This orientation promoted the belief that African languages were primitive and unsuitable for formal academic instruction (Owoo, 2022). Over time, such assumptions became deeply embedded in educational discourse and have continued to influence attitudes toward language and schooling in postcolonial Ghana (Edu-Buandoh, 2016). As a result, some teachers and stakeholders continue to interpret the use of indigenous languages and mother tongue-based bilingual education through deficit frameworks, rather than as pedagogical and epistemic resources (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009).

The current language-in-education policy reflects this historical legacy by prescribing English as the primary language of education (Ministry of Education, 2004). This policy is grounded in a largely monolingual conception of language, which tends to treat languages as separate, bounded systems rather than as part of dynamic multilingual repertoires used by individuals and communities. In doing so, it does not adequately account for, or leverage, the ways in which multilingual language practices can support learning, cognition, and participation in classroom contexts (insert citation).

As Yevudey and Agbozo (2019) note, multilingualism in education raises complex questions about language selection in contexts where multiple linguistic resources are available. Decisions about which language or languages should be used for instruction are influenced by a range of political, ideological, and practical factors. However, the linguistic diversity of Ghana also makes it difficult for policy to fully accommodate the needs of all minority language groups.

While this observation reflects a real implementation challenge, it can also risk framing multilingualism primarily as a problem of manageability rather than as an educational resource.

Bonney (2022) further argues that the position of Ghanaian languages in education remains marginal and decentered, mirroring patterns established during the colonial period (Ansah, 2014). English literacy and proficiency continue to be prioritized as central outcomes of schooling (Bonney, 2021), while curricular materials often underrepresent or misrepresent Ghanaian languages, histories, and cultural knowledge (Bonney, 2020). This reinforces a narrow conception of legitimate knowledge within formal education and sustains the privilege of colonial language forms.

A growing body of research has also documented the educational consequences of this linguistic hierarchy. Studies indicate that the dominant use of English in Ghanaian classrooms can negatively affect students' comprehension, participation, and overall academic achievement, particularly in the early years of schooling (Ahadzi et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2010). These findings underscore the need to critically interrogate not only how language policies are implemented, but also the ideological assumptions that continue to shape what counts as valid language and knowledge in Ghanaian education.

The official status of English, inherited from the colonial administration, extends across domains such as education, law, administration, politics, and commerce (Bonney, 2022). This institutional embedding of English has produced strong associations between English proficiency and social mobility, academic success, and economic opportunity. Consequently, English competence is widely perceived as a marker of prestige and upward mobility within Ghanaian society (Owusu, 2022). In educational contexts, this has led parents and teachers to place strong emphasis on English acquisition as a pathway to academic and socioeconomic advancement (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009; Appiah & Ardila, 2020).

The contemporary language policy environment must also be understood within Ghana's colonial and postcolonial history. Ghana was colonized by Britain for over half a century, and colonial education systems were central in establishing English as the dominant language of formal learning. This legacy continues to shape contemporary educational structures, reinforcing English as a symbol of authority, access, and knowledge. Colonial and neo-colonial language

regimes have been associated with the distortion and marginalization of indigenous epistemologies, as well as processes of cultural and cognitive displacement (Prah, 2018).

Within this context, language policy in Ghana has consistently oscillated between English-only instruction and bilingual or multilingual approaches (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016; Owu-Ewie, 2006; Ansah, 2014; Anyidoho, 2018). These shifts are often driven by competing policy goals, including educational performance, cultural identity, and economic mobility (Chimbutane, 2011), although the dominance of English has remained relatively stable.

The colonial orientation of Ghana's current language-in-education policy, together with the monolingual ideologies that underpin it, continues to limit its responsiveness to the linguistic realities of the population. This raises important questions about how the policy can be re-envisioned in ways that decenter colonial language hierarchies and better align with the everyday multilingual practices of Ghanaian society. Any meaningful rethinking of language policy therefore requires attention not only to technical implementation, but also to its historical and ideological foundations.

2.62 Language-in Education Policy and the Medium of Instruction Debate

Ghana's language-in-education policy reflects a long-standing attempt to balance the promotion of indigenous languages with the continued dominance of English as the official language of schooling. Since independence, Ghana's language-in-education policies have changed repeatedly, often with each new government or even within a single administration (Owusu, 2017). This policy instability has historical roots in colonial language planning, where the British colonial administration itself oscillated between English-only instruction and bilingual education (Owu-Ewie, 2006). These continual shifts have contributed not only to pedagogical uncertainty but also to broader struggles over national identity and linguistic legitimacy in education.

The current language-in-education policy specifies an early-exit transitional bilingual model, which is also known as the mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) model, where a dominant Ghanaian language alongside English is used as the medium of instruction from kindergarten to grade 3, after which English becomes the primary language of instruction from grade 4 onward (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Ministry of Education, 2004; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2019). However, this policy framework remains highly

unstable in practice, as it is subject to political change and reinterpretation with shifts in government priorities. The policy's stipulations have also been described as vague and difficult to implement in practice (Ansah, 2014).

The early-exit bilingual model was institutionalized through the National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP), which aims to strengthen foundational literacy by enabling children to begin schooling in languages they already speak (Bronteng et al., 2019; Soma & Zuberu, 2022). In principle, this model positions indigenous languages as scaffolds for early learning and later transition to English literacy. The language policy itself states that where teachers and learning materials are available and where the linguistic composition of classrooms is relatively uniform, a Ghanaian language should be used as the dominant medium of instruction in kindergarten and lower primary (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2004, p. 27). However, this formulation has been described as vague and difficult to implement in practice (Ansah, 2014; Reilly et al., 2022). Given Ghana's linguistic diversity, with approximately 81 recognized languages (Mfum-Mensah, 2005), the selection of a single instructional language is both practically and politically complex.

The choice of language of instruction in Ghanaian schools has generated sustained debate. Proponents of English-only instruction argue that the use of Ghanaian languages beyond the early grades limits English acquisition, particularly in rural areas where exposure to English outside school is limited. Since English is the primary language of assessment and examination, limited proficiency is often associated with lower academic performance. From this perspective, an English-only policy is seen as a means of improving educational standards and ensuring linguistic uniformity in assessment (Mfum-Mensah, 2005).

In contrast, advocates of bilingual and multilingual education emphasize the pedagogical benefits of using learners' home languages, particularly in early education. They argue that instruction in familiar languages enhances comprehension, supports conceptual development, and facilitates later acquisition of English (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). This position is also supported by a substantial body of research in African multilingual contexts demonstrating the educational benefits of multilingual pedagogy.

Despite these competing perspectives, a recurring pattern in the literature is the attribution of responsibility for policy failure to various stakeholders, including teachers, policymakers, and parents. This “blame narrative” is often accompanied by recommendations aimed at improving implementation fidelity or optimizing language choice. However, such approaches tend to assume that the primary issue lies in implementation rather than in the deeper ideological and structural assumptions embedded in language policy itself.

2.63 Implementation, Classroom Realities, and Empirical Evidence

Empirical research consistently demonstrates a persistent gap between policy intentions and classroom practice. English frequently dominates instructional interaction even in early grades where indigenous languages are officially recommended as the medium of instruction (Arkhurst et al., 2025; Reilly et al., 2022). This indicates that policy directives alone are insufficient to guarantee multilingual implementation, as classroom language use is shaped by broader ideological, institutional, and sociocultural factors.

Research on language-in-education policy in Ghana indicates that successive policies have oscillated between monolingual English instruction and bilingual models that combine English with indigenous languages (Ansah, 2014; Owu-Ewie, 2006). However, despite these policy shifts, studies consistently show that monolingual ideologies remain dominant in classroom practice. Yevudey (2017) notes that English continues to be privileged in teaching and learning, regardless of official policy provisions for bilingual education. Several studies (e.g., Reilly et al., 2022; Yevudey, 2017) argue for a more flexible and inclusive language policy that reflects the multilingual realities of Ghanaian classrooms, including the linguistic backgrounds of both teachers and learners.

Similarly, Ansah (2014) observes that the sociolinguistic complexity of Ghanaian communities is often underrepresented in language-in-education policy. Ansah calls for greater attention to fluid and dynamic language practices that reflect how multilingual speakers actually use language in everyday contexts. These critiques suggest a persistent disconnect between policy intentions and classroom realities, where multilingualism is officially acknowledged but not fully operationalized.

Public attitudes further complicate the implementation of language policy in Ghana. Many parents express concern that early use of local languages may delay or weaken children's acquisition of English, which is widely perceived as essential for educational attainment and socioeconomic advancement (Soma & Apio, 2025). These perceptions reinforce the symbolic dominance of English and place additional pressure on schools and teachers to prioritize English even within policy frameworks that promote early-grade bilingualism.

The transition from mother tongue instruction in Grades 1 to 3 to English-medium instruction in Grade 4 represents a critical juncture in Ghana's education system. At this point, learners who may have developed foundational literacy in indigenous languages are expected to engage with academic content in English, often before achieving sufficient proficiency in the language. Research suggests that this abrupt shift can disrupt comprehension and participation, particularly in subjects such as mathematics and science that rely on specialized academic vocabulary (Nyamekye, 2022; Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2019). While some scholars argue that early exposure to English may support later academic performance, others emphasize the importance of sustained indigenous language use for strengthening conceptual development and literacy acquisition (Moussa & Lee, 2024; Agbevivi, 2022).

These dynamics unfold within a highly multilingual national context where languages such as Akan (Twi), Ewe, Ga, Dagbani, and Fante are widely spoken (Dakubu, 2015). In practice, teachers face structural constraints including limited training in multilingual pedagogy, shortages of instructional materials, and English-dominant assessment systems. As a result, they frequently rely on adaptive strategies such as code-switching and translanguaging to support comprehension and participation (Yevudey, 2014; Agbozo & ResCue, 2021; Dankwa-Apawu et al., 2025).

Teacher deployment patterns further complicate implementation, as educators are often assigned to linguistically unfamiliar communities (Nyamekye, 2024; Bretuo, 2020; Yevudey & Agbozo, 2019). In many cases, this means teachers work in classrooms where they do not share a common indigenous language with their learners, limiting their ability to draw on students' full linguistic repertoires for instructional purposes (Nyamekye, 2024). As a result, classroom interaction is frequently mediated through English or simplified forms of communication that may not fully reflect learners' home language resources.

This challenge is further intensified by shortages of teaching and learning materials in indigenous languages, which restrict the extent to which multilingual pedagogy can be systematically implemented. Even where teachers are willing to incorporate local languages, the absence of appropriate curriculum resources often makes sustained use difficult in practice. In addition, assessment systems remain predominantly English-based, reinforcing the expectation that instruction should prioritize English proficiency over multilingual meaning-making and conceptual development (Nyamekye, 2024; Ball et al., 2024).

Together, these structural constraints shape the conditions under which language policy is enacted in schools. Rather than enabling stable bilingual or multilingual instruction, they often narrow the space for sustained use of indigenous languages, resulting in classroom practices that are highly adaptive, uneven, and responsive to immediate instructional demands.

The Ghanaian language policy's structure produces a significant pedagogical tension. Many learners enter school with strong proficiency in their home and community languages, but only emerging proficiency in English (Opoku-Amankwaa, 2009). Teachers therefore operate in classrooms where the official language of instruction does not align with learners' strongest linguistic resources (Bretuo, 2020). This creates a dual demand on teachers: they are expected to deliver content and assess learning in English while simultaneously ensuring that learners understand subject matter that is often conceptually demanding and linguistically complex.

As a result of this mismatch between policy expectations and classroom realities, teachers frequently engage in flexible and adaptive language practices (Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2019). Although policy prescribes a transition to English-only instruction after Grade 3, classroom interaction often involves the informal and strategic use of learners' home languages beyond this point. Teachers may switch between languages, translate key concepts, or re-express ideas in indigenous languages to secure comprehension and maintain learner engagement. These practices are not always formally sanctioned, but they are functionally necessary for teaching and learning to proceed in multilingual classrooms.

This gap between monolingual policy ideals and multilingual classroom realities highlights a broader issue in Ghanaian education: the question of which languages, and by extension which forms of knowledge, are recognized as legitimate within schooling. While policy frameworks

elevate English as the primary medium of instruction, classroom practice reveals that meaningful learning often depends on the activation of students' full linguistic repertoires.

From a social justice perspective, these teacher practices are significant because they challenge rigid language hierarchies embedded in formal education systems. By drawing on learners' home languages as pedagogical resources, teachers create possibilities for more inclusive forms of participation and understanding. Such practices can contribute to affirming students' multilingual identities and to fostering educational environments that are more responsive to linguistic diversity and inequality.

2.64 Language, Power, and the Ideology of English

A significant strand of research in Ghanaian sociolinguistics highlights the strong relationship between language and power. Studies show that certain languages are socially constructed as more valuable, prestigious, and economically beneficial than others (Rosekrans et al., 2012). Within this hierarchy, English occupies a dominant position, shaping both educational aspirations and instructional practices.

At the national level, English has become the dominant medium of instruction and communication in Ghanaian education systems (Rassool & Edwards, 2010). This dominance has significant implications for access to knowledge, as it shapes how learners engage with curriculum content. Many students are educated in a language that is not fully aligned with their everyday linguistic practices, which affects comprehension and learning outcomes.

This linguistic disconnect raises broader concerns about educational equity and inclusion. As Rassool and Edwards (2010) note, such conditions contribute to uneven access to knowledge and participation in schooling. As a result, there is a growing need for research that moves beyond descriptive accounts of language use to examine the ideological and structural factors that shape language planning and educational practice in Ghana.

In practice, these ideological and structural conditions reproduce linguistic hierarchies within the education system. The prioritization of English has contributed to widespread perceptions that indigenous Ghanaian languages are less capable of supporting academic discourse (Mfum-Mensah, 2005). Over time, this perception has reinforced their marginalization within formal

education systems. Consequently, these language-in-education arrangements have been critiqued as extensions of colonial linguistic governance operating within contemporary global capitalist structures (Tupas, 2016).

At the level of classroom practice, research shows that the dominance of English often results in instruction occurring in a language that many learners do not fully understand or use in their everyday lives (Rassool & Edwards, 2010). This mismatch between home language and school language has implications for comprehension, participation, and overall educational quality.

At the elementary level in particular, most learners are taught through English despite limited proficiency in the language (Rassool & Edwards, 2010). This situation is further complicated by broader systemic inequalities that position English proficiency as a prerequisite for academic success and future employment opportunities. As a result, language becomes not only a medium of instruction but also a gatekeeping mechanism for educational and social advancement.

Within this environment, monolingual ideologies often frame multilingual learners through a deficit lens. Rather than recognizing their linguistic repertoires as resources for learning, learners are frequently categorized as lacking competence due to limited proficiency in English (Mfum-Mensah, 2005). This perspective aligns with findings from Opoku-Amankwa (2009), whose study of English-only language policy in a multiethnic Ghanaian classroom showed that learners' indigenous language literacies were not recognized as legitimate forms of knowledge. Instead, these literacies were treated as liabilities, and learners were frequently positioned as deficient when they failed to produce correct English responses.

This deficit framing had significant pedagogical consequences. Classroom interaction under English-dominant instruction was characterized by learner silence, teacher-centered delivery, frequent correction of errors, and an emphasis on grammar drills and rote memorization (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). Such practices limited opportunities for meaningful participation and ultimately constrained the development of communicative and cognitive language skills in the classroom. However, despite the strong ideological preference for English, Opoku-Amankwa (2009) also found that teachers regularly resorted to indigenous languages during instruction, particularly because these languages were essential for maintaining learner engagement and ensuring basic comprehension.

The literature shows that language in Ghanaian education is deeply connected to power, ideology, and inequality. The dominance of English reflects both colonial history and present-day structures that continue to privilege certain languages over others, shaping access to knowledge, participation, and educational outcomes. Policy and classroom practices are often presented in technical terms, but the evidence shows that they are strongly influenced by beliefs about which languages count as legitimate for learning and academic success. At the same time, the continued use of multiple languages in classrooms shows the limits of strict monolingual approaches and highlights how teachers and learners actively adapt to multilingual realities. This tension between policy ideals and everyday practice points to language as a dynamic and contested part of education in Ghana.

2.7 English Language as Capital and Commodity in the Global South

The global spread of English has continued to transform the language into a form of capital and a marketable commodity with measurable economic, social, and symbolic value (Bourdieu, 1991; Heller, 2003; Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). English is widely seen as a resource that can increase or generate employment, educational mobility, prestige, and participation in globalized economies rather than functioning solely as a means of communication. This perception has had significant implications for language policy and educational systems, particularly in the Global South, where English often has a privileged position despite multilingual realities (Phillipson, 1992; Tupas, 2016).

A useful theoretical lens for understanding this phenomenon is Bourdieu's (1991) concept of *linguistic capital*, which explains how certain languages acquire higher exchange value in specific markets. English has become one of the most valuable forms of linguistic capital globally because proficiency in English can be converted into access to higher education, formal employment, and prestigious social networks. In many postcolonial societies, this value is intensified by colonial histories that institutionalized English in governance, schooling, and commerce.

Empirical studies strongly support this argument. In Ghana, Edu-Buandoh and Otchere (2012) found that students often preferred to use English in school because it was associated with intelligence, prestige, and authority. Even where local languages were available, English was

used to indicate social status because as Kubota (2022) notes, English teaching is often racialized and hierarchical, with certain accents and varieties valued more than others because they signify class etc. Similarly, Davis et al., (2015) reported that Ghanaian students preferred English as the medium of instruction in mathematics even though they were struggling to understand classroom content. They perceived English proficiency as essential for future success, demonstrating that its long-term benefits outweighed its immediate pedagogical value.

Parental attitudes also strongly reflect the commodification of English. In Ghana, Bronteng et al. (2019) found that many parents preferred early English-medium education because they associated English with academic success, prestige, and better life opportunities. Similarly, Soma and Apio (2025) reported that Ghanaian parents often viewed English as a marker of quality schooling and future progress. Similar patterns are found across the Global South too. In India, Annamalai (2004) showed that parents invest heavily in English-medium schools as a route to middle-class mobility, while Rahman (2005) found that English-medium schools in Pakistan are marketed as elite pathways to privilege. These studies suggest that English is widely treated as an educational commodity and an investment in children's socioeconomic futures.

The economic value of English is further seen in labor markets. Research by Reilly et al (2023) in Ghana shows that English proficiency remains strongly tied to access to formal-sector employment, civil service positions, and professional advancement. Similar patterns have been documented in India (Annamalai 2004), Nigeria (Bamgbose 2000; Olusola 2023), and South Africa (Probyn 2009), where English is associated with white-collar work, upward mobility, and transnational opportunity. In such contexts, English operates as both human capital and social capital.

However, scholars note that the commodification of English reproduces inequality. Pennycook and Makoni (2019) argue that the global dominance of English is related to neoliberal and colonial power structures that privilege certain speakers while marginalizing others. Those who can afford quality English education gain advantages, while rural and low-income learners often face exclusion. Heugh (2005) and Trudell (2016) further demonstrate that prioritizing English too early in schooling can negatively affect literacy development when learners lack strong foundations in their home languages.

Therefore, while English is widely valued as a vehicle of economic opportunity, prestige, and mobility, its commodification often impacts educational priorities in ways that privilege English over local languages and multilingual realities. These broader social attitudes influence how language policies are interpreted, how schools position different languages, and how teachers make daily pedagogical decisions. As the primary agents of policy enactment, teachers play a crucial role in negotiating the tension between the perceived value of English and the pedagogical benefits of multilingual approaches.

2.8 Multilingual Education and Teacher Beliefs

Research on language-in-education policy in Ghana and other African contexts consistently highlights the central role of teachers in mediating policy implementation. One of the most consistent findings is that incorporating mother tongue instruction, particularly in contexts where English proficiency is limited, enhances teaching effectiveness (Ankohmah et al., 2012). Teachers who are able to use learners' native languages tend to demonstrate greater pedagogical confidence and richer instructional vocabulary, which reduces reliance on "safe talk," defined as classroom interaction characterized by minimal participation, single-word responses, choral repetition, and avoidance of expressive risk. This approach, by contrast, can reduce memorization-driven instruction and support more meaningful learner engagement and understanding (Trudell, 2023).

Similarly, horizontal multilingual practices such as code-switching and translation have been identified as important pedagogical strategies that support learner participation and conceptual development (Heugh, 2017). Rather than viewing language separation as ideal, these practices recognize multilingual repertoires as instructional resources that can deepen comprehension, encourage critical thinking, and create more inclusive classroom environments.

Despite the policy recognition of multilingualism in many African education systems, research consistently shows that teacher beliefs and ideologies often reproduce monolingual assumptions about language and literacy. Opoku-Amankwa and Brew-Hammond (2011), for example, found that teachers in Ghana commonly define literacy as the ability to read and write in English or other Eurocentric languages. This definition reflects a hierarchy of languages shaped by colonial histories, where English is positioned as the legitimate marker of educational competence.

This ideology is explicitly expressed in teachers' own accounts. One teacher in Opoku-Amankwa and Brew-Hammond's 2011 study stated that literacy refers to the ability to communicate in English (p. 95), while another excluded Ghanaian languages from literacy entirely, arguing that fluency in a local language such as Ewe does not constitute literacy because "they're languages we're learning here" (p. 95). These views demonstrate how monolingual ideologies become embedded in professional understandings of what counts as knowledge and literacy.

Such perceptions are particularly consequential in rural Ghanaian contexts, where learners are often orally fluent in indigenous languages and have emerging proficiency in English. Within monolingual ideologies, these learners' linguistic competencies are not recognized as forms of literacy but instead are positioned as deficiencies. This reinforces a deficit framing of multilingual learners, where lack of English proficiency is equated with lack of literacy or academic capability.

These teacher ideologies are not merely abstract beliefs; they shape concrete classroom practices. Opoku-Amankwa (2009) shows that in English-only oriented classrooms, learners' indigenous language abilities are not valued as educational resources but are instead treated as obstacles to learning. In such settings, learners are frequently corrected, reprimanded for non-standard English responses, and subjected to instruction dominated by repetition, grammar drills, and rote memorization.

This instructional pattern produces classroom environments characterized by limited learner participation and reduced communicative engagement. Learners often respond with silence, minimal answers, or avoidance strategies, which further reinforces teacher-centered instruction (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). Over time, this dynamic can suppress the natural development of language and learning processes (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009).

However, a key contradiction emerges in this study: despite strong ideological commitment to English-only instruction, all teachers still used indigenous languages in practice when necessary to facilitate comprehension and maintain classroom interaction (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). This reveals a tension between official language ideologies and the practical realities of teaching multilingual learners.

A growing body of research across Ghana and other African contexts reinforces the complexity of implementing bilingual education policies in multilingual environments. Studies such as (Awedoba, 2001; Osseo-Asare, 2017; Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015, 2019), as well as comparative work from Tanzania (Brock-Utne, 2007) and Kenya (Bunyi, 2005; Kiramba, 2016, 2019), demonstrate that multilingual classrooms routinely rely on flexible language practices, even when policy frameworks are officially monolingual or narrowly bilingual.

Within this literature, there is increasing recognition that teacher beliefs alone cannot fully explain language practices in classrooms. Sadat and Ibrahim (2022), drawing on Sankoff (2001), emphasize that language outcomes are also shaped by broader social contexts, including economic conditions, political structures, and demographic realities. Their study of schools in a Zongo community in Ghana illustrates this complexity. In these schools, Arabic and the official bilingual policy languages were used alongside Hausa, the dominant community language, which is not included in Ghana's language-in-education policy framework.

This mismatch between policy and linguistic reality created additional challenges for literacy development, particularly in English, and exposed gaps in policy design that fail to account for non-official but dominant community languages. Sadat and Ibrahim (2022) thus highlight the limits of language policy frameworks that recognize only selected languages while ignoring others that are socially central to learners' lived realities.

Further evidence of the disconnect between policy and practice is provided by Reilly et al. (2022), who compare Ghana and Malawi. While Malawi's policy strongly emphasizes monolingual instruction, Ghana's policy at least partially acknowledges multilingualism as a pedagogical resource. However, in both contexts, classroom practices often diverge from official policy.

In Malawi, teachers reported using multilingual strategies to support comprehension, despite concerns that this might negatively affect English fluency and standardized test performance. In Ghana, teachers similarly engaged in fluid multilingual practices, often mixing languages such as Ewe and English to support learner understanding and engagement. For example, Reilly et al. (2022) describe classroom interactions where a teacher posed a question in Ewe and a learner responded in English, demonstrating natural translanguaging practices in instruction.

These findings contrast sharply with situations where strict English-only policies are enforced, which are often associated with learner silence, reduced participation, and limited comprehension (Bunyi, 2005; Kiramba, 2019; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). This further reinforces the argument that multilingual practices are not exceptional but are in fact central to how teaching and learning occur in multilingual contexts.

Beyond classroom interaction, a range of studies have examined how different educational stakeholders, including teachers, headteachers, parents, and policymakers, understand and implement Ghana's language-in-education policy. For example, Davis and Agbenyega (2012) investigated the perspectives of ten headteachers across K–8 schools with varying levels of academic performance, as reflected in overall school achievement outcomes. Their study found that the bilingual policy was not consistently implemented in lower primary classrooms (kindergarten to Primary 3), despite official expectations. In upper primary levels (Primary 4 to 8), where English was intended to become the sole medium of instruction, several schools continued to use indigenous languages extensively in teaching.

Importantly, language choices in these schools were not guided strictly by policy prescriptions but were instead shaped by practical classroom realities. Teachers adjusted their use of English and indigenous languages based on learners' levels of comprehension and their own linguistic competencies, rather than adhering to the prescribed ratios of language use outlined in the policy. This demonstrates that classroom language practices are often negotiated and situational, rather than directly determined by official policy frameworks.

These findings align with broader critiques of language policy implementation in Ghana. As Atintono and Nsoh (2018) observe, Ghana's linguistic diversity is frequently framed within policy discourse not as a resource, but as an obstacle to curriculum design and implementation. This framing reflects deeper ideological tensions in which multilingualism is simultaneously recognized in principle but constrained in practice

Within these constraints of language policy in Ghana, research indicates that although many teachers in Ghana are themselves multilingual, they frequently reproduce monolingual ideologies that privilege English as the legitimate language of schooling and academic achievement (Yevudey & Agbozo, 2019). This reproduction of monolingual norms is not simply a matter of

individual preference but is closely tied to institutional expectations, professional training, and broader societal language ideologies.

Similar tensions are observed across West African educational contexts, where teachers often recognize the pedagogical value of learners' home languages while simultaneously acknowledging the global importance of English. However, they frequently struggle to reconcile these competing demands within rigid curricular and assessment structures (Addo et al., 2025; Akinpelu & Yegblemenawo, 2023). This produces a form of pedagogical tension in which teachers are required to promote English proficiency while also managing comprehension and participation through local languages in practice.

These dynamics have direct implications for learning outcomes. Research suggests that English-dominant instruction can hinder early literacy development, particularly when learners have limited proficiency in the language of instruction (Arkhurst et al., 2025). In such contexts, learners may struggle to access curriculum content, which affects both participation and achievement. In contrast, studies indicate that multilingual instructional approaches that incorporate learners' home languages can improve comprehension, support stronger cultural and linguistic identity formation, and enhance overall academic engagement (Aroge et al., 2025).

Together, these findings highlight the complex interaction between language policy, teacher ideology, structural constraints, student learning outcomes, and classroom realities in multilingual education systems. They demonstrate that classroom language practices are not simply the result of policy directives or issues of teacher competence and compliance, but are shaped by a dynamic interplay of institutional conditions, ideological tensions, and lived multilingual realities. In the case of Ghana, these dynamics reflect deeper contradictions between monolingual language ideologies embedded in policy and the multilingual nature of everyday classroom contexts. Examining how teachers navigate these tensions in instructional practice therefore provides critical insight into how language policy is interpreted, negotiated, and enacted within Ghanaian classrooms.

For bilingual education policy to be effective, several scholars argue that it must move beyond technical adjustments and engage more fundamentally with its underlying assumptions about language, knowledge, and learning (Chimbutane, 2009; Nana, 2013; Sibanda, 2017). This

includes rethinking the role of language in education not merely as a medium of instruction, but as part of broader social, political, and epistemic structures that shape educational outcomes.

2.9 Multilingual Education Responses and Their Limitations

Research from Ghana and other African contexts indicates that the use of learners' home languages in instruction can significantly improve comprehension, engagement, and learning outcomes (Heugh, 2005; Prinsloo, 2007). However, the formal policy structure in Ghana, which shifts to English as the sole medium of instruction after Primary 3, creates a persistent mismatch between learners' linguistic realities and the language of schooling.

This mismatch produces tensions in classroom practice, where teachers and students often navigate between official policy expectations and practical communicative needs. As a result, multilingual practices persist informally even when they are not institutionally recognized. This tension highlights not only pedagogical challenges but also broader issues of linguistic equity and educational justice, particularly in relation to access to knowledge and participation in learning environments.

In response to these challenges, several studies advocate for multilingual education policies that better reflect Ghana's sociolinguistic realities. These approaches emphasize the pedagogical value of incorporating students' full linguistic repertoires into teaching and learning processes. Research suggests that such practices can enhance comprehension, improve learning outcomes, and promote greater educational equity, particularly for learners who struggle with instruction in English (Milligan et al., 2016).

However, despite their conceptual and pedagogical contributions, existing multilingual education models in Ghana have largely operated within reformist frameworks. While they promote bilingual or multilingual practices, they often do not fundamentally disrupt the underlying ideological dominance of English or the structural hierarchies embedded in language planning. As a result, monolingual ideologies continue to shape how language is valued and used in schools, even within officially multilingual frameworks.

This limitation has led to calls for more critical approaches to language planning that move beyond purely applied linguistic or policy-focused solutions (Dartey, 2025; Makoni &

Pennycook, 2019). The present study aligns with this concern by arguing for a rethinking of language planning in Ghana that engages more deeply with the ideological foundations of linguistic hierarchy and educational knowledge production.

Achieving meaningful success with Ghana's bilingual education policy requires more than technical adjustment or improved implementation strategies. It requires a deeper rethinking of the ideological foundations of language policy itself, particularly the assumptions that privilege English as the primary marker of educational legitimacy. These assumptions are rooted in colonial language hierarchies that continue to shape contemporary policy and limit its responsiveness to the linguistic realities of the population. As a result, a gap persists between stakeholders' lived linguistic practices, the intended goals of multilingual education, and the structural conditions that shape classroom realities. This raises important questions about how language-in-education policy can be re-envisioned in ways that decenter colonial language hierarchies and better align with everyday multilingual practices in Ghanaian society. Any meaningful rethinking of language policy therefore requires attention not only to technical implementation, but also to its historical, ideological, and structural foundations.

2.10 Decolonial and Southern Perspectives on Language Policy and Multilingual Education

Decolonization is a widely discussed but conceptually diverse term across academic disciplines. While its meanings vary across contexts, its central concern lies in interrogating and dismantling colonial structures that continue to shape knowledge production and social organization. Schramm & Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2024) conceptualize decolonization as both an epistemological and political project aimed at addressing enduring colonial legacies embedded in power, culture, and knowledge systems.

In applied linguistics, decolonial scholarship has increasingly challenged the Eurocentric foundations of language theory and policy (Makoni et al., 2024; Makoni & Pennycook, 2005). These critiques highlight how dominant frameworks often reduce multilingualism to separate monolingual systems, thereby obscuring the fluid and contextual nature of language use. Scholars such as Odugu (2011) and Makalela (2016) therefore advocate for approaches that recognize indigenous language practices and integrate local epistemologies into education.

Building on this perspective, Southern theory further emphasizes the need to ground knowledge production in local contexts and lived experiences. It challenges the dominance of Eurocentric epistemologies and calls for greater recognition of African intellectual traditions. As Owoo (2024) argue, knowledge should first be produced as local knowledge, while Adesina (2008) highlights endogeneity as a framework that centers African ontologies. From this perspective, language is a carrier of identity, culture, and ways of knowing, as well as a tool of instruction.

Within the Ghanaian context, these perspectives draw attention to how education continues to privilege Western epistemologies while marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems (Adjei & Dei, 2008; Bonney, 2022; Dei, 2004). This imbalance reinforces English as the dominant language of knowledge production and contributes to a disconnect between schooling and learners' lived realities. Colonial languages such as English have therefore been described as instruments of exclusion and epistemic silencing within education systems (Adjei & Dei, 2008; Dei, 2006), limiting meaningful participation and reinforcing linguistic hierarchies (Yeboah, 2023).

A useful comparative lens is provided by Brock-Utne's (2007) study in Tanzania, which explicitly links language of instruction to learner agency and epistemic access. Brock- Utne's (2007) findings show that learners in English-medium classrooms demonstrated limited participation and reliance on rote learning, while those taught in Kiswahili exhibited higher levels of engagement and critical thinking. This suggests that language choice in education is not merely a pedagogical issue, but one that shapes how knowledge is accessed and produced.

Despite these theoretical insights, much of the empirical research on language policy in Ghana continues to focus on cognitive and pedagogical outcomes such as literacy and academic achievement (Bronteng et al., 2019; Davis & Agbenyega, 2012; Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015; Yevudey & Agbozo, 2019). Less attention has been given to how language policy is shaped by deeper ideological and epistemic structures, and how these influence classroom interaction and learner agency. As a result, existing studies may overlook how colonial language ideologies are reproduced in everyday educational practice.

This gap highlights the need to move beyond outcome-based evaluations of multilingual education toward a more critical examination of how language, knowledge, and power intersect

in classroom contexts. In particular, there is limited research on how teachers negotiate language ideologies in practice, despite their central role as mediators of policy. Similarly, while multilingual practices such as translanguaging are widely documented, less attention has been given to the ideological assumptions that shape how these practices are interpreted, valued, or constrained within classroom contexts.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how multilingualism is enacted across classroom and schooling contexts, drawing on teacher talk, classroom interaction, and teacher interviews. It focuses on how assumptions about language, knowledge, and learning are reproduced, negotiated, and challenged in everyday educational practice.

Ultimately, this perspective suggests that addressing language policy in Ghana requires more than technical reform or additive bilingual models. It calls for a deeper engagement with the ideological foundations that sustain linguistic hierarchies and epistemic inequality. Without such engagement, multilingual education risks remaining limited in scope rather than contributing to more meaningful and contextually grounded educational transformation.

2.11 Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlights the complex and often contradictory nature of multilingual education in Ghana. While multilingual approaches are widely recognized for their pedagogical and cognitive benefits, their implementation remains shaped by deeply rooted historical, ideological, and structural factors that continue to privilege English. Existing research has provided valuable insights into policy development, classroom practices, and learning outcomes, but has paid comparatively less attention to how broader assumptions about language, knowledge, and learning are negotiated in everyday educational contexts. This gap is particularly significant given the central role of teachers and the prevalence of multilingual practices such as translanguaging in Ghanaian classrooms.

In response, the present study adopts a qualitative approach to examine how multilingualism is enacted across classroom and schooling contexts, drawing on teacher talk, classroom interaction, and teacher interviews. By focusing on the dynamics of everyday educational practice, the study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how language, power, and knowledge intersect, and how multilingual realities are navigated within existing institutional conditions.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Southernizing Multilingualism: Afro-Communitarian Praxis and the Fanonian Psychopolitics of Language in Ghanaian Classrooms

3.1 Introduction

Language in African classrooms cannot be understood as a neutral medium of instruction; it is a site where histories of colonial domination, epistemic struggle, and communal identity converge. In Ghana, as in many postcolonial contexts, multilingualism is often framed as a pedagogical challenge to be managed rather than as a resource to be theorized on its own terms (Appiah & Ardilla, 2020). This framing reflects deeper epistemological assumptions rooted in colonial logics that continue to privilege European languages not only as tools of instruction but as arbiters of knowledge itself.

This chapter intervenes in these assumptions by advancing a project of Southernizing multilingualism, a reorientation that takes seriously the intellectual traditions, lived realities, and philosophical resources of the Global South as generative rather than derivative. Drawing on Southern epistemologies, this approach challenges dominant models of multilingualism that universalize Eurocentric experiences while marginalizing African linguistic and cultural formations and foregrounds multilingualism as an embodied, relational, and historically situated practice shaped by local ontologies and communal ways of knowing.

Within this reorientation, Afro-communitarian philosophy provides a crucial ontological grounding for understanding language as more than an individual cognitive resource. It reframes language as a shared social practice embedded in ethical relations and collective life, where meaning is produced through intersubjective engagement rather than isolated mental processes. From this perspective, classroom language practices become sites of communal belonging, moral formation, and social responsibility, standing in contrast to individualist and instrumentalist models that dominate much of mainstream educational theory.

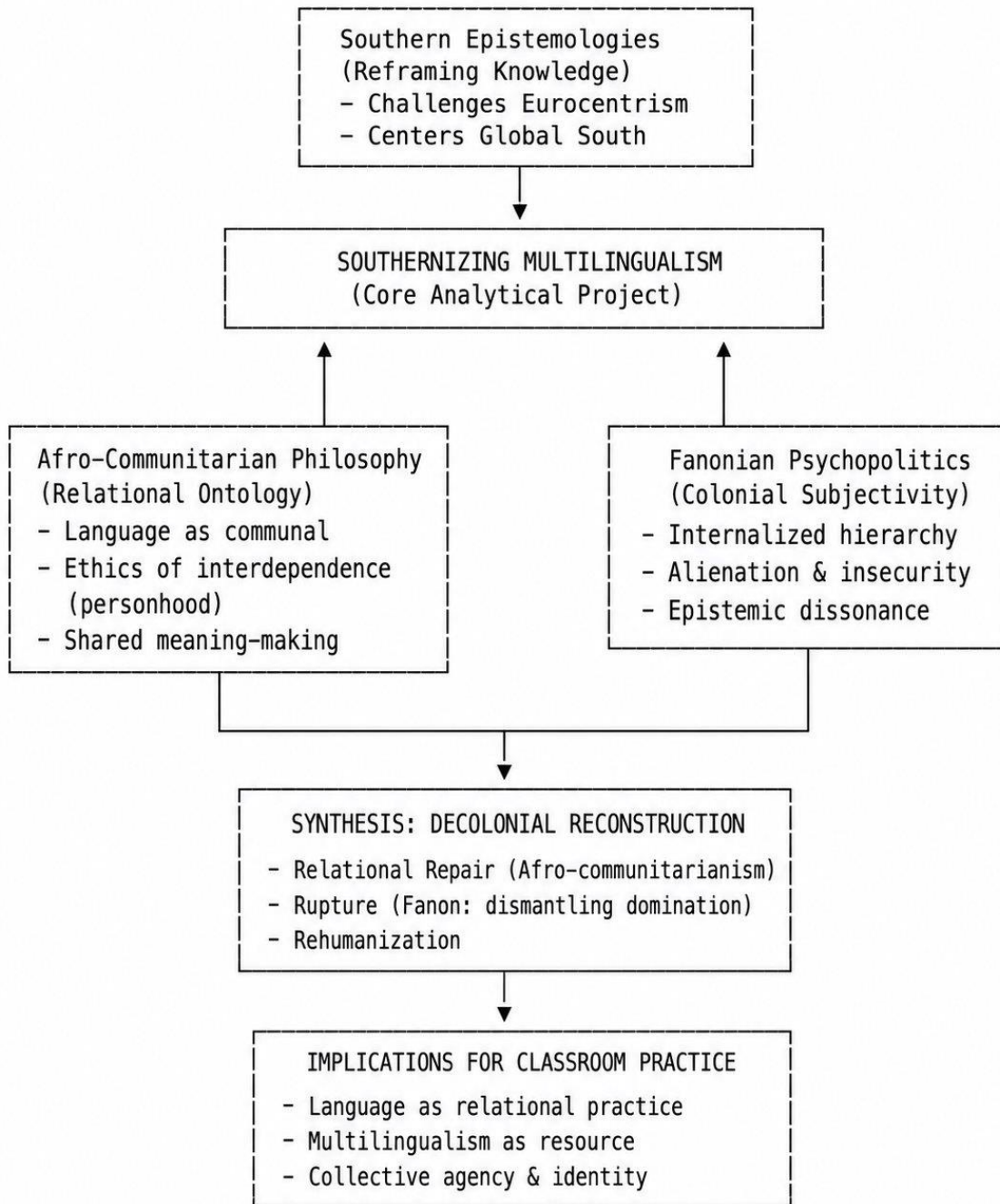
However, this relational account of language must also contend with the historical and psychological residues of colonial domination that continue to structure linguistic life in postcolonial contexts. It is here that Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytic account of the colonial

encounter becomes essential. Fanon illuminates how colonial language hierarchies are not merely external systems of value but are often internalized, producing forms of alienation, linguistic insecurity, and epistemic dissonance among students and teachers. In this sense, multilingual classrooms are not only relational and communal spaces but also psychopolitical terrains where subjectivity is continuously negotiated under the weight of colonial histories.

By bringing these strands together, the chapter shows that Southern epistemologies, Afro-communitarian philosophy, and Fanon's psychopolitical insights do not operate as separate explanatory lenses but converge on a deeper rethinking of what language is and what language does in postcolonial education. This convergence makes clear that rethinking multilingualism in Ghanaian classrooms requires more than policy reform or pedagogical adjustment. It demands a fundamental shift in how language, knowledge, and the human subject are conceptualized. Southernizing multilingualism thus becomes both an epistemic and political project, one that seeks to unsettle inherited hierarchies, reclaim suppressed ways of knowing, and imagine new possibilities for education rooted in the realities of the Global South. Figure 2 below visually summarizes the theoretical framework guiding this study, illustrating how Southern epistemologies, Afro-communitarian philosophy, and Fanonian psychopolitics converge within the core analytical project of Southernizing multilingualism.

Figure 2

Theoretical Framework



3.2 Southern Epistemologies

This section engages Southern epistemologies as a conceptual framework for understanding multilingualism in contexts shaped by colonial and postcolonial histories. Recent scholarship associated with the “multilingual turn” (May, 2014) has challenged the theoretical and pedagogical limitations of monolingual ideologies, particularly in multilingual societies. Yet, despite these critiques, language policy and educational practice across many Global South contexts remain structured by monolingual norms and Eurocentric assumptions (Erling et al., 2022). These assumptions continue to frame multilingualism as a problem to be managed rather than as a normative condition of social life, thereby delegitimizing indigenous language practices and reinforcing the marginal status of African languages in education (Makalela, 2015). While there has been a growing body of research that recognizes multilingualism as the norm in Ghana and across Africa, much of this work remains situated within frameworks that do not fully interrogate the epistemological foundations that sustain these hierarchies (Dartey, 2025).

This study takes up that challenge by grounding its analysis in Southern epistemologies and decolonial thought. In doing so, it treats Ghana not simply as a site of application, but as a site of theory. As a former British colony, Ghana’s educational and linguistic landscape has been shaped by over a century of colonial and neo-colonial interventions characterized by the distortion and erasure of indigenous epistemologies, as well as processes of objectification and ideological indoctrination. Any meaningful analysis of language practices in this context must therefore engage with these historical and epistemic conditions, rather than treating multilingualism as a purely pedagogical concern.

The “Southern” in Southern epistemologies does not refer strictly to geography, but to histories and conditions of marginalization produced through colonialism, capitalism, and global inequality (Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). It encompasses diverse epistemic traditions that have been subjected to erasure, including those shaped by indigeneity, race, class, gender, and colonial domination. As Pennycook and Makoni (2019) argue, the Global South also represents spaces of resistance, re-existence, and epistemic re-imagination, where alternative forms of knowledge and language practices continue to emerge. Within applied linguistics, this perspective calls for a shift away from viewing language as a bounded, standardized system and toward understanding

languageing, multilingualism, and communicative practice as dynamic, contextually grounded processes.

Across different strands of Southern and decolonial theory (Connell, 2007; de Sousa Santos, 2015; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), there is a shared critique of coloniality as an enduring structure that continues to shape economic, political, and epistemic life in postcolonial societies. In language studies, this critique draws attention to how colonial languages are positioned as modern, rational, and legitimate vehicles of knowledge, while the linguistic practices of colonized populations are rendered deficient or irrelevant. This hierarchy is not simply linguistic but epistemic: it determines what counts as knowledge, who can produce it, and in which language it can be expressed. Southern theory, particularly in Connell's (2007) formulation, calls for an epistemic delinking from these hierarchies by foregrounding knowledge produced in the peripheries rather than treating it as derivative of Eurocentric theory.

This epistemic intervention is especially important in understanding multilingualism in Ghana, where language practices continue to be shaped by ideologies rooted in imperialism and the "one language, one nation" paradigm. Colonial language policies did not merely introduce English as a medium of instruction; they restructured the relationship between language, culture, and knowledge. As Viswanathan (2014) demonstrates in the Indian context, English education functioned as a mechanism of cultural and ideological transformation, producing subjects aligned with colonial values. This logic was made explicit in Macaulay's vision of creating colonial subjects who were "Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Lowe, 2015, p. 34). Such projects were not confined to India but were replicated across colonial contexts, including Ghana, where English continues to be associated with intellectual authority and social mobility (Ansah, 2014).

These dynamics reflect what Nkrumah (1965) describes as neo-colonialism—the persistence of colonial power in new forms that continue to shape local realities while presenting themselves as progress and modernity. Within education, this manifests in the privileging of English as the primary language of knowledge production and the marginalization of indigenous epistemologies. Southern epistemologies emerge as a response to these conditions, offering both a critique of Eurocentric knowledge systems and a framework for re-centering alternative ways

of knowing. As de Sousa Santos (2009) argues, the South represents a field of epistemological struggle aimed at repairing the historical damage caused by colonialism and capitalism.

Importantly, Southern epistemologies do more than critique; they also foreground the intellectual resources generated within the Global South itself. In this regard, Afro-communitarian philosophy and the work of Frantz Fanon must be understood not as supplementary perspectives but as central contributions to Southern knowledge production. Afro-communitarian thought, grounded in African ontologies of relationality and collective existence, offers a fundamentally different understanding of language as embedded in social life, ethics, and communal responsibility. Similarly, Fanon's analysis of colonialism provides a deeply situated account of how language operates as a psychopolitical force, shaping subjectivity, identity, and self-perception within colonized contexts. Both traditions emerge from the lived realities of colonial and postcolonial societies and articulate theoretical frameworks that challenge the universalizing claims of Eurocentric thought.

Recognizing these traditions as theory rather than context is central to the project of Southernizing multilingualism. It shifts the analytical focus from applying external frameworks to African contexts toward generating theory from within those contexts. This aligns with calls for endogeneity in African scholarship, where knowledge production is grounded in local ontologies and lived experiences (Okere, 2005; Adesina, 2008). From this perspective, language is not merely a medium of instruction but a site through which cultural identity, epistemology, and social relations are constituted.

In practical terms, this reorientation challenges hierarchical models of language use in Ghanaian classrooms and instead supports the lateral coexistence of languages. It resonates with approaches such as translanguaging (García, 2009) and Southern multilingualism (Heugh & Stroud, 2019), which emphasize the fluid and integrated nature of multilingual practices. However, it also moves beyond these frameworks by situating multilingualism within broader questions of epistemic justice and decolonial transformation.

Ultimately, Southern epistemologies provide the conceptual foundation for rethinking multilingualism in Ghana not as a technical or pedagogical issue, but as an epistemic and political project. They foreground the need to confront the historical and ideological structures

that sustain linguistic hierarchies while recognizing the theoretical contributions of Global South intellectual traditions. In doing so, they open up possibilities for reimagining education in ways that are grounded in the realities, languages, and knowledge systems of the societies in which they are enacted.

3.21 Southern Multilingualism

Southern multilingualism emerges as a direct extension of Southern epistemologies, offering a rethinking of language that refutes the assumption that multilingual contexts are best understood through the aggregation of discrete, bounded language systems (Banda, 2009; Pennycook & Makoni, 2019; Heugh, 2017). In contrast to language-centered approaches that treat multilingualism as the coexistence of multiple monolingual codes, Southern multilingualism shifts attention toward the social, relational, and political grounding of language practices (Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). From this perspective, multilingualism is not a structural feature of linguistic systems but a lived, situated phenomenon embedded in human interaction, history, and social organization.

This shift is important because dominant Eurocentric frameworks continue to conceptualize multilingualism as “multiple monolingualism” (Banda, 2009, p. 2), an approach that artificially separates languages into discrete entities competing for space and legitimacy. Banda (2009) critiques this framing, arguing that African multilingual realities have historically involved long-standing patterns of coexistence, overlap, and complementarity among languages. In this sense, languages in African contexts do not primarily compete but function in what Banda (2009) describes as “multilingual symbiosis” (p. 2). Southern multilingualism therefore challenges the idea that languages are bounded units and instead foregrounds fluidity, continuity, and coexistence as normative features of linguistic life.

This reconceptualization has direct implications for language policy and education in the Global South. Heugh et al. (2017) demonstrate that many bilingual and multilingual education policies in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia are still structured around Euro-American transitional models, where learners move from a home language to a “language of power” after the early years of schooling. While presented as additive or progressive, these models reproduce a hierarchy in which indigenous languages are treated as temporary scaffolds rather than sustained

media of learning (Heugh et al. 2017). The transition from local languages to colonial languages in the third or fourth year of schooling often occurs before learners have developed sufficient proficiency in the language of instruction, thereby undermining comprehension, participation, and conceptual development.

Against this backdrop, Southern multilingualism challenges the assumption that such transitional models represent best practice. Heugh et al. (2017) argue that pedagogies designed for minority contexts in Europe and North America cannot simply be transplanted into Global South settings, where the majority of learners and teachers already operate within rich multilingual repertoires. In Ghanaian classrooms, this mismatch becomes visible in everyday instructional practice, where teachers frequently rely on horizontal multilingual practices such as code-switching and translation to mediate curriculum demands and ensure learner understanding. These practices are not deviations from policy but evidence of alternative linguistic rationalities at work.

Southern multilingualism foregrounds these horizontal practices as theoretically significant rather than pedagogically incidental (Heugh, et al. 2017). In contrast to vertical multilingualism, where languages are ranked, regulated, and often excluded through policy, horizontal multilingualism recognizes the fluid movement across linguistic resources as central to meaning-making. Vertical models tend to reproduce colonial hierarchies by positioning certain languages, typically English, as legitimate while restricting or delegitimizing local languages within formal education (Heugh, et al. 2017). Over time, such arrangements reinforce linguistic stratification and sustain the colonial logics that multilingual education is often expected to overcome.

Another key contribution of Southern multilingualism lies in Pennycook and Makoni's (2019) concept of *lingua franca* multilingualism, which further destabilizes the idea of languages as separable systems. Here, language is understood as a continuously evolving, layered repertoire in which linguistic resources are combined and recombined in context. Language learning and language use are inseparable processes, occurring simultaneously rather than sequentially. This perspective challenges conventional assumptions about competence, proficiency, and linguistic ownership.

In the Ghanaian context, these theoretical insights are particularly significant because official language-in-education policy continues to reflect monolingual and transitional ideologies rooted

in colonial language planning traditions (Ansah, 2014; Dartey, 2025). However, classroom practice often reveals a different reality. Teachers and students routinely construct alternative communicative systems that draw on multiple linguistic resources in ways that exceed policy prescriptions (Yevudey, 2017). These practices demonstrate that multilingualism in Ghana is not simply a policy issue but a lived, dynamic, and often unpredictable social reality. Heugh and Stroud (2019) describe this unpredictability as a defining feature of Southern multilingual contexts, where language use cannot be fully pre-determined or standardized through policy frameworks.

Importantly, Southern multilingualism also emphasizes the communal nature of language (Dartey, 2025). Multilingual practices are not merely individual cognitive skills but collective, socially embedded processes through which meaning is co-constructed. This understanding aligns with the broader argument that multilingualism is more than the sum of monolingual competencies. It is a qualitatively different mode of communication grounded in relationality and shared social life. Recognizing this communal dimension opens up possibilities for rethinking educational practice in ways that move beyond rigid language separation toward more integrated and responsive pedagogies.

Southern multilingualism therefore reframes language in education as a dynamic, socially embedded, and politically charged process rather than a neutral pedagogical tool. It challenges the assumption that effective multilingual education requires strict separation or sequential transition between languages and instead foregrounds fluidity, coexistence, and interaction as central to learning. In doing so, it extends Southern epistemologies by providing a concrete linguistic and pedagogical framework through which colonial hierarchies in language and knowledge can be questioned. In doing so, it positions multilingualism in Ghana as a theoretical resource from which new understandings of language, education, and knowledge production can emerge.

This project is aware of the wide range of terms used to describe contemporary multilingual practices, including polylingualism, translingualism, translanguaging, and metrolingualism, as discussed by García and Li Wei (2014). Each of these concepts has contributed important insights into how language is used in fluid, dynamic, and context-dependent ways. However,

while these terms are analytically useful, they often emerge from different theoretical traditions and do not always fully account for the epistemic and historical conditions of language use in African contexts.

In response, this study adopts Southern multilingualism as its guiding concept. The choice reflects an epistemic and geopolitical stance rather than a terminological preference. Southern multilingualism foregrounds the ways in which language practices are shaped by colonial histories, contemporary inequalities, and local ontologies of communication and knowledge. It enables multilingualism to be theorized simultaneously as a situated practice and as part of broader structures of power and epistemic ordering.

Using Southern multilingualism as the central analytic lens, this study positions multilingualism in Ghana as both a descriptive feature of classroom life and a site of theoretical production grounded in the Global South. In this sense, the concept carries geographic and epistemic weight, signaling a commitment to theorizing language from within the social, historical, and intellectual conditions in which it is lived.

In an overarching sense, this dissertation project draws on Southern multilingualism to reframe how classroom language practices in Ghana are understood and theorized. Instead of treating multilingual practices as deviations from policy or as transitional strategies toward English proficiency, it positions them as central sites of knowledge production, identity formation, and epistemic negotiation. The aim is to move beyond models that merely accommodate linguistic diversity toward an analytical framework that recognizes multilingualism as foundational to how meaning is made in Ghanaian classrooms. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to a broader rethinking of language, education, and knowledge in the Global South

3.3 African Philosophical Traditions of Personhood

3.31 Introduction

African philosophical thought offers a distinctive conception of personhood that stands in contrast to many Western individualist frameworks (Menkiti, 1984). Central to this tradition is the idea that personhood is not an intrinsic property bestowed at birth but rather something cultivated and realized within the social matrix of the community (Menkiti, 2005; Molefe, 2017).

This conception, often framed within Afro-communitarianism, places the community at the center of human identity, moral development, and social recognition (Gyekye, 1992). Whereas in many Western traditions the individual is viewed as an autonomous entity whose moral worth exists prior to social relations, African traditions frequently regard personhood as something achieved through participation in the moral and cultural life of the community (Gyekye, 1997; Menkiti, 2005; Wiredu, 2008). In this sense, one becomes a full person not simply by existing biologically but by meeting communal expectations, embracing shared values, and contributing to the welfare of others (Menkiti, 1984). Personhood is thus relational, dynamic, and deeply embedded in practices of reciprocity, solidarity, and responsibility (Menkiti, 2005). Reciprocity is the practice that strengthens bonds and attachment between living beings through continual sharing. Expanding upon this relational conception of personhood, Afro-communitarianism provides the normative and philosophical foundation through which personhood is articulated, offering a comprehensive framework that situates moral, ontological, and epistemological claims within the context of communal interdependence (Ikuenobe, 2006; Menkiti, 2005).

An Afro-communitarian notion of personhood is a social arrangement which provides a philosophical orientation that informs moral, epistemological, and ontological understandings of what it means to be human. It moves beyond the descriptive observation that African societies are community-oriented, advancing instead a normative claim: that the self cannot be abstracted from the network of social relations in which it is situated (Menkiti, 1984; Gyekye, 1992; Masolo, 2010). This perspective challenges assumptions about self and society, asserting that human beings are fundamentally interdependent and that individual flourishing is inseparable from communal well-being (Molefe, 2017). It also reconfigures the framework of personhood by grounding ethical responsibility in mutual recognition and collective thriving, rather than in isolated acts of personal choice or duty (Menkiti, 1984). From this standpoint, freedom and individuality are not negated but redefined, taking shape within the bonds of sociality and obligation. Afro-communitarianism, therefore, serves as both a critique of atomistic individualism and an articulation of an alternative moral anthropology, one in which community constitutes the very possibility of personhood (Menkiti, 1984).

This section examines key strands of African thought on personhood through the work of Ifeanyi Menkiti, Kwame Gyekye, Kwasi Wiredu, and Oritsegbubemi Oyowe. Menkiti's "maximalist"

view holds that personhood is achieved through sustained moral and communal participation, foregrounding social recognition and cultural embeddedness (Menkiti, 1984; 2005). In contrast, Gyekye and Wiredu propose more moderate accounts that retain the communal basis of personhood while also accommodating individual rights and autonomy. More recently, Oyowe and others have revisited and critiqued these positions in light of contemporary ethical and political concerns. Together, these perspectives reveal both continuity and tension within African philosophy of personhood and by tracing these convergences and divergences, the section highlights the richness and diversity of African philosophical discourse on personhood and situates it within broader debates on identity, agency, and human dignity, as well as within multilingualism research.

This section also argues that Afro-communitarian philosophy offers a particularly generative theoretical framework for understanding multilingualism in African contexts, especially within education. If personhood is fundamentally relational and socially achieved, then language cannot be reduced to an individual cognitive tool. Instead, it must be understood as a medium through which relational personhood is enacted, negotiated, and evaluated (Menkiti, 1984). Multilingualism, in this sense, extends beyond a pedagogical or communicative phenomenon to a deeply social and moral one, embedded in systems of recognition that define who counts as a full participant in communal life.

Despite its explanatory capacity for understanding multilingualism in African contexts, African philosophical conceptions of personhood are not monolithic. Rather than offering a single communitarian account, they constitute a dynamic field of internal differentiation in which relationality is progressively refined, contested, and extended (Oyowe, 2015). Across the works of Ifeanyi Menkiti, Kwame Gyekye, Kwasi Wiredu, Oritsegbubemi Oyowe, among others, we find complementary articulations that deepen and elaborate the conceptual scope of Afro-communitarianism rather than competing theories that undermine it. These articulations revolve around three persistent tensions: between social achievement and intrinsic dignity, between communal belonging and individual autonomy, and between relational ideals and the power structures that govern recognition.

When considered together, these tensions do not destabilize Afro communitarianism but clarify its analytical strength. They show that personhood is not a fixed category, but a process shaped by social practice, moral evaluation, and institutional power. It is precisely this processual and relational character that makes Afro-communitarian philosophy a productive framework for analyzing multilingualism, where language functions as a key site of social recognition and differentiation.

3.32 African Conceptions of Personhood as Relational Ontology

The idea that “a person is a person through other persons” is central to many African traditions and provides a foundation for thinking about identity, morality, and social belonging (Menkiti, 1984). In these frameworks, the community is ontologically prior to the individual, meaning that the very existence and meaning of the self are inseparable from the collective (Menkiti, 1984; Molefe, 2017). One does not enter the world already possessing full personhood as an inherent attribute; rather, it is something cultivated over time through moral conduct, social participation, and recognition by others (Wiredu, 1992). Personhood is thus a process, not a static state: it must be earned, maintained, and reaffirmed through one’s relations and responsibilities within the social world (Menkiti, 1984). The journey toward full personhood can involve rites of passage, communal service, and the demonstration of virtues such as generosity, humility, and respect for elders, all of which mark the individual as integrated into the moral fabric of the community (Gyekye, 1992; Menkiti, 2005).

This conception of personhood is not confined to academic theorizing but can be traced in both oral traditions and contemporary philosophical discourse. African proverbs, folktales, and rituals consistently emphasize values such as solidarity, reciprocity, and mutual care (Gyekye, 1992). Proverbs, in particular, function as distilled repositories of communal wisdom, shaping everyday understandings of what it means to live a good life. For example, in Akan society, the adage *Onipa yɛ nipa fa onipa so* (“A person is a person because of other persons”) encapsulates the conviction that individual identity and worth emerge from relational embeddedness (Gyekye, 1992). Folktales frequently portray characters who gain honor and recognition through acts of selflessness, while those who neglect communal obligations are often portrayed as incomplete or morally deficient. Ritual practices, such as initiation ceremonies, further dramatize the

movement from biological existence to social personhood, underscoring that to be recognized as fully human is to be recognized as a member of, and contributor to, a number of different communities which one is associated with. (Gyekye, 1997).

Philosophers such as Gyekye (1997) and Wiredu (2008) have argued that this communitarian orientation is not an incidental feature of African societies but reflects a deep-seated metaphysical and moral worldview. In these contexts, morality is not merely a matter of personal integrity or adherence to abstract principles but a commitment to sustaining the life of the community (Gyekye, 1997). The good is defined less by what preserves individual autonomy than by what fosters collective harmony. Social order and communal flourishing are prioritized, and moral failure can result in diminished recognition as a person and can then have adverse effects on the moral standing of the entire community, sometimes expressed in statements such as “he is not a person” to describe one who has violated fundamental communal values (Gyekye, 1997; Wiredu, 2008). This way of thinking challenges dominant Western frameworks by relocating moral worth from the solitary individual to the relational web of human life, suggesting that to understand personhood fully, one must account for the interdependent structures that give it meaning in which you take into account the importance of reciprocity as embodied practice in human relations.

In this sense, Afro-communitarianism describes social life while also providing the conceptual infrastructure for analyzing how linguistic practices structure humanity in African contexts. This theoretical foundation prepares the ground for a subsequent analysis of language practices in Ghanaian classrooms, where these dynamics become empirically visible in the lived realities of multilingual education.

3.33 Ifeanyi Menkiti’s Maximal Conception of Personhood

Menkiti (1984) offers one of the most influential and oft-cited articulations of African conceptions of personhood in his notion of maximal personhood. Central to Menkiti’s framework is a deliberate rejection of the idea, common in many Western philosophical traditions, that personhood is automatically and universally conferred upon individuals by virtue of their birth or biological humanity (Menkiti, 1984). For Menkiti, personhood is not an ontological given, but a moral and social achievement. A human being begins life as a mere “it”

and gradually becomes a “person” through active participation in the life of the community, the cultivation of moral character, and recognition by others (Menkiti, 1984). This position reflects what he terms the “primacy of the community” in African moral thought.

Menkiti grounds this argument in both philosophical reasoning and anthropological observation. He emphasizes that in many African societies, the community is not simply a background context for individual life but the very medium through which individual existence acquires meaning. Without community, there is no person; or more precisely, there is only a biological human, not the moral person (Menkiti, 1984; 2005). Thus, personhood is not inherent, but it is something that must be achieved and sustained over time. This achievement is cumulative, measured in degrees, and dependent upon the individual’s demonstration of socially recognized virtues such as generosity, respect, responsibility, relationality, reciprocity, and solidarity.

A key component of Menkiti’s framework is his idea of rituals of incorporation (Menkiti, 1984). These rituals, naming ceremonies, initiation rites, marriage, and funerals, function as thresholds that mark an individual’s gradual passage into deeper stages of social belonging and moral responsibility. For example, a naming ceremony is not merely a symbolic act but a performative one: it incorporates the child into a lineage, acknowledges them before the ancestors, and affirms their potential trajectory toward personhood (Menkiti, 1984). Initiation rituals, often accompanied by teachings about morality, sexuality, and communal responsibility, further inscribe the individual into the shared life of the group. Marriage similarly signifies not just a union of individuals but an integration of families and an expansion of the community (Menkiti, 1984). Importantly, these rites are mediated through language and performance: proverbs, songs, blessings, and speeches serve as linguistic markers of recognition, embedding the individual within the moral narrative of the community.

The moral dimension of personhood is equally central in Menkiti’s thought. To be recognized as a full person requires more than simply undergoing social rites; it requires the cultivation of moral excellence. A person must actively demonstrate virtues that benefit the group, such as care for the vulnerable, respect for elders, and commitment to communal welfare. In this sense, personhood is not reducible to biology or social status; it is a moral quality that emerges from

lived practice. Menkiti's perspective thus situates ethics at the very heart of anthropology: one's moral standing is inseparable from one's standing as a person.

Anthropological evidence lends weight to this account. In certain African communities, differential mourning practices after death reflect the view that not all humans attain the same degree of personhood. For instance, the mourning rituals for an infant may be minimal compared to those for an elderly person. This is not a denial of the infant's worth as a human life, but rather an acknowledgment that the infant had not yet fully participated in the communal practices and responsibilities that constitute personhood (Menkiti, 1984). In contrast, the elaborate mourning accorded to an elder testifies to the recognition that the individual had lived a morally and socially complete life, fully achieving personhood (Wiredu, 2008).

Despite its explanatory power and resonance with many African cultural practices, Menkiti's account has also faced significant critique. Philosophers such as Gyekye (1997) have argued that treating personhood as something wholly dependent on communal recognition risks marginalizing individuals who, through no fault of their own, cannot meet communal expectations, such as people with disabilities, the socially ostracized, or those who dissent from prevailing cultural norms. Critics (e.g., Oyowe, 2015) contend that if personhood is too tightly bound to communal approval, it may justify exclusion, discrimination, or even the denial of basic moral consideration. Furthermore, in contemporary contexts where pluralism, migration, and global human rights discourses and citizenship shape African lives, the conditionality of Menkiti's model appears increasingly problematic.

As indicated earlier, Menkiti's account reveals a structural tension: if personhood is dependent on recognition, then recognition becomes a site of potential exclusion. This tension does not undermine the framework but highlights the need to interrogate how recognition is distributed and who has authority over it, an issue that becomes central in multilingual contexts where linguistic legitimacy is unevenly allocated.

Nevertheless, Menkiti's framework remains a cornerstone of African philosophy. His articulation of maximal personhood has not only provided a powerful counterpoint to Western individualist assumptions but also sparked rich debates that continue to shape contemporary African thought. Even those who critique his conclusions often affirm his central insight: that human identity and

moral worth cannot be understood in isolation but must be situated within the web of social relations, cultural practices, and moral obligations that give them meaning. This extends not only to the concepts under analysis but also to the personhood of the analyst and the authority they exercise in interpretation.

3.34 Kwame Gyekye's Moderate Communitarianism and The Recalibration of Communal Ontology

Kwame Gyekye stands as one of the most important figures in the discourse on African personhood, particularly for his formulation of what he terms “moderate communitarianism.” Writing in response to Ifeanyi Menkiti’s strong communitarianism, Gyekye (1992, 1997) offers a framework that seeks to retain the relational insights of African philosophy while avoiding what he sees as its exclusionary or overly collectivist tendencies. His interpretation represents both a critique and a reformulation of the communitarian conception of personhood.

At the heart of Gyekye’s view is the insistence that personhood has both intrinsic and relational dimensions. Unlike Menkiti, who ties full personhood to social incorporation and moral achievement, Gyekye (1992) argues that every human being possesses innate dignity and worth simply by virtue of being human. This is the intrinsic dimension of personhood: it is not conferred by the community, nor can it be withheld, because it is rooted in the very nature of human beings. Infants, people with disabilities, or those who resist communal norms are still full persons in this fundamental sense. For Gyekye (1992), these intrinsic worth grounds the moral intuition that all humans deserve recognition, care, and protection, regardless of their social standing or moral performance.

Gyekye (1997) also acknowledges that the relational dimension of personhood remains vital in African thought. He emphasizes that while personhood is not contingent upon community membership, the flourishing of personhood requires participation in communal life. Human beings are social by nature, and it is through their relationships, obligations, and shared practices that they realize their potential and moral identity. Thus, while Menkiti (1984) views personhood as conferred by the community, Gyekye (1992) sees it as enhanced and fulfilled through communal participation.

This distinction leads Gyekye (1992, 1997) to develop his moderate communitarianism, which stands between the extremes of individualism and strong communitarianism. On one hand, he rejects the radical individualism of many Western philosophical traditions, which portray the self as atomistic, autonomous, and prior to society. On the other, he also critiques Menkiti's maximalism, which makes personhood overly dependent on communal recognition. Moderate communitarianism therefore affirms both the intrinsic dignity of the individual and the moral obligations of communal life. In Gyekye's words, the individual and the community are "mutually constitutive": neither can be understood apart from the other, and both shape the meaning of human existence.

Gyekye's interpretation also stresses the moral autonomy of individuals within the communal context. While acknowledging the importance of social obligations, he argues that individuals are not merely passive recipients of communal norms. Rather, they possess the capacity for critical reflection, moral reasoning, and the ability to challenge unjust practices. This emphasis on autonomy allows Gyekye's framework to accommodate dissent, reform, and innovation within African societies. It ensures that appeals to tradition or communal harmony cannot simply be used to suppress critical voices or entrench oppressive structures.

One of Gyekye's most influential contributions lies in his attempt to integrate African communitarian thought with human rights discourse. By grounding personhood in intrinsic dignity, he provides a philosophical foundation for universal human rights within an African worldview. Unlike Menkiti, whose framework risks excluding certain individuals from the category of personhood, Gyekye's model guarantees recognition to all humans while still highlighting the importance of community. This has made his work especially appealing in contemporary debates about democracy, pluralism, and justice in Africa.

Concrete examples drawn from Akan culture illustrate Gyekye's view. While Akan proverbs such as *Onipa ye nipa fa onipa* ("A person is a person because of other persons") highlight the communal nature of personhood, other proverbs underscore the individuality and dignity of the person. For instance, *Onipa na oye adee* ("It is the person who matters") reflects the recognition that individuals carry intrinsic worth beyond their social roles. Such proverbs, Gyekye argues,

demonstrate the coexistence of individual dignity and communal interdependence within African moral thought.

Gyekye's intervention is significant because it preserves the relational ontology of Afro-communitarianism while preventing it from collapsing into conditional exclusion. It ensures that individuals remain morally recognizable even when they fail to meet communal expectations. At the same time, it preserves the idea that full moral flourishing occurs through participation in communal life.

Within the context of multilingualism, this framework is particularly important because it guarantees that linguistic differences do not negate personhood. Speakers remain intrinsically valuable regardless of whether their linguistic practices align with dominant norms, while still being shaped by the communicative life of the community.

Critics of Gyekye sometimes suggest that his position dilutes the radical communitarian insight by bringing it too close to liberal individualism (Matolino, 2009). They argue that by stressing innate dignity, Gyekye risks importing Western categories into African philosophy, thereby muting the distinctiveness of communitarian thought. Others contend, however, that his framework reflects a more faithful interpretation of African cultural traditions, which balance respect for the individual with the primacy of social relations.

In sum, Gyekye's theory of moderate communitarianism provides a middle path in the discourse on African personhood. It preserves the communal ethos that defines much of African philosophy while ensuring that individual dignity and moral autonomy remain safeguarded. His contribution has been particularly influential in contemporary African ethics and political philosophy, offering a robust framework for thinking about personhood in societies that are increasingly pluralistic, rights-conscious, and globally interconnected.

3.35 Kwasi Wiredu's Normative Personhood

Wiredu (2008) builds on the communitarian tradition of African philosophy but offers a more nuanced articulation that departs from the strong communitarianism of Ifeanyi Menkiti. Whereas Menkiti ties the very recognition of personhood to communal incorporation, Wiredu introduces an important distinction between ontological personhood and normative personhood. This

distinction allows him to affirm both the inherent dignity of every human being and the moral responsibilities that flow from communal life.

For Wiredu, ontological personhood refers to the basic status of being human, a status that is universal, inherent, and inviolable. In this sense, every human being is already a person by virtue of their humanity, regardless of age, ability, or social standing. Ontological personhood establishes a moral baseline: no one can be denied recognition as a human subject, even if they have not yet or cannot demonstrate participation in communal practices. By grounding personhood in the fact of humanity itself, Wiredu ensures that individuals who might be marginalized in Menkiti's framework (such as infants, people with disabilities, or dissenters) are still accorded fundamental recognition.

Alongside this, Wiredu (2008) affirms a second dimension: normative personhood. This is not automatic but must be cultivated through moral maturation, social participation, and fulfillment of obligations to others. Normative personhood is what makes an individual not just human, but a good person. It is measured by virtues such as honesty, generosity, respect for others, and willingness to contribute to communal well-being. This conception reflects a central aspiration in African moral thought: that human life reaches its fullest meaning in the pursuit of moral excellence within a community. Thus, while ontological personhood is universal, normative personhood is aspirational and dynamic; it can be developed, lost, or regained depending on one's moral conduct.

Wiredu (2008) also highlights the centrality of reciprocity in communal life. To be a member of a community is to exist within a network of mutual rights and responsibilities. Individuals benefit from the protection, resources, and identity that the community provides, but they are equally obligated to uphold and nurture that community in return. This reciprocity is concretized in kinship networks, where care for elders and the young is distributed across families, and in collective decision-making processes, which emphasize consensus and mutual recognition over adversarial confrontation. Cultural practices, such as festivals, rites of passage, and communal labor, further reinforce these reciprocal bonds, reminding individuals that their well-being is inseparable from that of others.

By framing personhood in this way, Wiredu seeks to strike a careful balance between the individual and the community. Unlike certain Western ethical theories that prioritize autonomy and individual rights as the foundation of moral worth, Wiredu situates dignity and morality in the ability to sustain communal relationships. However, unlike Menkiti, he avoids making communal approval the sole determinant of personhood. Instead, his two-tiered framework allows him to affirm both individual dignity (through ontological personhood) and collective responsibility (through normative personhood). In this sense, his position represents a moderate communitarianism, one that preserves the relational insights of African philosophy while mitigating the risks of exclusion or marginalization.

Philosophically, Wiredu's distinction also has important implications for broader debates. It resonates with global human rights discourses, where the inviolability of basic personhood is central, while still maintaining the African emphasis on relational identity and moral responsibility. It also provides a way to interpret African communal values in pluralistic and modern contexts, where strict communal conformity is neither possible nor desirable. For this reason, Wiredu's framework has been widely regarded as a compelling synthesis: a model that honors the communitarian spirit of African philosophy while responding to the challenges of justice, diversity, and individual dignity in contemporary societies.

Wiredu's framework is particularly useful for understanding how communities evaluate participation. Normative judgments are always relational, grounded in expectations of reciprocity and mutual obligation. Language, in this context, becomes a key medium through which such evaluations are communicated and reinforced, linking linguistic practice to moral recognition.

3.36 Oritsegbubemi Oyowe and the Politics of Recognition

Oyowe (2015) offers a critical intervention in the ongoing debate on African conceptions of personhood by foregrounding the role of power relations in shaping who counts as a person. Whereas earlier thinkers such as Menkiti, Gyekye, and Wiredu largely focus on the philosophical criteria for personhood, whether ontological, normative, or communitarian, Oyowe draws attention to the sociopolitical structures that mediate access to recognition. His work underscores that personhood in African societies, while couched in communal ideals, is not always evenly distributed or accessible in practice (Oyowe, 2015).

A key insight in Oyowe's argument is that communitarian theories often assume egalitarianism, portraying the community as a neutral and nurturing space where individuals can mature into persons through social participation. However, in reality, communities are structured by hierarchies of power, based on gender, age, class, ethnicity, lineage, or even political status. These hierarchies determine whose contributions are valued, whose voices are heard, and ultimately, who is acknowledged as a "full" person.

For example, in many patriarchal societies, the personhood of women may be compromised or undervalued, as their roles are relegated to the private or domestic sphere and their moral authority overlooked (Oyowe, 2015). Similarly, in gerontocratic systems, younger members are often excluded from decision-making processes, with their capacity for moral judgment subordinated to that of elders. Class and lineage also play significant roles: those from marginalized families or lower social strata may struggle to secure recognition within a framework that ostensibly celebrates communal belonging but in fact privileges certain groups (Oyowe, 2015).

By highlighting these dynamics, Oyowe (2015) problematizes the idealized image of community presented in much of the African communitarian literature. The promise of mutual recognition and reciprocity, while normatively appealing, is frequently undermined by asymmetries of power that distort social relations. In this way, Oyowe (2015) exposes a tension at the heart of African theories of personhood: the very structures designed to nurture moral growth can simultaneously function as mechanisms of exclusion.

Another significant dimension of Oyowe's work is his postcolonial framing of African personhood discourse. Oyowe (2015) acknowledges that the communitarian emphasis on relational identity emerged, in part, as a corrective to the atomistic tendencies of colonial modernity and Western liberal individualism. By affirming the primacy of community, African philosophers sought to reclaim indigenous ways of being and resist the fragmentation imposed by colonial structures. Yet Oyowe (2015) warns that this corrective move must not blind us to the internal contradictions of communitarianism itself. Without critical reflection, appeals to "community" can inadvertently reinforce systems of domination, patriarchy, gerontocracy, classism, that limit rather than enhance the moral development of individuals.

In this regard, Oyowe's intervention can be seen as a call for a critical communitarianism, one that retains the relational insights of African thought but interrogates the power relations that undergird social life. His approach insists that theories of personhood must grapple with the politics of recognition, not merely the metaphysics or ethics of being human. Personhood, then, is not only about fulfilling communal obligations or embodying virtues but also about navigating the uneven terrains of authority, legitimacy, and inclusion.

Oyowe's contribution thus complicates the debate between Menkiti, Gyekye, and Wiredu. While Menkiti stresses the community's role in conferring personhood, and Gyekye emphasizes intrinsic dignity alongside social realization, Oyowe (2015) asks: "who within the community actually has the power to recognize or withhold recognition? (p.9)." This shifts the conversation from the criteria of personhood to the conditions under which those criteria are applied. In doing so, Oyowe highlights how African philosophy of personhood, if uncritically embraced, risks legitimizing existing inequalities.

Importantly, this critique does not negate Afro communitarianism but deepens it. It shows that relational ontology must be supplemented with an analysis of the social conditions under which relations are recognized. This is particularly relevant for multilingual contexts, where linguistic hierarchies similarly determine whose speech is valued and whose is delegitimized.

Ultimately, Oyowe (2015) deepens the discourse on personhood by reminding us that community is never neutral: it is a site of negotiation, contestation, and sometimes domination. If the African conception of personhood is to fulfill its egalitarian promise, it must confront the internal power dynamics that undermine its ideals. His perspective is particularly relevant in contemporary African societies, where debates about democracy, gender equality, youth empowerment, and social justice reveal the urgent need to interrogate how communal ideals intersect with unequal social realities.

3.37 Classifications and Critiques in African Philosophy

Efforts to categorize African conceptions of personhood have generated rich debates and multiple typologies that reflect the philosophical diversity of African thought (Masolo, 2010; Matolino, 2009; Molefe, 2016; Oyowe, 2015). While there is broad consensus that African personhood is relational and socially grounded, scholars differ on the precise nature and

implications of this relationality (Molefe, 2017). The categorization attempts by thinkers such as Menkiti, Gyekye, Wiredu, Matolino, Ikuenobe, and Oyowe demonstrate how African philosophy continues to refine and contest its own conceptual foundations.

3.38 Critiques of Communitarianism

Despite its prominence, the communitarian conception of personhood has faced significant critique. Some scholars caution that it risks romanticizing the community as a space of harmony and moral solidarity while overlooking the internal hierarchies, exclusions, and power asymmetries that shape real social life (Molefe, 2017; Chemhuru, 2024). Feminist and postcolonial critics, for instance, point out that communities may reproduce patriarchal norms, restrict women's agency, or marginalize individuals who deviate from dominant moral expectations (Chemhuru, 2024).

Moreover, communitarian frameworks can be normatively coercive, requiring conformity to collective ideals of virtue and belonging that may not accommodate individual differences or dissent. As Oyowe (2015) notes, power is always present in the construction of personhood, some voices are authorized to confer recognition, while others are silenced or excluded. This raises ethical and political questions: who defines the moral community, and on what terms?

A further critique concerns the compatibility of communitarianism with modern pluralistic societies. As African states navigate globalization, urbanization, and multiculturalism, personhood can no longer be anchored in a single, homogenous community. Matolino (2016) argues that rigid communitarianism may be ill-suited to contemporary realities, where individuals belong to multiple overlapping communities, ethnic, national, digital, and global. The challenge, then, is to articulate a flexible communitarianism that retains the moral insights of African thought while accommodating social complexity and individual autonomy.

3.39 Moving Beyond Classifications

Ultimately, the Afro-communitarian debates transcend taxonomic precision. They reveal deeper philosophical tensions about the relationship between individuality, morality, and social structures in African thought. Whether approached through metaphysical, communitarian, descriptive, or normative lenses, African philosophers converge on a shared insight: the human

person is both autonomous and relational, both subject and participant in a moral community. What varies is the weight given to each pole of this relationship.

In contemporary discourse, especially in applied fields such as education, language policy, and ethics, these classifications have far-reaching implications. They challenge scholars to reconsider what it means to be a person, not as an isolated self but as a being constituted through linguistic, cultural, and moral relations. In this sense, the typological debates are not mere academic exercises but living inquiries into the foundations of human dignity and belonging.

3.40 Afro-communitarianism and Applied Linguistics

Afro-communitarian conceptions of personhood, as articulated by thinkers such as Menkiti, Gyekye, Wiredu, and Oyowe, offer fertile ground for rethinking identity, language, and education within applied linguistics. The communitarian view that personhood is cultivated through participation in communal life intersects with key questions in sociolinguistics, language policy, and language education. Some of these intersections are discussed below.

3.41 Afro-communitarianism and Language Policy and Planning

The communitarian conception of personhood carries significant implications for language policy in multilingual African contexts. Education systems that privilege ex-colonial languages, such as English or French, risk marginalizing local languages that are central to communal identity and moral development (Heugh, 2002). This valorization of colonial languages undermines linguistic diversity and disrupts the cultural processes through which individuals attain recognized personhood. When schooling takes place primarily in colonial languages, indigenous languages are confined to the private or informal sphere, eroding their social prestige and diminishing their role in moral and civic formation (Bamgbose, 2000; Odugu, 2011). If, as Menkiti (1984) suggests, full personhood is realized through participation in community life, then erasing the role of indigenous languages in education is equal to eroding one of the very foundations upon which communal belonging and moral growth are built. The exclusion of indigenous languages from educational and administrative domains is a form linguistic injustice and, more deeply, an ontological harm. It compromises the very means through which individuals become morally and socially complete (Menkiti, 2005). Within Afro-communitarian thought, personhood is not a static or innate attribute but an achievement that emerges through

active participation in the moral and social life of the community (Menkiti, 1984; Gyekye, 1992). Language plays a constitutive role in this process. It is not merely a neutral medium of communication but also a repository of collective memory, a vehicle of moral instruction, and a means through which individuals internalize communal values (Wiredu, 2008). In this sense, language is both expressive and formative: it reflects pre-existing cultural meanings while simultaneously shaping how individuals come to understand and inhabit those meanings. To speak one's mother tongue is therefore to participate in, and be shaped by, the moral and cultural world that gives meaning to personhood

For the field of language policy and planning, the Afro-communitarian perspective challenges dominant paradigms that frame language primarily in instrumental terms, as a resource for economic advancement or national integration (Bamgbose, 1999). This lens invites a reorientation toward an ethical and ontological understanding of language, one that views linguistic diversity as foundational to human flourishing and communal vitality. Policies that promote mother-tongue education, linguistic pluralism, and the inclusion of indigenous epistemologies are not simply matters of equity; they are central to the moral project of sustaining personhood and collective well-being in postcolonial Africa.

A communitarian approach to language policy would also prioritize a kind of multilingualism in which indigenous languages are maintained and developed alongside official or global languages. Southern multilingualism differs from subtractive approaches by affirming that acquiring English (or any other global language) should not come at the cost of local language competence (Cenoz, 2013). Instead, it envisions a linguistic ecology where English proficiency coexists with sustained mastery of African languages such as Twi, Ga, Igbo, Swahili, Ewe, Dagbani, and other indigenous tongues. Such a framework would strengthen social cohesion and foster a sense of shared moral responsibility, aligning with Wiredu's emphasis on reciprocity and mutual care. By recognizing multilingualism as a form of collective wealth rather than an obstacle, education policy can more faithfully embody the communitarian values of solidarity and interdependence.

Pedagogically, adopting an Afro-communitarian lens would require integrating culturally grounded linguistic practices into curricula and classroom interaction. Such an approach

recognizes that education is not only a cognitive endeavor but also a relational process through which individuals are inducted into the values and communicative norms of their communities (Wiredu, 2009). Within many African societies, knowledge transmission has traditionally occurred through oral and participatory modes such as storytelling, proverbs, riddles, communal singing, and collective problem-solving. These practices encode ethical principles, social responsibility, and respect for interdependence. They are not decorative cultural embellishments but foundational pedagogical resources that embody a distinct epistemology of learning through participation and relational attunement.

When these communal practices are sidelined in favor of decontextualized English drills and rote memorization, education risks alienating students from the moral and cultural worlds that give meaning to their personhood (Gyekye, 1992). The result is often a disjunction between school-based knowledge and community-based wisdom, leading learners to perceive their indigenous languages and traditions as obstacles rather than assets. A communitarian pedagogy would resist this alienation by positioning local linguistic and cultural forms as legitimate modes of reasoning and communication. For example, proverbs and oral narratives could be used to teach critical thinking, moral reasoning, and even scientific explanation, while collective projects and peer teaching could reflect the communitarian ethic of co-responsibility and mutual support.

Such a pedagogical orientation does not advocate insularity or rejection of global knowledge systems. Rather, it seeks to create a dialogic space where local epistemologies and global competencies can interact productively (Bonney, 2022). Students would learn to navigate multiple linguistic and cultural codes, developing both rootedness and adaptability. In this sense, an Afro-communitarian pedagogy contributes to the formation of learners who are not only proficient in dominant languages such as English or French, but who also remain grounded in the moral, relational, and linguistic traditions that sustain communal life. This synthesis positions education as a site for the cultivation of whole persons, individuals capable of flourishing as both locally situated moral agents and globally engaged citizens. (other ways of becoming a human being).

Implementing such a communitarian pedagogy would also have direct implications for language policy and teacher education. Curriculum reform would need to move beyond token inclusion of

indigenous languages and toward systemic bilingual or multilingual models that position these languages as central, rather than supplementary, to learning. This would require policy frameworks that recognize linguistic diversity as a resource for moral and intellectual formation, rather than a barrier to modernization. Teacher training programs would play a critical role in this shift. Educators would need to be equipped with proficiency in local and ex-colonial languages, and also with pedagogical strategies for incorporating oral traditions, storytelling, and community-based learning into formal instruction. Assessment practices would likewise need to reflect these values by recognizing collaborative learning, oral expression, and culturally grounded reasoning as indicators of educational success. Aligning language policy with Afro-communitarian principles therefore entails transforming the very ecology of schooling, so that it affirms local epistemologies while preparing students to participate confidently in wider linguistic and cultural networks.

Positioning language policy and pedagogy within an Afro-communitarian framework also aligns closely with decolonial efforts to reclaim epistemic agency and revalue marginalized linguistic traditions (Makoni et al. 2024). Decolonial approaches to education emphasize the need to unsettle hierarchies of knowledge that privilege European languages and epistemologies as the universal norm (Adjei & Dei, 2008; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). From this perspective, linguistic justice involves more than equitable access to education in different languages; it demands recognition of the moral and ontological worlds that these languages sustain. Afro-communitarianism contributes a distinct dimension to this discourse by grounding linguistic justice in the ethics of relational personhood. The preservation and promotion of indigenous languages thus become acts of restoring communal dignity and reasserting local modes of knowing. Integrating these insights into language policy and teacher practice allows education to function as a site of epistemic repair, where learners are empowered to inhabit both their cultural inheritances and their global futures without forfeiting either.

3.42 Afro-communitarian Traditions and Multilingualism

The preceding discussion has highlighted how Afro-communitarian notions of personhood reframe the moral and cultural foundations of language policy and education. If language functions as a conduit of moral recognition and communal belonging, then multilingualism and

multilingual education must be understood not only as an educational strategy but as a philosophical and ethical commitment to specific normative practices. The coexistence of multiple languages within African societies (Fardon & Furniss, 1994) reflects more than historical contingency; it embodies the interdependence and relationality at the heart of Afro-communitarian thought. To engage seriously with multilingualism, therefore, is to engage with the question of how persons are formed, recognized, and sustained through linguistic interactions. An Afro-communitarian perspective invites educators and policymakers to see multilingualism and multilingual education as a form of moral practice that sustains both communal life and global participation. This conceptual shift opens new avenues for research into how language, culture, and personhood intersect within African educational contexts and how these intersections can inform more just and contextually grounded approaches to language policy and pedagogy.

An Afro-communitarian and multilingual approach to education would not only prepare students for participation in global contexts but also sustain the local cultural lifeworlds in which personhood is nurtured and sustained over a long period of time. It calls for a vision of education that is both globally enabling and locally affirming, one that treats language as a site of moral development, social recognition, and educational justice. Within this Afro-communitarian framework, multilingualism is a pragmatic skill set for navigating diverse communicative environments and a moral orientation toward coexistence, reciprocity, and respect for difference. The ability to speak across languages becomes intertwined with the ability to inhabit multiple worlds, a capacity that lies at the heart of Afro-communitarian ethics.

As indicated earlier, situating multilingualism within African philosophical debates reframes it not as a technical issue of language planning but as an ontological concern. Language choice is intimately bound up with questions of who counts as a person and how recognition is conferred within a community. To value only English or any other ex-colonial language is to imply that full personhood and intellectual maturity are attainable only through a foreign language, thereby severing children from the communal sources of moral and cultural recognition embedded in their mother tongues. Such a hierarchy reproduces colonial legacies of epistemic domination, where linguistic uniformity masquerades as progress while silencing local epistemologies and modes of expression (Schramm & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2024).

In contrast, policies that foster Southern multilingualism (Pennycook & Makoni, 2019) affirm both the ontological dignity (Wiredu, 1992) and the intrinsic moral worth (Gyekye, 1997) of all students. They recognize linguistic diversity as constitutive of human flourishing rather than as an impediment to it. Southern multilingualism does not replace one's linguistic identity with another but builds an ecology of coexistence, allowing individuals to participate fully in both local and global communicative spaces (Heugh et al. 2017). It resists the hierarchies of domination that Oyowe (2015) identifies as forms of dehumanization and instead promotes what might be called relational linguistic justice, an environment in which languages are valued in proportion to the communities and histories they sustain.

An Afro-communitarian approach to multilingualism thus demands a rethinking of the aims of education itself. It shifts the focus from producing economically competitive individuals to cultivating morally grounded and relationally responsible persons. In doing so, it expands the meaning of multilingual competence to include ethical competence: the ability to listen across difference, to speak from situated communal identities, and to engage others with humility and reciprocity. Research in this area must therefore bridge philosophy, sociolinguistics, and pedagogy, showing how African philosophical insights can inform practical frameworks for language-in-education policy. Such integration would demonstrate that the struggle for multilingual education in Africa is inseparable from the broader struggle for epistemic justice, cultural continuity, and the moral renewal of postcolonial schooling.

The implications of an Afro-communitarian and multilingual framework extend beyond questions of language use and into the broader terrain of epistemic justice and curricular transformation. If language is central to how communities construct, preserve, and transmit knowledge, then reorienting educational practice around indigenous linguistic resources necessarily entails rethinking the epistemological assumptions that underpin schooling. A truly decolonial education system must not only diversify the languages of instruction but also validate the modes of knowing, reasoning, and inquiry embedded in those languages. This requires a curriculum that recognizes oral knowledge systems, communal forms of intelligence, and the ethical dimensions of learning as legitimate foundations of academic inquiry. In this way, Afro-communitarian thought moves from serving as a cultural reference point to functioning as a

generative framework for reimagining what counts as knowledge, who is authorized to produce it, and how education can serve both local moral life and global intellectual participation.

3.4 Bridging Philosophy and Educational Practice: Language, Personhood and Power

The philosophical debates surrounding personhood in African thought provide a critical lens for examining contemporary educational and linguistic realities across the Global South. The distinctions drawn by Menkiti, Gyekye, Wiredu, and Oyowe between metaphysical, normative, and communitarian conceptions of personhood illuminate how language practices in schools are deeply tied to moral and ontological assumptions about what it means to be a fully realized human being (Menkiti, 2005; Wiredu, 2008). In many ways, African classrooms have become microcosms where these philosophical tensions between communal belonging and individual recognition, and between moral achievement and structural exclusion, are enacted through language policy and pedagogy (Dartey, 2025).

Language is not only a communicative tool but also a moral and ontological marker of personhood (Wiredu, 2009). When English is positioned as the sole legitimate medium of instruction, it functions much like Menkiti's idea of the "rituals of incorporation," serving as a symbolic gateway into full social recognition. Mastery of English becomes the modern equivalent of moral maturity or social legitimacy. Students who fail to demonstrate linguistic competence in English are, implicitly, denied full epistemic and social personhood within the educational community. In this sense, language policy becomes a form of moral adjudication: it determines who counts as a capable subject and who remains incomplete or deficient. The linguistic hierarchy that elevates English to a position of exclusivity transforms language from a medium of learning into an instrument of social evaluation, thereby redefining access to personhood in educational spaces (Dartey, 2025).

From Gyekye's moderate communitarianism, we can see the potential for a more inclusive vision that affirms both communal belonging and individual dignity of persons. Gyekye (1997) challenges the view that personhood must be entirely conferred by the community, arguing instead for a conception that recognizes intrinsic human worth while maintaining the moral importance of social relations. Applied to education, this insight would mean acknowledging each student's inherent worth as a potential person irrespective of linguistic proficiency, while

also valuing the communal significance of local languages as vehicles of shared moral life. Gyekye's model invites educators to view multilingual competence not as a deviation from educational norms but as an affirmation of the relational and plural character of African personhood. It encourages a pedagogical environment where the acquisition of global languages complements rather than supplants the cultural grounding provided by indigenous languages.

Wiredu's (2009) concept of normative personhood further clarifies the ethical stakes of language education. For Wiredu, personhood is cultivated through moral practice, mutual responsibility, and participation in community life. An educational system that marginalizes local languages effectively disrupts the social conditions necessary for moral formation. When learners are separated from the language of their communities, expressed through proverbs, idioms, and folktales that serve as carriers of ethical instruction, they lose access to the very discourse through which moral consciousness is developed. Thus, English-only instruction not only alienates students linguistically but also erodes the moral ecology in which personhood is nurtured. By excluding indigenous languages, education isolates learners from the ethical frameworks that binds learning to communal life, reducing moral growth to the mechanical acquisition of foreign linguistic competence.

Oyowe's (2015) intervention on power and recognition adds another crucial layer of critique. The linguistic hierarchy that privileges English over African languages reproduces the very power asymmetries Oyowe warns against, where access to full personhood is mediated by structural inequalities of class, geography, and history. Just as Oyowe (2015) cautions that communal ideals can obscure domination, so too can the rhetoric of global competence or international opportunity mask the neo-colonial hierarchies embedded in language policy. English proficiency, presented as a neutral or universally valuable skill, becomes a gatekeeping mechanism for social mobility, much like the traditional social hierarchies that historically determined who could attain moral recognition within the community. In this sense, linguistic inequality perpetuates epistemic inequality: the right to be heard and understood in one's own language becomes a marker of power, while those excluded from dominant linguistic codes are rendered epistemically invisible.

Taken together, these philosophical insights reveal that language education is not merely a pedagogical issue but a moral and ontological one. The privileging of English in African education systems effectively redefines the parameters of personhood: who is recognized, who is heard, and whose knowledge counts. A communitarian framework would resist this fragmentation by re-centering education around shared linguistic and cultural practices that affirm collective identity while respecting individual potential. Such a framework would insist that personhood develops within a web of linguistic and moral relations and that denying access to those relations constitutes a profound ethical failure.

Thus, the African philosophical discourse on personhood compels a rethinking of language policy and education from a system that stratifies and disciplines learners according to global linguistic hierarchies to one that cultivates moral interdependence and epistemic justice. In this light, multilingualism becomes a practical tool for communication and an ethical orientation. It represents a way of acknowledging the plurality of voices, values, and worldviews that constitute the moral community. To embrace multilingualism and multilingual education is to affirm the moral equality of speakers and the legitimacy of their knowledge systems. It is also to reclaim education as a space where language serves not as a test of belonging but as the medium through which belonging, recognition, and moral personhood are realized.

Bringing Afro-communitarian philosophy into dialogue with language policy and educational practice makes visible the moral and ontological dimensions often overlooked in debates about multilingualism and development. At its core, this project argues that language is not simply a medium for transmitting information but a moral ecology through which personhood is formed and recognized. When education systems privilege colonial languages as the sole markers of competence and legitimacy, they reproduce historical hierarchies that fragment both identity and community. By contrast, an Afro-communitarian vision of education affirms linguistic diversity as a moral good, one that sustains the relational bonds through which learners become fully realized persons. Integrating indigenous languages and epistemologies into schooling is therefore not an act of nostalgia but an ethical imperative rooted in the pursuit of epistemic justice and collective flourishing. Such an approach reimagines education as a transformative moral practice, one that equips students to engage the world critically while remaining anchored in the cultural and linguistic traditions that define their humanity.

3.5 The Psychopolitics of Language in Postcolonial Contexts: A Fanonian Intervention

3.51 Introduction

Frantz Fanon has been widely described as “the most influential anticolonial thinker of his time” (Jansen & Osterhammel, 2017, p. 10), a characterization that reflects both the breadth of his influence and the continued relevance of his work across postcolonial studies, political theory, critical studies, education among other disciplines. Fanon’s thought does not sit comfortably within a single disciplinary frame. As Gordon (2015) argues, his contribution lies not only in conceptual originality but in his sustained critique of dominant traditions, ranging from psychoanalysis and phenomenology to existentialism and Marxism. Central to this critique is Fanon’s sociogenic account of subjectivity, which rejects any separation between psychological life and the social conditions that produce it, insisting instead that human identity is constituted through historically structured relations of power (Gordon, 2015). Writing in the mid-twentieth century, Fanon conceptualizes colonialism as a political and economic system as well as a totalizing structure that reorganizes the material, psychological, and epistemic dimensions of life. His major works, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1961), offer complementary accounts of how colonial domination operates through violence, racialization, language, and subject formation, and how decolonization must therefore be both a political and psychosocial process.

This review synthesizes Fanon’s theorization of the colonial encounter across several themes. It also situates Fanon within broader scholarly conversations, highlighting how his work informs contemporary debates on identity, language, and power.

3.52 The Myth of a Non-Racial Africa

Frantz Fanon’s work on colonialism and subject formation offers a foundational account of how race operates as a structuring force within colonial and postcolonial worlds (Fanon, 1952, 1961). Fanon’s analysis moves beyond race as a descriptive category to show how it shapes consciousness, social hierarchy, and systems of value under colonial conditions (Ayling, 2019). However, the relevance of Fanon’s racial lens in African contexts becomes clearer when placed against prevailing assumptions about the nature of race on the continent.

One such assumption is the notion of Africa as a “non-racial” space, a view present in both popular and some scholarly discourses, which holds that race is largely irrelevant within African social and political life (Ochonu, 2018). According to this view, Africa is often imagined as a continent where identity is primarily organised through ethnicity, culture, or kinship, rather than racial categories or racial consciousness (Ochonu, 2018; Zuberi, 2010). Within such framings, race is treated as an external imposition, something introduced through European colonial encounters and therefore presumed to have limited analytical or experiential relevance in contemporary African contexts (Ochonu, 2018; Ray, 2015). This perspective effectively positions race as a historical residue of Black–White contact, rather than as an active and structuring social force.

However, such a narrative carries significant conceptual limitations. It implicitly suggests that Africans neither meaningfully experience nor articulate race as a lived reality, thereby obscuring the multiple ways in which racial hierarchies continue to operate, often in subtle and institutionalised forms (Mamdani, 2018; Ochonu, 2018). The demographic reality of majority Black populations is frequently misread as evidence of the absence of racial systems of meaning or domination. Yet this assumption conflates numerical majority with the absence of racialisation, overlooking how racial logics can persist through global structures of power, knowledge production, and historical memory even in contexts where white populations are not numerically dominant (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Mbembe, 2015). A further limitation of the “non-racial Africa” thesis lies in its reliance on a narrow understanding of racism as dependent on direct, everyday physical interaction between racial groups (Ochonu, 2018). In response, critical race theory offers an important corrective by demonstrating that racism does not require the constant physical presence of racialised others to function (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Zuberi, 2010). Rather, it can be reproduced through institutions, histories, global economic arrangements, and inherited epistemologies that continue to structure inequality and perception (Ochonu, 2018; Bonilla-Silva, 2015). From this perspective, the idea of a postcolonial Africa free of racial dynamics becomes difficult to sustain, as it overlooks the enduring ways in which racial thinking has been embedded into global and local systems alike (Ochonu, 2018; Lee, 2015).

Related to this is the need to distinguish between racialized bodies and racialized systems. Racialized bodies refer to individuals and groups who are marked, read, and positioned through racial meanings attached to physical appearance and inherited categories of difference (Ahmed, 2002; Bonilla-Silva, 2022). Racialized systems, by contrast, refer to the institutional, political, cultural, and epistemic arrangements through which racial hierarchies are produced and sustained, regardless of whether visibly “racial” actors are present (Ahmed, 2002; Bonilla-Silva, 2022). This distinction is crucial for understanding how race operates beyond face-to-face interracial encounters and why its effects persist in structurally mediated forms (Ochonu, 2018)

One implication of this broader understanding is that racism cannot be reduced to Black–White interactions alone. Limiting racism to such encounters overlooks its multiple manifestations, its persistence after the departure of white colonial actors, and its broader societal impacts. Race can operate in subtle, disguised, and ordinary ways, exerting power precisely through its invisibility rather than only through overt interracial confrontation (Rollock, 2016; Ochonu, 2018). It is therefore possible for racial logics to remain active even in contexts where racial diversity appears limited or where explicit racial antagonism is not immediately visible.

Within postcolonial African contexts, this complexity is further deepened by the role of Black elites in sustaining racialized structures. Black elites may consciously or unconsciously reproduce systems shaped by colonial racial logics, even when these practices are misrecognised as merely class-based or culturally neutral forms of governance and social organization (Mbembe, 2015; Mamdani, 2018). In this sense, racial power is not solely external but can be internalised and reproduced within African societies through inherited institutional frameworks.

This dynamic is further illustrated in the post-independence period, where segments of African political elites often engaged in forms of colonial mimicry. In seeking to consolidate authority and legitimacy, they adopted administrative styles, cultural orientations, and governing attitudes that mirrored those of colonial officials, including their detachment from local lifeworlds and their hierarchical disposition toward the governed. Such practices highlight how colonial racial logics can persist not only through external domination but also through internal replication.

The insights discussed in this section reinforce the need to rethink race in Africa beyond simplistic binaries of presence or absence, or of Black versus White interaction. They underscore

that racialization is best understood as both embodied and systemic, operating through bodies, institutions, and inherited structures of thought that continue to shape postcolonial African realities.

3.53 Language, Race, and the Psychopolitics of Colonial Subjectivity

Within the context of colonialism, Fanon's central intervention lies in his insistence that domination extends beyond political and economic structures to include the production of racialized forms of rationality, language, and embodiment (Fanon, 2008). Dei (2010) captures this dynamic through the concept of "organized colonial relations," where colonial power determines whose knowledge is authorized and whose is systematically devalued. In African contexts, these relations operate as epistemic structures that define legitimacy in education, positioning European languages as the normative medium of intelligence and modernity while rendering African linguistic forms deficient or premodern (Bonney, 2022). Education, therefore, becomes a key site in which colonial power reproduces itself through what is recognized as legitimate knowledge, proper speech, and authoritative discourse, thereby operating as a technology of social and epistemic stratification (Dei, 2010).

This logic is most explicitly articulated in *Black Skin, White Masks*, where Fanon situates language as a central mechanism of colonial subject formation. Fanon argues that "adopting another culture's language... is above all to assume a culture" (Fanon, 1967, p. 2), indicating that language acquisition is never merely instrumental but deeply ontological. The process of learning a language under colonial conditions becomes a process of embodied reclassification, in which proximity to the colonizer's language is equated with proximity to humanity, rationality, and social value. As Hilton (2011) notes, Fanon's analysis of colonial oppression consistently foregrounds racism, alienation, and dehumanization as psychological and existential conditions produced through colonial structures. In this framework, language is not simply a communicative tool but a mechanism through which inferiority is internalized and reproduced. This also implies that linguistic hierarchy is inseparable from the production of colonial subjectivity.

Fanon's account of linguistic assimilation further demonstrates how colonial education generates internalized inferiority. In the Antillean context he analyzes, French functions as a symbolic gateway to recognition, while indigenous or creolized speech is rendered illegitimate and

backwards. This produces a structured psychic orientation in which the colonized subject evaluates themselves through the standards of the dominant language. Hilton (2011) identifies this as the formation of an inferiority complex rooted in the colonial “juxtaposition of the black and white races” (p.5), where linguistic performance becomes a primary site of self-surveillance and aspiration. Language, in this sense, becomes a site where colonial domination is both socially enforced and psychologically internalized.

This psychopolitical dimension of colonization cannot be reduced to individual psychology. Wright (2022) underscores Fanon’s rejection of ontogenetic explanations of alienation in favor of sociogenic analysis, which locates psychic formations within historically produced social structures. From this perspective, linguistic inferiority is not an internal defect, but a socially generated condition produced through colonial systems of valuation. Fanon’s critique of psychoanalysis is therefore not a dismissal of psychic life but a re-situating of it within the material and historical conditions that structure perception, desire, and identity. These structures form the foundation of racial capitalism and colonial governance, and they contribute immensely to the inferiority experienced by colonial subjects.

Fanon extends this sociogenic account into a broader analysis of colonial society as fundamentally Manichaeic, divided into rigidly opposed zones of value, humanity, belonging, and legitimacy. The colonizer’s zone is associated with order, civilization, and humanity, while the colonized zone is constructed as chaotic, primitive, and subhuman. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, colonial space is organized through a logic of absolute opposition between the colonizer and the colonized, where difference is not merely cultural but ontological (Fanon, 1963). Burke (1976) notes that this structure produces a world in which epistemic and moral hierarchies are spatially and symbolically encoded, with the colonizer’s world associated with order, abundance, and rationality, and the colonized world with deprivation and illegitimacy. Within such a configuration, language becomes one of the principal mechanisms through which these hierarchies are stabilized and naturalized.

However, Fanon’s work resists closure within a purely diagnostic framework, and he envisions the possibilities of human transformation beyond colonial categories. Gibson (2017) emphasizes that Fanon’s humanism is directed toward the abolition of hierarchical divisions that fragment

human existence. His critique of Manichaeism extends beyond colonial domination to include anticolonial responses that risk reproducing binary logics of exclusion. Fanon's project is therefore reconstructive rather than purely oppositional, oriented toward the reconstitution of human relations beyond colonial epistemic and ontological constraints.

In educational contexts, this reading of Fanon has significant implications. Dei (2010) argues that Fanon's work remains critical for education precisely because it exposes the persistence of colonial logics within contemporary institutional arrangements. Education is not simply a site of knowledge transmission but a space in which colonial hierarchies are reproduced through linguistic norms, curricular authority, and epistemic validation. Hilton (2011) similarly underscores that Fanon's analysis of oppression extends to everyday institutional life, including schools, where racialized assumptions about intelligence and competence are continually reinforced through language practices. Fanon's contribution is distinctive in that he links colonial structural divisions directly to psychological and embodied experience, foregrounding the lived reality of colonial domination.

Across these readings, Fanon emerges as a theorist of psychopolitical formation whose work reveals how colonial power operates through the internalization of language and the structuring of subjectivity (Fanon, 2008). His analysis establishes that language under colonial conditions is never neutral. It is a site where epistemic authority, racial hierarchy, and psychic life converge. This renders multilingualism in colonial and postcolonial contexts a fundamentally contested terrain, in which language and linguistic plurality function as both a site of domination and a potential site of reconstitution.

3.54 Colonial Encounter, Whiteness and Decolonization: A Fanonian Reading of Colonial Psychology

Fanon's theory of colonization is best understood as a sustained critique of how colonial domination reorganizes not only political and economic life but also the psychic, cultural, and epistemic conditions of existence. Across his work, colonialism is not treated as an external system imposed upon pre-existing subjects but as a productive regime that actively manufactures subjectivity. As Fanon argues, colonialism constitutes "a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity" (Fanon, 1963, p.

200). This negation extends beyond individual dehumanization to the structuring of social reality itself, such that the colonized are reduced to what Fanon describes as a “collective condition of dependency, where existence is mediated through the presence and recognition of the colonizer” (Fanon, 2004, pp. 219–220). Colonialism, in this sense, produces a depersonalized social world in which both identity and value are externally assigned rather than internally constituted.

Fanon’s theorization of colonization was not developed in abstraction but forged through his psychiatric practice during the Algerian war and sharpened by direct engagement with colonial violence (Hilton, 2011). While early intellectual influences can be traced to Martinique and his education under Aimé Césaire, it is in Algeria that his analysis of colonial subjectification takes its most systematic form. As Hilton (2011) notes, Fanon’s psychiatric work during the war enabled him to analyze oppression not only as a political structure but as a lived psychological condition, expressed through racism, alienation, and dehumanization. His texts, particularly *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, therefore, emerge as both clinical and political interventions, written under conditions in which colonial violence was not theoretical but immediate and embodied (Ndayisenga, 2022).

At the center of Fanon’s analysis is the claim that colonialism produces a fundamentally racialized social order structured through opposition and hierarchy (Fanon, 2008). The colonizer and colonized are not simply different groups within a shared system but are constructed as ontologically opposed categories, with blackness positioned as the negation of whiteness. Fanon’s intervention is to show that this opposition is not natural but produced through colonial epistemologies that render whiteness normative and blackness deficient (Ayling, 2019). As Fanon demonstrates, blackness becomes “at best a figure of absence, or worse a total reversion” to whiteness (Fanon, 2008, p. 15), a formulation that captures how colonial discourse erases black subjectivity by defining it only in relation to white normativity.

This racial ordering is inseparable from the production of whiteness as a symbolic and material standard of value. Whiteness, in Fanon’s analysis, is not simply a racial category but a hegemonic structure that organizes perception, aspiration, and social recognition. As Ayling (2019) argues, drawing on Fanon, whiteness operates as a system of distinction and exclusivity that shapes access to education, mobility, and social legitimacy. In this framework, whiteness

functions as a form of symbolic capital through which intelligence, morality, and competence are measured. Fanon (2008) captures this logic succinctly when he notes that “one is white as one is rich, as one is beautiful, as one is intelligent” (p. 13). Whiteness thus becomes synonymous with value itself, while blackness is constructed as its structural opposite, associated with deviance, immorality, and absence.

Fanon’s psychoanalytic account of this racial formation demonstrates how whiteness is both externally imposed and internally reproduced through psychic life (Fanon, 2008). Colonial subjectivity is structured through what he describes as a fractured corporeal experience, in which the colonized subject develops what he terms a “racial epidermal schema” (Fanon, 2008, p. 84). This schema replaces an integrated sense of self with a racially overdetermined self-consciousness in which the body becomes the site of external judgment and internal surveillance. The colonized subject is therefore not only seen through the gaze of whiteness but comes to see themselves through that gaze, producing what Fanon describes as a condition of “absolute depersonalisation” (Fanon, 2008, p. xi). In this condition, recognition is structurally monopolized by whiteness, such that the colonized subject experiences value as something that must be conferred externally.

This psychic structure is reinforced through language, education, and cultural formation. Fanon’s account of linguistic colonialism is particularly significant in this regard. Language functions as a communicative tool as well as a medium through which cultural belonging and ontological status are produced and allocated (Fanon, 1967). To adopt the colonizer’s language is, for Fanon, to assume an entire worldview structured by colonial hierarchies of value (Fanon, 1967). Within colonial education systems, linguistic competence in the colonizer’s language becomes a proxy for intelligence and civility, while indigenous languages are devalued and associated with inferiority. These dynamics produce what Hilton (2011) identifies as an inferiority complex rooted in the colonial “juxtaposition of the black and white races” (p. 16), in which self-worth becomes dependent on proximity to whiteness.

The internalization of whiteness operates beyond language, extending into broader cultural and aspirational formations. Fanon’s analysis demonstrates that colonialism produces a psychic economy in which black subjects are compelled to disavow their own cultural formations in

order to approximate the norms of whiteness (Fanon, 1967). This process is not simply coercive but also aspirational, as whiteness is constructed as the condition for recognition, mobility, and social existence. Puwar (2004) argues that Black subjects are often positioned in ways where upward mobility is tied to forms of self-denial, and where being visible within dominant institutions can require the suppression or erasure of Blackness itself.

Importantly, Fanon insists that these processes cannot be understood at the level of individual pathology. Wright (2022) emphasizes Fanon's commitment to sociogenesis, the argument that subjectivity is produced through social and historical conditions rather than biological or purely psychological determinants. From this perspective, colonial alienation is not an internal defect but a structural outcome of a racialized social order. Fanon's intervention is therefore methodological as much as it is political, rejecting ontological accounts of race in favor of historically grounded analyses of how racial categories are produced and sustained.

Fanon extends this analysis to colonial society as a whole through his concept of Manichaean division, which has been discussed in the previous section. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, colonial space is organized into radically opposed zones of existence, where the colonizer's world is marked by abundance, order, and legitimacy, while the colonized world is marked by deprivation and exclusion (Fanon, 1963). Burke (1976) notes that this structure produces both material inequality and epistemic closure, in which colonial categories of knowledge reinforce the naturalization of domination. Within this framework, race is not simply descriptive but constitutive of social reality, organizing how space, value, and humanity are distributed.

The persistence of these structures beyond formal colonial rule is central to contemporary Fanonian scholarship (Gibson, 2017; Gordon, 2015; Sekyi-Otu, 1996). Decolonization, understood narrowly as the removal of colonial administrations, does not necessarily dismantle the deeper structures of colonial power. As Grosfoguel (2007) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argue, coloniality persists as a system of knowledge, subjectivity, and aspiration that continues to structure postcolonial societies. Coloniality operates through what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, p. 38) describes as the maintenance of "inferior-superior relations" embedded in education, culture, and self-understanding. In this context, Fanon's concept of the "colonial condition" remains

analytically relevant, as it captures the persistence of racialized hierarchies in the psychic and institutional life of postcolonial societies.

This persistence is particularly evident in the formation of postcolonial elites, whose relationship to whiteness is not incidental but constitutive. Fanon's analysis suggests that postcolonial elites often reproduce colonial hierarchies because their social authority depends on proximity to metropolitan standards of value. As Ayling (2019) notes, in African contexts, elite aspirations are frequently structured through identification with European norms of education, culture, and refinement. This produces a class position that is both postcolonial in form and deeply shaped by colonial orientations. In this sense, decolonization becomes uneven, as political sovereignty does not automatically translate into epistemic or psychological decolonization.

Whiteness studies (e.g., Doane & Silva, 2004; Levine-Rasky, 2011; Kolchin, 2002) further clarify this dynamic by showing how whiteness operates as both structure and disposition. As Levine-Rasky (2011) argues, whiteness functions as an epistemological frame that defines norms of intelligence, morality, and legitimacy. Its power lies in its invisibility, operating as an unmarked standard against which other identities are measured. A psychoanalytic reading, consistent with Fanon's approach, reveals how these norms are internalized at the level of language, desire, and perception, producing what Nayak (2007) describes as the psychic cultivation of white subjectivity. Whiteness thus operates as both external structure and internalized orientation.

Across these formulations, Fanon's contribution is to demonstrate that colonization is fundamentally a psychopolitical process that produces both whiteness and blackness as relational formations (Fanon, 2008). Whiteness is not simply imposed upon the colonized but is also sustained through systems of recognition in which value is continually routed through colonial standards. Decolonization, therefore, cannot be reduced to institutional reform or political independence. It requires a fundamental reconfiguration of the psychological and epistemic conditions through which subjects come to understand themselves and others (Hilton, 2011).

In this regard, Fanon's theory of colonization provides a foundational analytic for understanding race as a lived structure of meaning, rather than a static category of identity. It also establishes

the conditions for thinking about decolonization as an ongoing process of psychic, cultural, and epistemic transformation.

A Fanonian reading of race and education is evident in Dei (2010), who develops an anti-colonial framework that underscores Fanon's continuing relevance for education and decolonial thought. He emphasizes that early anti-colonial theorizing was grounded in the pursuit of political liberation for colonized peoples through the power of knowledge and a commitment to justice, highlighting the "two-sidedness" of colonial relations, which requires analysing both structures of domination and the strategies of resistance developed by marginalized groups (Howard, 2004). From this perspective, dismantling colonial relations involves simultaneously interrogating whiteness as a system of power and engaging the epistemologies of oppressed communities. Dei (2010) further argues that colonialism has profound psychological effects, producing forms of mimicry that can result in a "loss of the soul" for the colonized, while rendering the colonizer "with no heart," a dynamic also recognized by Memmi's analysis of the colonial encounter as inherently violent and depersonalizing for both parties. Within this framework, Fanon is positioned as central to anti-colonial theorizing because his work links colonial domination to processes of knowledge production, identity formation, and psychic alienation, while insisting that both colonized and colonizer are implicated in decolonial transformation.

Decolonization, in Fanon's sense, extends beyond political independence to include intellectual, cultural, and internal resistance to dominant epistemologies, requiring a refusal to accept colonial reality as fixed and an active struggle against the internalization of inferiority (Fanon, 1967). As Dei (2010) further emphasizes, colonialism is not reducible to interpersonal relations but constitutes a systemic conquest involving mental, physical, and psychological domination (Fanon, 1967). This domination is sustained through dehumanizing representations that construct African and colonized subjects as lacking rationality and moral capacity, while Western knowledge systems are positioned as universal and civilizational benchmarks. Consequently, Dei (2010) calls for a revitalization of suppressed cultural knowledge systems and a critical interrogation of Enlightenment rationality, which continues to function as a gatekeeping framework for defining civilization and knowledge. Howard (2004) also underscores that race operates through historically sedimented narratives that consistently position whiteness as

superior to the “othered” body, reinforcing the need for historically grounded analyses of racial formation. Dei also points out Fanon’s (1967) argument that racism cannot be reduced to psychological abnormality, as it is embedded within rationalized social and economic systems that render it normal within colonial orders. From this perspective, racism is sustained through ideological coherence, including the historical use of scientific discourse to justify domination and slavery, demonstrating that colonial power is maintained through both material structures and epistemic legitimacy.

Another example of a critique of whiteness and the need for decolonization is Singler (2016), who reads Fanon’s account of decolonisation as grounded in the structural encounter between two racialised formations: the colonial settler and the native population. This encounter is not merely historical but constitutive, sustained through organised violence as the primary technology of colonial rule (Fanon, 2004). Within this framework, Europe’s material and epistemic formation is inseparable from colonial extraction; as Fanon argues, ‘Europe is literally the creation of the Third World’ (Fanon, 2004, p. 81). Whiteness, in this sense, is not an autonomous cultural identity but a product of global relations of dispossession that require the continuous production of the colonised as governable and exploitable subjects.

Singler (2016) emphasizes Fanon’s distinction between metropolitan capitalism and colonial governance. In the metropole, exploitation is stabilized through ideological infrastructures such as education, religion, and civil society that obscure coercion. In the colony, however, domination is immediate and unmediated, operating through overt violence and producing a Manichean social order in which coloniser and colonised are positioned as irreconcilable opposites. This binary is not descriptive but productive: it manufactures racial difference as an organising principle of political and economic life.

Central to this order is the dehumanisation of the colonised. Singler (2016), following Fanon, shows how this process operates through linguistic degradation, racialised “scientific” discourse, and systematic assaults on indigenous cultural forms. Cultural practices are reclassified as irrational, primitive, or pathological, even when they function as coherent expressions of collective life and political continuity (Singler, 2016). In this sense, colonial knowledge

production becomes a technology of whiteness, converting epistemic authority into a mechanism for defining humans.

This dehumanisation serves a dual function. First, it resolves the ideological contradiction between liberal universalism and colonial violence by rendering domination compatible with the language of civilisation and progress (Rabaka, 2010, p. 115). Second, it produces psychic effects within the colonised, including the internalisation of inferiority and the fragmentation of selfhood. Yet Singler (2016) also foregrounds Fanon's insistence that this internalisation is never complete; the colonised subject remains structurally resistant to total incorporation, and recognition of shared humanity becomes the point at which colonial authority begins to destabilise itself (Fanon, 2004).

Within this analysis of Fanon's work, violence occupies an ambivalent position. Singler (2016) notes that Fanon treats anti-colonial violence not as an ethical principle but as a historically produced necessity embedded within the structure of colonial domination. Violence is the condition through which colonial order is both maintained and ultimately contested (Mbembe, 2012). It functions as a mechanism of rupture that can unify the colonised against the settler formation and disrupt the psychic and political conditions of colonial dependency (Gibson, 2003). However, this is not a celebration of violence as such.

Fanon's account, as interpreted by Singler (2016), is careful to delimit its function. Violence is neither sufficient for liberation nor capable of generating a stable postcolonial order on its own. It is politically productive only insofar as it is oriented toward self-realisation and collective transformation, rather than reproduction of antagonistic identity structures. Without such orientation, violence risks becoming cyclical and self-defeating, reinforcing the very binaries of settler and native it seeks to undo. Fanon's warning that 'all killing is by definition de-humanizing' underscores this limitation (Caute, 1970: 87).

Accordingly, Singler (2016) highlights Fanon's insistence that decolonisation requires more than rupture; it requires directionality, collective clarity, and political futurity. In this respect, decolonisation cannot be reduced to inversion of the colonial order or simple displacement of whiteness. It must instead dismantle the epistemic and affective structures through which colonial identity itself is produced (Singler, 2016). Otherwise, postcolonial identity risks

remaining defined through negation, reproducing the colonial relation at the level of subject formation (Gibson, 2017).

In this reading, Singler (2016) positions Fanon's work as a critique of both colonial violence and its epistemic afterlife. Whiteness is not only a category of domination, but a relational structure sustained through ongoing processes of dehumanisation, epistemic exclusion, and psychic dependency. Decolonisation, therefore, cannot be understood as a completed political transition; it is a continuous process of dismantling the conditions through which colonial difference is reproduced.

3.55 Tensions in Fanonian Studies, Misreading of Fanon, and the Question of Violence

Fanon's work has been persistently misread through an overdetermined emphasis on violence, a reduction that obscures the theoretical and political complexity of his project. As Gibson (2007) argues, *The Wretched of the Earth* has often been framed as a text written "in anger," a characterization that collapses Fanon's analysis into affect rather than intellect. Yet Fanon himself explicitly rejects the sufficiency of affect as a political force, insisting instead on "the power of ideology" as the condition of revolutionary sustainability (Fanon, 2004, p. 42).

Violence, in this schema, is neither origin nor endpoint but a contingent moment within a broader dialectic; unmediated brutality, if not theoretically and organizationally contained, inevitably results in the movement's collapse within a matter of weeks (Gibson, 2007). The persistent fetishization of Fanonian violence, reinforced in paratextual materials such as prefaces and blurbs, therefore constitutes not merely a misinterpretation but an ideological displacement that sidelines his critique of postcolonial degeneration and the failures of national consciousness (Gibson, 2007).

This distortion is compounded by influential readings such as Jean-Paul Sartre's preface of *The Wretched of the Earth*, which amplifies violence beyond Fanon's own formulation. Sartre's rendering collapses the dialectical movement of decolonization into a totalizing rupture, positioning violence as an end rather than a historically situated means (Gibson, 2007). Fanon, by contrast, conceptualizes decolonization as a transformative process that "fundamentally alters being," reconstituting the colonized subject as a historical agent rather than an object (Fanon, 2004, p.76). Violence operates within this transformation but remains subordinated to political

clarity, collective mobilization, and the construction of a new social order. The analytical slippage from instrument to essence not only misrepresents Fanon's position but also depoliticizes his broader critique of colonial and postcolonial structures (Gibson, 2007).

The misreading of Fanon must also be situated within broader shifts in postcolonial theory. As Gibson (2007) notes, contemporary engagements have moved from an earlier fixation on violence toward a more muted discourse of "historical change," often recasting Fanon as a canonical yet temporally bounded figure. This repositioning aligns him with a depoliticized postcolonial canon, wherein his work is treated as an artefact rather than an intervention. Such framing neutralizes the radical edge of his critique, particularly his analysis of post-independence elites and the persistence of colonial structures in ostensibly decolonized societies. The consequence is a selective appropriation that preserves Fanon's symbolic authority while evacuating his revolutionary content.

Gordon (2015) further complicates this terrain by identifying the problem of translation and epistemic framing in Fanon studies. The limitations of English translations have led to substantive distortions, with scholars frequently attributing to Fanon positions he did not, in fact, articulate. Translation here is not merely linguistic but political, shaping the interpretive horizon within which Fanon is received. Moreover, Fanon's thought has been unevenly mediated through racialized and disciplinary lenses: some readings minimize the centrality of racism by privileging culture or class, while others risk reductively essentializing his work as exclusively about racial experience. Gordon (2015) insists that such dichotomies misrecognize the integrative nature of Fanon's analysis, which operates simultaneously across psychological, social, political, and historical registers.

This interpretive fragmentation is further evident in cross-cultural appropriations of Fanon. White and European scholars have often emphasized his "Frenchness" or universalism, while Black scholars foreground the lived realities of racialization that structure his work. The tension reflects not simply divergent emphases but deeper epistemological divides regarding the status of race as an analytic category. As Gordon (2015) argues, the reluctance to fully engage racism as a structuring principle of modernity leads to partial readings that displace Fanon's critique onto more palatable terrains. Yet Fanon's own intellectual trajectory, shaped by colonial Martinique,

wartime Europe, and revolutionary Algeria, resists such compartmentalization, demanding instead a framework attentive to the simultaneity of race, empire, and subjectivity (Gordon, 2015).

The question of Fanon's contemporary relevance remains inseparable from these interpretive struggles. To render Fanon as historically bounded is to ignore the persistence of the conditions he theorized: racial hierarchy, epistemic domination, and the unfinished project of decolonization (Gordon, 2015). As Gibson (2007) suggests, the continued resonance of *The Wretched of the Earth* lies precisely in its capacity to illuminate the ongoing "disenfranchisement of the masses by the elite" in postcolonial contexts. The misreading of Fanon, therefore, is not merely an academic problem but a political one, shaping how decolonization itself is understood, whether as a completed historical event or as an ongoing, contested process requiring both theoretical rigor and transformative praxis.

3.56 Fanonian Theory of the Colonial Encounter: Implications for Applied Linguistics

A Fanonian theory of the colonial encounter offers a critical framework for rethinking key assumptions within applied linguistics, particularly in relation to language, subjectivity, and education in postcolonial contexts. Contrary to approaches that treat language as a neutral medium of communication or a purely social practice, Fanon's work foregrounds the extent to which language is historically constituted and psychically mediated through colonial relations of power (Fanon, 2008). This perspective compels applied linguistics to move beyond descriptive accounts of multilingualism and toward an analysis of how language is implicated in the production of hierarchical subjectivities, epistemic inequalities, and enduring forms of coloniality.

The implication of language in colonial systems means that language in postcolonial contexts cannot be understood apart from the colonial histories that continue to structure linguistic hierarchies and lived experience. While relational and sociocultural approaches to language emphasize fluidity, interaction, and co-construction of meaning, they risk underestimating the asymmetrical power relations sedimented within language itself. It is precisely here that Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytic account of the colonial encounter becomes indispensable. Fanon forces a confrontation with the fact that language is never simply a medium of communication or social

relation, rather it is a site where colonial power is inscribed, reproduced, and lived at the level of the psyche (Fanon, 2008)

Fanon's central insight is that colonial language hierarchies do not remain external systems of valuation; rather, they are internalized, shaping how subjects come to experience themselves as speaking beings (Fanon, 1967). The colonized subject does not merely learn a dominant language but is interpellated through it, coming to associate linguistic competence with proximity to rationality, civility, and full humanity. This process produces what can be understood as a form of linguistic alienation, in which one's "native" or community language is experienced as inadequate, improper, or even shameful (Fanon, 2008). At the same time, mastery of the colonial language rarely results in full recognition, generating a persistent condition of epistemic and affective dissonance. The subject is thus caught in a double bind, estranged from their own linguistic identity while never fully accepted within the linguistic order of the colonizer (Fanon, 2008).

In educational contexts, this dynamic becomes particularly acute. Schools in postcolonial societies often function as key institutional sites where colonial language hierarchies are reproduced under the guise of neutrality, meritocracy, or global competitiveness (Dei, 2010). The privileging of ex-colonial or global languages such as English or French continues to structure curricula, assessment practices, and definitions of academic success. Within multilingual classrooms, this creates stratified linguistic economies in which certain forms of speech are legitimized while others are marginalized or rendered invisible. Students who speak stigmatized languages or varieties may internalize perceptions of cognitive or intellectual inferiority, even when these judgments are rooted in historically produced hierarchies rather than actual linguistic or intellectual capacity.

For teachers, these dynamics can produce equally complex forms of negotiation and tension. Educators operating within postcolonial systems are often required to uphold linguistic standards that they themselves may experience as externally imposed or misaligned with their own linguistic identities. This can result in pedagogical contradictions, where teachers simultaneously reproduce and resist dominant language ideologies. On one hand, they may enforce standardized forms associated with institutional authority; on the other hand, they may recognize the epistemic

richness and communicative legitimacy of students' diverse linguistic repertoires. This tension highlights the extent to which multilingual classrooms are both sites of linguistic diversity but also arenas of ideological struggle.

From a Fanonian perspective, these struggles are not reducible to questions of policy or pedagogy alone; they are fundamentally psychopolitical (Fanon, 2008). That is, they involve the continuous negotiation of subjectivity under conditions shaped by colonial histories. Linguistic insecurity, multilingual instruction anxieties, and the policing of "proper" speech can all be understood as manifestations of deeper colonial residues that structure how individuals perceive their own voices and the voices of others. The classroom thus becomes a space where coloniality is not only reproduced institutionally but also lived affectively, through feelings of shame, aspiration, inadequacy, and resistance.

Importantly, this psychopolitical framing complicates celebratory accounts of multilingualism that position linguistic diversity as inherently emancipatory (Poza, 2017). While multilingual classrooms do indeed hold transformative potential, they are also shaped by unequal power relations that condition which languages can be spoken, how they can be spoken, and by whom. A Fanonian lens insists that any critical account of language in education must attend to these layered dynamics, recognizing that the coexistence of multiple languages does not in itself dismantle colonial hierarchies. Instead, such hierarchies may be rearticulated in more subtle ways, embedded in norms of pronunciation, accent, fluency, and academic discourse (Oram, 2021).

Crucially, Fanon's work does not foreclose the possibility of transformation. By exposing the mechanisms through which linguistic hierarchies are internalized, it opens up space for rethinking educational practice as a site of decolonial intervention. This involves not only diversifying linguistic representation but also challenging the underlying epistemic frameworks that assign value to particular languages and forms of expression. In this sense, multilingual classrooms can be reimagined as spaces where the psychopolitical effects of colonialism are not merely reproduced but critically interrogated and potentially reconfigured.

Thus, to understand language and education in postcolonial contexts requires holding together two seemingly divergent insights, that language is fundamentally relational and socially

constructed, and that it is also historically burdened and psychically charged. Fanon's contribution lies in showing that these are not contradictory claims but mutually constitutive ones. Multilingual classrooms are, therefore, not only relational and communal spaces but also deeply contested psychopolitical terrains, where subjectivity is continuously negotiated under the weight of colonial histories and in the ongoing struggle over what it means to speak, to know, and to be recognized.

3.57 Theoretical Synthesis

Fanon's theorization of the colonial encounter, when read alongside Afro communitarianism, offers a robust framework for understanding both the disruption and reconstruction of human relationality under colonial conditions. Fanon demonstrates how colonialism fractures subjectivity, language, and social life through violence, racialization, and epistemic domination, producing alienation and hierarchies that extend into everyday practices. Afro-communitarianism, in contrast, foregrounds an ethical vision of personhood grounded in interdependence, mutual recognition, and communal belonging. Together, these perspectives reveal decolonization as a dual process: a necessary rupture with the violent structures that sustain inequality and a reconstitution of social life rooted in relational dignity and collective flourishing. This synthesis is particularly instructive for domains such as language and education, where colonial hierarchies continue to shape practices and values, suggesting the need for approaches that do not only dismantle linguistic domination but also affirm language as a site of shared meaning-making, cultural continuity, and human connection.

3.6 Convergences: Relationality, Humanity and Rehumanization

Afro-communitarianism and Fanon also converge in their shared commitment to relational conceptions of personhood and humanity. Afro-communitarian philosophies understand the self as fundamentally embedded in social relations. Similarly, Fanon's critique of colonialism is grounded in the recognition that colonial domination ruptures relational life, producing alienation not only from oneself but from others and from community.

Fanon's call for a "new humanism" can be read as an attempt to reconstruct relational humanity on non-hierarchical terms (Fanon, 2008). While Afro-communitarianism articulates an already

existing ethical framework rooted in communal interdependence (Menkiti, 1984; Wiredu, 2008), Fanon identifies the historical conditions under which such relationality has been distorted and calls for its radical reconstitution. Both frameworks, therefore, emphasize that liberation must involve the restoration of human relationships grounded in dignity, reciprocity, and mutual recognition.

3.7 Tensions and Productive Extensions: Violence, Agency, and Community

Despite these convergences, there are important tensions that generate productive theoretical insights. Afro-communitarianism typically foregrounds harmony, consensus, and social cohesion as ethical ideals, whereas Fanon insists on the necessity of rupture and struggle, including revolutionary violence, in dismantling colonial structures. From a Fanonian perspective, the restoration of community cannot occur without first confronting and undoing the violent foundations of colonial domination (Fanon, 2008).

This tension suggests a complementary relationship: Afro-communitarianism provides a normative vision of ethical relationality, while Fanon offers a diagnostic and transformative account of how such relationality is historically obstructed and how it might be reclaimed. They both allow for a more nuanced understanding of decolonization as both a process of disruption and a project of reconstruction: one that moves from the breakdown of oppressive systems toward the rearticulation of communal life.

3.8 Chapter Summary

When brought together, Afro-communitarianism and Fanon offer a compelling framework for rethinking language and education. Fanon exposes how colonial language hierarchies produce alienation and stratification, while Afro-communitarianism emphasizes the role of language as a medium of shared meaning-making and communal belonging.

This synthesis suggests that decolonial language practices must go beyond inclusion to foster linguistic environments that sustain relational identity, cultural continuity, and collective agency. In this sense, multilingualism is both a pedagogical strategy and an ethical-political project aligned with Fanon's concept of rehumanization and Afro-communitarian commitments. Decolonization is therefore both a struggle against the structures that fracture human relations

and a commitment to rebuilding forms of life grounded in shared humanity, relational dignity, and collective flourishing.

Chapter 4- Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in this study, which is grounded in a qualitative approach with a particular emphasis on case study methods. The chapter provides a detailed account of the procedures used to collect and analyze data in order to investigate how classroom interactions reflect Southern multilingual language practices and the perceptions, ideologies, and beliefs of school officials and teachers regarding Southern multilingual practices in the classrooms of both schools, drawing primarily on data from teacher and school official interviews. It outlines the rationale for selecting a qualitative case study design, the processes for gathering rich, contextually grounded data, and the strategies used to interpret and make meaning of the linguistic practices and perspectives of teachers, students, and school officials within the classroom and broader school environment.

The current study is situated as a case study of Southern multilingual practices in public and private elementary school classrooms in Ghana. I drew on case study methods to provide an in-depth and contextually grounded understanding of how multilingual practices are enacted, perceived, and shaped by institutional and social factors. Using a case study approach allowed me to explore the complexities of classroom interactions and the perceptions of teachers and school officials, while considering how these practices are influenced by broader social and historical contexts.

To collect data, I conducted classroom observations, interviews with teachers and school officials, and document analysis. These sources allowed me to examine both explicit and implicit language practices and ideologies and to understand how Southern multilingualism is negotiated, supported, or constrained in different school environments. By framing the study as a case study, I aimed to provide a rich, nuanced, and coherent account of classroom language practices and stakeholder perceptions while remaining attentive to the social, cultural, and institutional contexts that shape language use in Ghanaian schools.

4.2 Research Design

4.21 Qualitative Case Study Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which involves gathering and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, experiences, and social processes (Davis, 1995). Qualitative research is particularly suited for investigating phenomena that are complex, context-dependent, and socially constructed, as it emphasizes understanding the meanings that participants attach to their experiences (Creswell, 2013). In addition to providing insight into existing practices, qualitative research can generate new ideas, reveal patterns, and illuminate processes that are not easily captured through quantitative measures (Davis, 1995).

Within this qualitative framework, this study employs a case study methodology, a method of inquiry designed to explore and interpret phenomena within their real-life contexts (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Case study research allows for a detailed examination of specific instances, capturing the complexity of social phenomena as they naturally occur. In this study, the cases consist of two elementary schools in Ghana, a public school and a private school. These schools provide bounded systems that allow focused observation of multilingual classroom practices and investigation of teachers' and school officials' perceptions and ideologies regarding Southern multilingualism.

Qualitative case study methodology emphasizes naturalistic inquiry, where data collection occurs in the participants' own settings, providing rich and contextually grounded understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). By situating the research in the classrooms themselves, the study allows for detailed observation of teaching and learning processes as they unfold in real time. This approach facilitated by classroom observations, audio-recorded classroom interactions and follow-up teacher interviews, enabled the researcher to explore not only what occurred in the classrooms but also how participants interpreted and made sense of these events. The integration of multiple qualitative data sources contributes to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

One of the strengths of the qualitative case study approach is its capacity to capture the particularity and complexity of human behavior (Stake, 1995). By focusing on the specific contexts of two schools, the study investigates Southern multilingual practices in depth,

examining the interactions, decisions, and beliefs that shape classroom language use. This method also allows for exploration of the interconnectedness between participants' linguistic activities and the broader teaching context, including institutional policies, classroom norms, and community (school) language practices.

Furthermore, qualitative case study methodology supports the construction of meaning through engagement with participants and sustained immersion in the field. Spending time in classrooms enabled me to develop an interpretive understanding of the social and linguistic dynamics at play, going beyond surface-level descriptions to uncover the underlying perceptions, ideologies, and strategies employed by teachers and school officials. My presence in the natural environment of the classrooms facilitated both rich observational data and interactive dialogue, which together offered insights into how Southern multilingual practices are enacted and understood in everyday school life.

The qualitative case study approach is particularly appropriate for this research because it aligns with the study's focus on exploring, interpreting, and understanding Southern multilingual practices in their natural classroom contexts. It provides the methodological flexibility to examine linguistic phenomena in depth, consider participants' perspectives, and situate observations within broader social, institutional, and cultural contexts, thereby addressing the research questions comprehensively. Building on this qualitative foundation, the study employs an instrumental case study design to guide the selection of research sites and the focus of inquiry. The following section discusses the rationale for choosing this design, how the two schools function as instrumental cases, and how this approach facilitates a deeper understanding of Southern multilingual practices within elementary classrooms.

4.22 Instrumental Case Study Design

This study employs an instrumental case study design based on the work of Stake (1995), who distinguishes between intrinsic case studies and instrumental case studies. An intrinsic case study focuses on a single case that is of interest in its own right, often because it is unique or unusual. In contrast, an instrumental case study selects cases to provide insight into something else, such as a phenomenon, pattern, or issue that extends beyond the individual case (Stake, 2003). In this research, the interest lies not in the schools themselves but in the broader phenomenon of

Southern multilingual classroom practices and the ideologies, perceptions, and beliefs associated with them. The schools function as instruments that allow the researcher to access and interpret the phenomenon within a real, naturally occurring, and situated educational context.

The selection of two elementary schools, one public and one private, is purposeful and theoretically driven. These sites were chosen because each allows the researcher to observe Southern multilingual classroom practices in contexts shaped by different institutional histories, community demographics, and governance structures. Although their differences may appear to invite comparison, the intention is not to produce a comparative analysis of public versus private schooling. Instead, their contrasting characteristics broaden the range of conditions under which multilingual practices can be observed. This increases the opportunities to see how Southern multilingualism emerges, how it is navigated by teachers and students, and how educators interpret and make sense of it.

In this design, the cases themselves are instrumental rather than central (Stake, 2003). This distinction is critical to understanding the logic of the study. The schools serve as platforms that allow a deeper exploration of the nature and meaning of multilingual practices. For example, they provide access to classroom interactions where students draw on multiple languages, and they enabled me to enter spaces where educational actors articulate their beliefs, ideologies, and policy interpretations. The focus is therefore on the phenomenon as it interacts with the environments of the schools, not on the schools as objects of analysis.

This approach aligns directly with the study's research questions, which focus on identifying Southern multilingual practices that occur in elementary school classrooms and exploring how teachers and school officials perceive those practices. Because the questions aim to understand how a linguistic phenomenon is enacted in educational settings, a design that privileges depth, context, and interpretive insight is crucial. Merriam (1998) emphasizes that case study research is particularly valuable when the researcher seeks an in-depth understanding of a complex, contextually embedded issue. Merriam (1998) argues that qualitative case studies are ideal for exploring processes, meanings, and interpretations that are shaped by specific social and cultural environments. This orientation aligns closely with the present study, which seeks to understand how multilingual practices unfold in classrooms that are located within Southern linguistic

ecologies and shaped by regional histories and institutional norms. The instrumental case study allows the researcher to examine linguistic practices as they unfold in real time, respond to contextual factors, and reflect broader cultural and regional histories associated with Southern multilingualism.

The instrumental case study is particularly well suited for research on language practices because such practices are shaped by the interaction of social, cultural, and institutional forces (Heugh, 2012). Observing multilingual behavior and gathering educators' perspectives in more than one site provides a richer, more layered understanding of how Southern multilingualism operates and how it is valued or constrained. The design made room for the complexity of linguistic practice by enabling me to capture the interplay of classroom interactions, teacher beliefs, and institutional norms.

Crucially, the instrumental case study structure supports theoretical generalization rather than statistical generalization (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The goal is not to claim that the findings of this study represent all public or private schools but to offer insights that refine and deepen understanding of multilingualism in Southern educational contexts. By grounding the analysis in two thoughtfully selected cases, the study provides an empirically rich foundation for interpreting how multilingual practices are experienced and how ideologies surrounding them are constructed. The instrumental case study design also guides the research toward understanding Southern multilingual classroom practices through focused, contextualized investigation. The design supports a close alignment between the purpose of the study, the nature of the research questions, and the kind of nuanced, context-sensitive data needed to explore this linguistic phenomenon in depth. The following section presents the research questions that guide this study.

4.3 Research Questions

Main Research Question:

How are Southern multilingual practices enacted in elementary school classrooms in Ghana, and how are these practices shaped by teachers' beliefs, ideologies, and broader socio-institutional contexts?

Sub-Questions:

4. What Southern multilingual practices can be observed in classrooms?
5. What beliefs and ideologies do teachers and school officials hold?
6. How do these beliefs align with or diverge from observed practices in the classroom?

This study investigates Southern multilingual practices in elementary school classrooms in Ghana, focusing on how these practices are enacted and how they are shaped by teachers' beliefs, ideologies, and broader socio-institutional and societal factors such as coloniality and socio-economic context. Guided by a single unified research question and its sub-questions, the study draws on data from two schools to provide detailed insights into the phenomenon of Southern multilingualism in classroom settings.

Classroom recordings provide evidence of the forms, functions, and patterns of multilingual language use in teaching and learning, capturing how teachers and students deploy multiple linguistic resources in interaction. Interview data from teachers and school officials complement these observations by revealing the beliefs, assumptions, and ideological positions that underpin classroom practices, particularly regarding language policy, notions of appropriate language use, and the role of multilingualism in education. These two strands of data directly address the sub-questions. The first focuses on observable practices, the second on stakeholder beliefs, and the third examines the alignment or divergence between beliefs and practices.

By integrating evidence from both data sources, the study highlights the relationship between what teachers and school officials articulate as their beliefs and what occurs in practice, providing a nuanced understanding of how multilingualism is enacted and negotiated within classroom and broader socio-institutional contexts. The use of two schools enriches the analysis by illustrating how the phenomenon of Southern multilingualism manifests in different settings, without positioning the schools themselves as the primary focus of comparison.

Through this approach, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of Southern multilingualism in Ghanaian classrooms by emphasizing the complex interactions between classroom practices, stakeholder ideologies, and broader social and institutional influences.

4.4 Researcher Reflexivity

Prior to describing the context of this study, I acknowledge my positionality and the role of reflexivity in shaping the research process and outcomes. In qualitative research, reflexivity is widely understood as a marker of rigor and validity, as it requires researchers to critically examine how knowledge is produced through their interactions with participants and research contexts (McCabe & Holmes, 2009; Hertz, 1996). Reflexivity involves being cognizant of what I know, how that knowledge is constructed, and how my presence influences the field (Jootun et al. 2009). I am not separate from the research; rather, I am embedded within it, engaging in a reciprocal relationship in which the research context shapes me and, in turn, is shaped by my presence. Making these dynamics explicit enhances transparency and allows readers to better evaluate the interpretations I present (Cutcliffe, 2003).

My positionality in this study is shaped by my personal background, academic training, linguistic experiences, and epistemological commitments, all of which influence how I formulated the research questions, collected data, and interpreted classroom language practices (Berger, 2015; Lin, 2015). These factors are particularly salient in a study of Southern multilingualism, as language practices and ideologies are deeply embedded in histories of coloniality, power, and educational policy. As such, my perspectives inevitably inform the analytical lens through which classroom interactions and stakeholder perceptions are understood.

In terms of field relations, I was acquainted with several teacher participants prior to data collection and was familiar with the local context in which the study was conducted. These connections facilitated access to the schools and may have contributed to participants' willingness to grant classroom access and engage in open discussion. However, I did not hold any prior institutional role within either school. Teachers consistently referred to me as a researcher, while students often perceived and referred to me as a teacher, reflecting common assumptions about adult roles in classroom spaces. This dual perception created a shifting positionality that required ongoing reflexive attention throughout the research process.

Within classrooms, I navigated both formal and informal modes of engagement, moving between observing instructional practices, interacting casually with students, and conducting formal research activities such as explaining consent procedures, taking field notes, and interviewing

teachers and school officials. Although I did not teach in either school, being positioned as a teacher by students had implications for classroom interactions and may have influenced how language practices were enacted in my presence. Acknowledging these dynamics is essential for interpreting observed multilingual practices and understanding how my presence may have shaped participant behavior and classroom discourse.

My academic background in language policy and planning, critical sociolinguistics, and African philosophy further informed the study's analytical orientation. My familiarity with critical approaches to language and education heightened my sensitivity to issues of power, ideology, and institutional constraint, particularly in relation to the implementation of Ghana's language-in-education policy. This orientation shaped my focus on discrepancies between observed classroom practices and the expressed beliefs and ideologies of teachers and school officials. Consequently, my analysis attends closely to how Southern multilingual practices are negotiated within institutional structures and how policy is interpreted, resisted, or reconfigured in everyday classroom interactions.

Reflexivity in this study therefore serves not as an attempt to eliminate bias but as a means of situating interpretation within my positionality. I recognize that this research would have looked different if conducted by another researcher, a reality that is consistent with qualitative inquiry, and one I view as a strength rather than a limitation. By making my positionality explicit, I aim to provide a more nuanced and credible account of Southern multilingualism, language ideologies, and policy enactment in public and private elementary school classrooms in Ghana.

4.5 Selection of cases

The two schools selected for this study were chosen purposefully to serve as instrumental cases, providing insight into the broader phenomenon of Southern multilingual practices in elementary classrooms. The selection of one public school and one private school reflect the desire to capture the phenomenon within two distinct institutional contexts, each with unique organizational structures, language policies, and classroom environments. The goal is not to compare the schools, but to use their differing contexts to illuminate the ways in which multilingual practices are enacted, perceived, and shaped by institutional and social factors.

The public school was selected because it provides a contrasting institutional context that highlights how multilingual practices function under government-mandated structures. Public schools in Ghana specifically often serve large and linguistically diverse student populations, with children coming from a variety of home language backgrounds and socio-economic conditions (Yevudey, 2017). Teachers are required to follow standardized curricula and adhere to official language policies, which can limit instructional flexibility and shape classroom language use. Class sizes are typically larger, and resources such as teaching materials, technology, and language support programs are often constrained, requiring teachers to manage multilingualism within these limitations. Observing public-school classrooms allowed the study to examine how teachers navigate language diversity, implement multilingual strategies within policy constraints, and respond to the linguistic needs of students in a resource-limited and highly structured environment.

However, the specific public-school classrooms in which this study was conducted do not align neatly with all of these general characteristics. These contextual nuances are taken up in a later section of this chapter. Observing public-school classrooms nonetheless allowed the study to examine how teachers navigate language diversity, implement multilingual strategies within policy constraints, and respond to the linguistic needs of students within a structured institutional environment.

The private school was selected for its distinct institutional and pedagogical characteristics that contrast with the public school, providing a complementary perspective on multilingual practices. Private schools in Ghana often have smaller class sizes, greater access to teaching resources, and higher levels of instructional flexibility. Teachers in these settings are typically afforded more autonomy in designing lessons, implementing multilingual strategies, and integrating students' home languages into classroom instruction. Private schools may also attract students from families with specific linguistic expectations or higher exposure to English, which can influence classroom language dynamics. Including a private school as a case allows the study to explore how multilingual practices emerge in a setting where policy constraints are fewer, teachers exercise more discretion, and students' linguistic backgrounds intersect with different social and cultural expectations. This contrast with the public-school context enriches

the study's understanding of how Southern multilingualism is enacted, supported, or limited across varying educational environments.

Selecting these two cases aligns with the principles of instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995, 2003), where the purpose of case selection is to provide a lens through which the broader phenomenon can be examined. The two schools were not chosen for their uniqueness or representativeness of all public and private schools, but for their potential to offer contrasting insights into classroom multilingual practices. By exploring the phenomenon in both settings, the study captures a wider range of interactions, beliefs, and institutional influences, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of Southern multilingualism in elementary education.

In addition, the selection of one public and one private school enables the researcher to explore how contextual factors, such as governance, curriculum structure, and student demographics, interact with teacher ideologies and classroom language practices. This approach supports the study's aim of understanding both the enactment of multilingual practices and the perceptions that shape them, while remaining focused on the phenomenon rather than on school comparison.

4.6 Boundedness of case

In case study research, it is essential to clearly define the boundaries of the cases to establish what will be studied and to maintain a focused and manageable scope (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2003). In this study, the cases are bounded both contextually and conceptually. The contextual boundaries are defined by the specific schools selected for investigation: one public elementary school and one private elementary school in Southern Ghana. These schools serve as sites where classroom interactions and institutional practices related to Southern multilingualism are observed, analyzed, and interpreted. Within these schools, Grades 2 and 4 were specifically selected because Ghana's bilingual language policy mandates a transition to English-only medium of instruction beginning in Grade 4. Observing these two grades in both schools allowed me to capture how multilingual practices operate before (Grade 2) and after this transition (Grade 4), providing insight into how language use, teaching strategies, and classroom interactions adapt across this policy shift.

Conceptually, the cases are bounded by the phenomenon of interest, namely Southern multilingual language practices in elementary school classrooms, as well as the perceptions,

beliefs, and ideologies of teachers and school officials regarding these practices. By focusing on both observed classroom interactions and participants' perspectives, the study establishes clear conceptual boundaries around the linguistic and social processes under investigation. This ensures that the research remains centered on the enactment and understanding of multilingual practices rather than on other aspects of school life, such as administrative procedures or extracurricular activities.

Temporal boundaries are also needed to delimit data collection to a specific period during which classroom observations, interviews, and other data gathering activities were conducted. The dissertation data collection period took place between June and August of 2024, which corresponds to the Spring semester for elementary schools in the region. This period captures a representative snapshot of classroom interactions and teacher practices while remaining feasible within the scope of the dissertation.

Defining the cases in this bounded way serves several purposes. First, it ensures that the study is manageable and focused, allowing for an in-depth exploration of complex classroom phenomena. Second, it clarifies what is included and excluded from the analysis, enhancing transparency and rigor. Third, it situates the findings within the particular social, institutional, and cultural contexts of the selected schools, providing rich, contextualized insights into Southern multilingual practices that can inform theory and future research.

The boundedness of the cases is defined by the selection of two schools, the focus on classroom-based multilingual practices and associated beliefs, and the nine-week period of fieldwork conducted during the Spring semester of 2024. These boundaries provide a clear framework for the study, guiding data collection and analysis while ensuring that the research remains aligned with its central questions and objectives.

4.7 Research Site / Context

4.7.1 Community and school context

The study was carried out in two elementary schools in Asankrama (pseudonym) community in Southern Ghana. The schools are located in Obosomkrom (pseudonym) municipality within Asankrama. Obosomkrom municipality has a population of approximately 180,000 people

according to the 2021 census data (Ghana Statistical Service, 2022). The municipality is a rapidly growing semi-urban area, strategically located near major towns and transport routes, which has contributed to its accelerated development. The community is characterized by a mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial developments, as well as growing social infrastructure, including health clinics, markets, and recreational facilities.

Education is a key focus in the municipality, with numerous primary and secondary schools, as well as vocational training centers, serving the local population. Many residents are engaged in formal employment in nearby towns or run small businesses and services within the municipality, including retail shops, transport services, and food vending. While some households continue to engage in small-scale agriculture, most farming activities are now oriented toward supplying local markets rather than subsistence. The semi-urban context, with its blend of urban amenities and traditional community life, provides a dynamic environment for educational research, reflecting both the opportunities and challenges of rapidly developing municipalities in this region.

The schools in this study predominantly serve families from diverse socio-economic backgrounds in the Asankrama community. A look at the statistical data of the municipality may shed light on the demographics of Obosomkrom. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, out of approximately 180,000 residents in Obosomkrom municipality, about 120,000 have access to mobile phones and internet services, reflecting widespread connectivity. Access to television and radio is also high, with an estimated 145,000 residents owning televisions and 165,000 listening to radio programs regularly.

Education levels in the municipality are generally higher than in rural areas. Approximately 85% of the population have completed at least primary education, and around 60% have attained secondary or higher education. Very few residents, roughly 5%, have never attended formal school. These statistics suggest that literacy rates are relatively high, with most residents able to read and write in English and the local language, Twi. The semi-urban nature of the community, combined with its proximity to major towns and transport networks, has resulted in greater exposure to technology, media, and educational opportunities, which shape the learning environment of the schools in this study.

The majority of people in the community speak Twi, the local language, while a significant number also speak English, the official language of the nation. Twi serves as the primary language for daily communication, and most residents understand English, although not all use it fluently in informal settings. Most students in the schools speak Twi, reflecting the language of the community. However, some students whose parents have moved to Obosomkrom municipality from other parts of Ghana may also speak Hausa, Ewe, Frafra, or other Ghanaian languages in addition to Twi, creating a multilingual environment within the schools.

The people in the community where the study was carried out come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and this diversity is reflected in both schools included in the study. Unlike typical rural or under-resourced public schools, the public primary school in Obosomkrom municipality is a top-performing institution and, together with the private school, they attract students from across the socio-economic spectrum. Families from middle-class and affluent backgrounds enroll their children in both schools, while children from families with more modest means also attend, reflecting the semi-urban and rapidly developing nature of the municipality.

Although public primary education in Ghana is free, parents may contribute small fees to cover other school expenses, such as teaching aids and remedial classes. In contrast, schooling in private schools is paid for by families who cover all core educational costs. The private school provides a paid lunch, which is served to all students across the school, while the public school has canteens and a cafeteria where students can purchase food individually during breaks. Many parents are engaged in small-scale trading, casual labor, or smallholder farming. They live in a mix of rented apartments, self-built homes, and newer residential estates, some with electricity and running water, others relying on shared or community facilities. This socio-economic diversity across both schools creates a dynamic learning environment in which students experience a blend of urban amenities and traditional lifestyles, shaping their educational and social experiences.

4.72 Public School

The public school (State Government School, pseudonym) selected for this study was established in 2006, with the current principal serving as one of the founding teaching staff. The school

provides education from kindergarten through Primary 6 (K-6) and has grown to accommodate a student population of approximately 1,400, supported by 45 teachers at the time of data collection. The school is structured into three streams, resulting in 18 classes across all grades. For example, Grade 1 is divided into three sections: 1A, 1B, and 1C. Applying this structure across the six grades gives a total of 18 classes.

Classroom staffing varies by level. In the lower primary (Grades 1 to 3), there are typically two teachers per class, while in the upper primary (Grades 4 to 6), teaching is organized by subject, with approximately five teachers per class, excluding courses such as Creative Arts. This structure allows teachers to specialize in specific subjects while accommodating the larger student body.

The schools' facilities include a toilet block funded by the World Bank, and ongoing maintenance and improvements are supported by an active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). The school is widely recognized as a prestigious public school in the community, often referred to by both staff and local residents as a "benchmark school". This reputation was consistently noted during interviews with the principals and teachers, and community members, and was reflected in the school's strong academic performance and well-organized structure. The schools' facilities, the active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and the level of external support and organized community involvement are relatively rare in the region, particularly among public schools, which are often perceived as underfunded and lacking in resources. Before conducting fieldwork, I expected to encounter the typical challenges associated with resource-constrained public schools; however, this school contrasted sharply with that expectation. It is widely recognized as a prestigious public school in the community.

Due to the size and scope of the public school, the primary and junior high school sections have separate principals, ensuring effective management. Most students transition directly from primary school to the junior high section upon promotion, creating continuity in their educational experience. This organizational structure, combined with the school's resources, teacher allocation, and reputation, makes it an informative site for exploring multilingual classroom practices in a large, public-school context. A summary of the selected public school's key characteristics is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1*State Government School (Public School)*

Variable	Grade 2	Grade 4
Name of Main Class Teacher	Sandra Johnson	Isaac Obeng
Number of Class Teachers	2	5 (3 participated in the study)
Number of Students	73 students	81 students
Average age of Students	8 years	11 years

4.73 Private School

Grace Academy (pseudonym) is the private school selected for this study. The school has an enrollment of approximately 300 students, with class sizes ranging from 30 to 40 students across grades, kindergarten through 9. It is a faith-based institution, specifically affiliated with a Christian denomination. The principal is expected to be a member of the Christian faith and denomination, while teachers may come from diverse religious or non-religious backgrounds.

The school offers instruction in three languages: English, French, and Twi, with English serving as the primary language of instruction. It operates under the oversight of both the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service, ensuring that its curriculum and educational practices comply with national standards while allowing for the flexibility often associated with private school management. This combination of smaller class sizes, a structured yet flexible curriculum, and multilingual instruction makes the school a suitable site for examining the enactment of Southern multilingual practices in a private school context. A summary of the selected private school's key characteristics is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2*Grace Academy (Private School)*

Variable	Grade 2	Grade 4
Name of Main Class Teacher	Rose Acheampong	Kwaku Obeng Adjei
Number of Class Teachers	1	1
Number of Students	35 students	35 students
Average age of Students	8 years	11 years

4.8 Field entry and data collection procedure

Approval to conduct dissertation fieldwork in Ghana was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Penn State. Fieldwork was carried out between June and August 2024, corresponding to the Spring semester for elementary schools in the region. Data collection spanned a total of nine weeks and involved classroom observations, audio-recorded interactions, and interviews with teachers and school administrators.

During the initial visits to both schools, I introduced myself to the principals, who in turn facilitated introductions to the teachers of Grades 2 and 4. The first week at each school was dedicated to familiarization, allowing me to build rapport with teachers and students, observe classroom routines, and understand the school environment. From the second week onwards, classroom interactions were audio-recorded to capture multilingual practices in English, Science, and History lessons across the four classes in both schools. Teacher interviews were conducted between weeks six and nine to gather insights into their perceptions, beliefs, and ideologies regarding Southern multilingual practices.

In total, the data collection included 12 class observations, 20 audio-recorded classroom sessions, and 8 interviews with school administrators and teachers. The structure of teaching differed between the schools due to variations in class size and institutional organization. In most elementary classrooms in Ghana, a single class teacher teaches most subjects, apart from

electives such as French and Creative Arts. In the Grace Academy, both Grades 2 and 4 had a single class teacher along with one teacher for each elective. In contrast, the public school (School A) had larger student populations, with two teachers assigned to Grade 2 and five teachers for Grade 4, reflecting the need for subject-specialized teaching and classroom management. Details of the classes, including student numbers and teacher allocation, are provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Class Structure, Subjects, and Teacher Allocation

School	Grade	Number of Students	Subjects observed	Number of teachers per class	Notes
State Government School	Grade 2	73	English, Science, and History	2 teachers	Teachers co- teach most subjects; electives excluded
State Government School	Grade 4	81	English, Science, and History	5 teachers	Upper primary uses subject- specialized teaching; electives excluded
Grace Academy	Grade 2	35	English, Science, and History	1 class teacher + 1 teacher per elective	Smaller class sizes; elective teachers handle French and Creative Arts.

Grace Academy	Grade 4	35	English, Science, and History	1 class teacher + 1 teacher per elective	Smaller class sizes; elective teachers handle French and Creative Arts.
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Notes in relation to table

- “Electives” refer to French and Creative Arts, which are taught by specialized teachers rather than the class teacher.
- Class sizes in the public school were significantly larger than the private school, requiring multiple teachers for both lower and upper primary grades.
- This table illustrates the organizational differences between the two schools, which influenced classroom interactions and multilingual practices observed.

4.9 Participants

The participating classrooms for both observations and audio recordings were Classes Two and Four in each school. Teacher interviews were conducted with five teachers across both grades and schools. Teacher interviews were conducted with five teachers across both grades and schools, and I also interviewed two school officials, one from each school, to gain additional insights into school-level language practices (see Tables 3 and 4). In both schools, the term “class” is used to denote grade level, with Class Two and Class Four corresponding to Grades Two and Four in the American school system. As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, Ghana’s educational language policy is an early-exit transitional bilingual policy, which allows the use of a Ghanaian language as the primary medium of instruction alongside gradual increments of English from kindergarten through Class Three. By Class Four, learners are expected to transition to an entirely monolingual English medium of instruction.

I selected these two classes across the two schools to capture a snapshot of language use before (Class Two) and after (Class Four) the transition to English-only instruction. Focusing on these classrooms enabled me to examine patterns of language use across different lessons and subjects. While I acknowledge that the data from these sources do not provide sufficient evidence to generalize about the normative use of language in these classrooms, the classroom interactions and teachers' reflections on their Southern multilingual practices offer valuable insights into how language is used in practice. Tables 4 and 5 present detailed demographic and professional profiles of the participating teachers and school administrators in the public and private schools, respectively.

Table 4

Public school teachers

Name	Grade and Subject	Teaching Experience	Teaching Qualifications	Number of years spent in current school	Other experiences
Francis Ofori	Class 4 (English)	5 years	Bachelor's degree in education	Less than a year	He taught in a village school first, so large urban class sizes are new to him.
Isaac Obeng	Class 4 (Science)	5 years	Diploma in basic education	5 years	Isaac teaches confidently in English and promotes its use among students.
Sandra Johnson	Class 2 (English)	15 years	Bachelor's degree in education	12 years	Sandra has experience teaching in

					multiple bilingual programs.
Pamela Oduro	Principal	26 years	Master of philosophy (MPhil) degree in art education	18 years	Pamela was one of the founding teachers who helped start the state Government School

Table 5

Private school teachers

Name	Grade and Subject	Teaching Experience	Teaching Qualifications	Number of years spent in current school	Other experiences
Kwaku Agyei	Class 4 (All subjects except French and Creative Arts)	9 years	High school certificate	8 years	Kwaku moved from school administration to construction, helping build several school facilities, before eventually shifting into

					full-time teaching.
Rose Acheampong	Class 2 (All subjects except French and Creative Arts)	5 years	Bachelor's degree	5 years	Rose has extensive experience teaching Grade 2 and emphasizes patience and discipline with young learners.
Paul Agbosu	Acting Principal	28 years	Bachelor's degree in human resource management	26 years	Paul is a seasoned French teacher and administrator with nearly 30 years of experience in tutoring and classroom instruction.

4.10 Data Sources

To address the first research question, multiple sources of information were collected and analyzed to understand Southern multilingual practices in Grade 2 and Grade 4 classrooms across both schools, in line with principles of methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2012). These sources included audio-recorded classroom interactions, fieldnotes, and reflective memos. The principal data sources were a) audio-recordings of teacher–learner interactions in Grade 2

and Grade 4 classrooms at the State Public School and Grace Academy, b) Fieldnotes and reflective memos generated from observations in these four classrooms.

4.101 Audio Recordings

I audio-recorded English, Science, and History lessons in each class using an Olympus WS-853 digital voice recorder. The recorder is equipped with a stereo microphone and was placed at the front of the classroom, either on the teacher's desk or on the desk of a student seated in the front row. Before recording, I explained the purpose and operation of the device to the teachers, who also instructed students not to touch the recorder and reiterated the purpose of my visit on the first day of recording in each class.

The total time spent on audio recordings in each class was as follows:

1. **Public School:** Grade 2 – 184 minutes; Grade 4 – 167 minutes
2. **Private School:** Grade 2 – 110 minutes; Grade 4 – 106 minutes

Further details of individual lessons and durations are provided in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

Table 6

Total audio recording per school and grade

School	Grade/Class	Total Duration (Minutes)
Public School	Grade 2	184
Public School	Grade 4	167
Public School Total		351
Private School	Grade 2	110
Private School	Grade 4	106
Private School Total		216
Overall Total		567

Table 7*Audio recorded lessons in public school*

Class	Date	Subject and Recording Number	Duration (Minutes)
Class 2	June 11	Science 1	50 minutes
	June 13	English 1	22 minutes
	June 13	History 1	50 minutes
	June 19	English 2	30 minutes
	June 24	Science 2	32 minutes
Class 4	June 11	English 1	46 minutes
	June 13	English 2	40 minutes
	June 13	History 1	48 minutes
	June 26	Science 1	33 minutes

Table 8*Audio recorded lessons in the private school*

Class	Date	Subject	Duration
Class 2	June 25	English	39 minutes
	June 25	History	47 minutes
	June 26	Science	24 minutes
Class 4	June 20	Science	27 minutes
	June 20	History	35 minutes
	June 20	English	44 minutes

Although History lessons were also recorded, they were not transcribed or coded for analysis. This decision was made to limit the scope of the study and to ensure comparability across schools by focusing on two core subjects, English and Science, which are taught regularly and follow more standardized instructional structures. In this study, instructional structures refer to the typical organization of lessons, including the sequencing of activities such as teacher

explanation, questioning, guided practice, and student responses. English and Science lessons tend to follow similar patterns across classrooms, which allows for more systematic comparison of teaching practices and classroom interaction. Focusing on these subjects also enabled a more in-depth analysis aligned with the research questions while remaining within practical time and resource constraints.

To provide transparency regarding the extent of data analyzed, the proportion of audio recordings that were transcribed for each lesson is summarized in Table 9. Reporting these percentages helps clarify the completeness of the dataset and the degree to which each recorded session contributed to the analysis.

Table 9

Audio recordings and percentages of transcription

Class	Percentage of transcription (%)
Class 2 English	90%
Class 2 Science	98%
Class 4 English	100%
Class 4 Science	100%
Class 2 English	89%
Class 2 Science	100%
Class 4 English	100%

As shown in Table 9, the majority of audio recordings were transcribed at a very high rate, with most lessons reaching between 90% and 100% transcription. This indicates a strong level of data completeness across both English and Science lessons. Minor variations in transcription percentages are evident in a few cases, but these differences are unlikely to affect the overall analysis, as the recordings still capture nearly the entirety of classroom interactions. Overall, the high transcription coverage strengthens the reliability and consistency of the dataset used in this study.

4.102 Observation, Field Notes, and Reflective Memos

Before beginning formal audio recordings, I observed a total of 12 class periods across Grade 2 and Grade 4 classrooms in both schools. During this initial observation phase, I familiarized myself with classroom routines, teacher–learner interactions, and the learning environment. Throughout the study, I continued to take field notes and write reflective memos from my observations until the end of the data collection period. During the observation period, I spent time in lessons, recess, extended periods for learner classwork and exercises, as well as informal interactions and conversations with teachers. I took detailed field notes in all lessons and classes, focusing on instances when teachers or learners chose different languages during communication, such as feedback, clarification, or introducing new concepts. I also recorded situations in which either the teacher or learners were unable to convey or comprehend teaching and learning content effectively, as well as classroom management issues, including periods with minimal or no teacher supervision. At the end of each observation day, I wrote reflective memos to document my ongoing reflections on topics such as my identity and positionality as a researcher in the classroom, negotiating relationships with teachers, teacher verbal feedback and evaluations, and challenges encountered by both learners and teachers during reading activities, drill exercises, or comprehension tasks. Overall, these memos provided me with a structured space to capture reflections and insights related to the study’s goals throughout the data collection process.

4.103 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and school officials to explore beliefs and ideologies regarding multilingual classroom practices, attitudes toward Southern language varieties, institutional expectations or constraints shaping language use, and perceived benefits, challenges, and tensions surrounding multilingualism.

Interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

4.11 Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. This approach was selected because it allows for a systematic yet flexible examination of patterned meanings across qualitative data while remaining attentive to context, participant perspectives, and social practices. The analysis was both inductive and theoretically informed, guided by the study's focus on Southern multilingual practices, language ideologies, and communicative practices within elementary school classrooms.

4.111 Transcription

All classroom observations and interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with detailed field notes. Audio recordings from classroom interactions and interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Transcription was treated as an analytic act rather than a purely technical task, allowing early immersion in the data. Because classroom interactions involved the use of multiple languages, including English, Twi, and occasional instances of other Ghanaian languages, transcription followed several deliberate conventions.

Classroom talk between teachers and learners in Classes Two and Four drew fluidly on both Twi and English. I conducted 12 hours of classroom observation and 10 hours of audio recording across the four classrooms in both schools. I transcribed 98% of the audio recordings, preserving all talk in the original language. Twi remained in Twi and English remained in English, without any initial translation.

The recordings included both Twi and English, so I initially used Otter.ai for transcription. However, the software could not accurately capture multilingual data. As a result, I went through all recordings manually to ensure that every section was correctly transcribed and preserved in the original language. I chose to do this myself rather than hire paid transcribers in order to become deeply familiar with the data and engage with it actively, exploring patterns and interactions as I transcribed (Miles et al. 2014). As noted earlier, I excluded history lessons from transcription to allow for comparability across classrooms. I transcribed most sections of lessons, stopping the recordings when learners were completing exercises after the teacher had finished delivering the content.

There were instances where I could not transcribe parts of the audio because of undiscernible talk or silence among learners while they worked independently. These periods were sometimes significant and are discussed in my memos, as they revealed important aspects of classroom dynamics. I also chose not to transcribe identical or highly similar lesson sections. After reviewing the recordings and making notes, I used my judgment to decide which sections to include or exclude. For example, Class Two English in the public school had two audio-recorded sessions, and I selected one of these for transcription.

During transcription, I noted when the teacher addressed specific learners individually rather than the whole class, as this was relevant to understanding how language was used in interaction with particular students. In such cases, I assigned pseudonyms to the learners.

The transcription prioritized communicative content and pedagogical interaction rather than fine-grained conversation analytic detail. Pauses, emphasis, overlapping speech, and code-switching were only noted where they were relevant to meaning, classroom management, or instructional strategies. This decision aligns with the study's focus on communicative practices and ideologies rather than micro-level turn-taking analysis (Miles et al. 2014).

Interview transcripts were reviewed alongside field notes to ensure accuracy and completeness. Any ambiguities were clarified through repeated listening to recordings. Transcripts were anonymized using pseudonyms for schools, teachers, and students to protect participant confidentiality. For security and organization, I transferred all audio recordings from the recorder to password-protected cloud storage. I then transcribed the recordings by playing them in 5 to 7 second segments, typing each segment before continuing until the entire audio was fully transcribed. In total, I recorded 15 audio sessions and selected 8 transcripts for detailed analysis, representing two sessions from each of the four classes.

4.112 Phase 1: Familiarization with the Data

The first phase of analysis involved sustained engagement with the data. I read and reread all interview transcripts, audio-recorded classroom transcripts, and field notes multiple times while listening to corresponding audio recordings and interviews. During this phase, I wrote analytic memos to document initial impressions, recurring patterns, surprising moments, and connections

to the research questions. These memos captured early reflections on language use across grades, institutional constraints, and teachers' stated beliefs versus observed practices.

Familiarization also involved cross-referencing classroom observations with interview data to begin identifying points of convergence and divergence between what teachers reported and what was enacted in practice. This iterative engagement laid the groundwork for systematic coding.

4.113 Phase 2: Initial Coding

Initial coding was conducted manually and involved line-by-line and segment-based coding of all data sources. Codes were applied to meaningful units of text, including classroom exchanges, instructional moves, teacher explanations, and reflections on language policy. Coding was primarily inductive, allowing codes to emerge from the data rather than being imposed a priori. However, sensitizing concepts from the literature, such as translanguaging, language ideology, choral repetitions, policy enactment, and instructional flexibility, also informed attention to particular patterns.

Codes captured both observed practices, for example use of Twi for explanation, English for assessment, and code-switching for classroom management, and reported beliefs or ideologies, such as English as a marker of quality education and local language as support for comprehension. Descriptive codes were used initially to stay close to participants' language, followed by more interpretive codes as patterns became clearer.

To enhance analytic rigor, coding was conducted across cases rather than within a single school at a time. This approach allowed emerging patterns to be examined across public and private school contexts without framing the analysis as a direct comparison.

Although initial coding was primarily inductive, the analytic process led to the development of a structured coding framework that captured recurring patterns in multilingual classroom practices. This framework combined data-driven codes with theoretically informed categories aligned with the study's focus on translanguaging, sociocultural practices, language ideology, and classroom interaction.

Codes were iteratively refined through repeated engagement with the data and analytic memo-writing. As patterns became more consistent across transcripts, the codes were grouped into broader categories representing key dimensions of classroom communication, including translanguaging practices, localized forms of English, sociocultural linguistic practices, interactional routines, instructional modes, and language ideologies. Table 10 provides a summary of the coding framework used in the analysis.

Table 10

Summary of Coding Framework

Code Family	Focus of Analysis	What It Captures
TL (Translanguaging)	Multilingual meaning-making practices and fluid language use	Use of English and Ghanaian languages (e.g., Twi) for explanation, clarification, and sociocultural meaning-making
L-ENG (Localized English)	Varieties of English	Ghanaian English forms and hybrid structures influenced by indigenous languages
SCL (Sociocultural Linguistic Practices)	Cultural grounding of language	References to local knowledge, culturally embedded pedagogy, and communication norms
INT (Interactional Practices)	Classroom interaction patterns	Routine classroom talk, participation structures, and peer influence
MOD (Instructional Modes)	Teaching and explanation strategies	Grammar explanations, task framing, and instructional metatalk
IDEO (Language Ideology)	Beliefs about language	Enforcement of Standard English norms and underlying

		assumptions about correctness
AFB / ERR (Affective & Error Positioning)	Feedback and evaluation	Praise, encouragement, and identification of student errors
CMT (Classroom Management)	Organizational talk	Procedural instructions and behavior management
READ (Reading Mode)	Literacy practice	Reading aloud from texts or shared classroom materials
REP (Repetition Pedagogy)	Reinforcement strategies	Choral repetition, drilling, and memorization practices

As shown in Table 10, the coding framework captures multiple dimensions of multilingual classroom interaction. For example, instances where teachers shifted between English and Twi to clarify meaning were coded under translanguaging for explanation, while corrections emphasizing grammatical correctness were coded as enforcement of Standard English norms. Similarly, locally meaningful references to everyday experiences such as farming or firewood collection were coded as sociocultural grounding of language use.

The coding framework remained flexible throughout the analysis. New codes were added when necessary, and existing codes were refined or collapsed to better reflect patterns across classrooms and interviews. This iterative process ensured that the coding scheme remained grounded in the data while also maintaining analytic rigor.

The final codebook, including detailed definitions, inclusion criteria, and illustrative examples for each code, is provided in Appendix A. Codes were not treated as mutually exclusive; multiple codes could be applied to a single excerpt where relevant, allowing for a nuanced analysis of the layered nature of multilingual classroom interaction.

4.114 Phase 3: Generating Initial Themes

Codes were then examined for patterns of shared meaning and clustered into preliminary themes. This process involved organizing codes into broader categories that captured recurring ways multilingualism was enacted, justified, or constrained in classrooms. Visual mapping and memo-writing were used to explore relationships among codes and to identify potential thematic structures.

At this stage, themes were provisional and expansive. For example, multiple codes related to language choice, instructional clarity, and student comprehension were grouped together, while others relating to policy, assessment, and institutional expectations formed separate clusters. Attention was given to how themes operated differently across grade levels, Class Two versus Class Four, and institutional contexts.

4.115 Phase 4: Reviewing Themes Across Cases

The preliminary themes were reviewed and refined by returning to the full data set. This phase involved checking whether themes coherently captured the coded data and whether they accurately represented patterns across classrooms, interviews, and schools. Some themes were collapsed due to overlap, while others were separated to better reflect distinct processes or ideologies.

Reviewing themes across cases allowed the analysis to remain focused on the phenomenon of Southern multilingualism rather than on school-level comparison. Differences between public and private school contexts were treated as contextual variations that shaped practice, rather than as variables to be measured or ranked.

4.116 Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

In this phase, each theme was clearly defined, named, and articulated in relation to the research questions. Definitions focused on what each theme revealed about multilingual practices, teacher ideologies, or institutional influences. Analytic memos were expanded to clarify the boundaries of each theme and to articulate how it contributed to understanding Southern multilingual practices in elementary classrooms.

Themes were refined to ensure they were internally coherent, distinct from one another, and grounded in the data. Representative excerpts from classroom interactions and interviews were selected to illustrate each theme while preserving participants' voices.

4.117 Phase 6: Developing Analytic Narratives

The final phase involved weaving themes into analytic narratives that connect observed practices with teachers' and school officials' beliefs, policies, and contextual constraints. These narratives move beyond description to interpretation, showing how multilingual practices are negotiated within classrooms shaped by national language policy, institutional expectations, and community language norms.

Analytic narratives were constructed to highlight how Southern multilingualism is enacted in everyday classroom interactions, how teachers justify or rationalize their language choices, and how institutional contexts enable or constrain these practices. Classroom episodes were used as illustrative cases to anchor interpretation in lived practice.

4.12 Reflexivity and Analytic Decisions

Throughout the analysis, I engaged in reflexive memo-writing to examine how my positionality, linguistic background, and prior assumptions influenced interpretation. As a researcher familiar with Ghanaian language practices and educational contexts, I was attentive to the risk of normalizing certain practices or overlooking taken-for-granted meanings. Reflexive notes were used to question interpretations and to remain grounded in participants' perspectives.

Decisions such as focusing on communicative practices rather than fine-grained discourse analysis, prioritizing multilingual transcription, and analyzing across cases were made deliberately to align with the study's research questions and conceptual framing.

4.13 Ensuring Trustworthiness

Several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis. Prolonged engagement in the field over a nine-week period allowed for sustained observation and contextual understanding. Triangulation across data sources, including classroom observations,

interviews, and field notes, strengthened analytic claims. Thick description was used to situate findings within their social and institutional contexts, enabling readers to assess transferability.

An audit trail consisting of transcripts, codes, memos, and thematic maps was maintained to enhance transparency and dependability. These strategies collectively support the credibility and rigor of the analytic process.

4.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the instrumental case study methodology guiding the research. By using two elementary schools as instrumental cases, the study seeks to illuminate the phenomenon of Southern multilingual classroom practices. Through observations, interviews, and document analysis, the research explores how multilingual practices occur and how teachers and school officials perceive and interpret them.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, addressing the main research question: How are Southern multilingual practices enacted in elementary school classrooms in Ghana, and how are these practices shaped by teachers' beliefs, ideologies, and broader socio-institutional contexts? The chapter also responds to the three sub-questions by examining (1) observed multilingual practices, (2) teachers' beliefs and ideologies, and (3) the relationship between beliefs and classroom practices.

The findings are organized into two main sections. The first section draws on teacher interviews conducted in State Government School (SGS) and Grace Academy (GA) in Obosomkrom municipality in Southern Ghana. It explores teachers' and school officials' beliefs, ideologies, and perceptions of multilingualism and multilingual education. The second section presents findings from classroom interaction data based on audio-recorded lessons, exploring how multilingual practices are enacted in real time through classroom discourse. An overview of the research questions and the study design is presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Research Questions and Study Design Overview

Research Questions and Study Design Overview		
Research Question	How are Southern multilingual practices enacted in elementary school classrooms in Ghana, and how are these practices shaped by teachers' beliefs, ideologies, and broader socio-institutional contexts?	
Sub-Questions:	1. What Southern multilingual practices can be observed in classrooms? 2. What beliefs and ideologies do teachers and school officials hold? 3. How do these beliefs align with or diverge from observed practices in the classroom?	
Observation of these practices through:		
Observed multilingual classroom practices	Teachers' beliefs and ideologies	The relationship between beliefs and classroom practices.

Occurring in two Ghanaian schools		
Section 1: Teacher Interviews- Belief and Ideologies		Section 2: Observation of Classroom Interaction- Translanguaging
Key Themes: 1) Euro-American English Preference and the Ideology of Social Mobility (2) Parental Preferences for English as the Language of Learning (3) Assessment Practices and the Systemic Pressure Toward English, (4) Teachers' Perspectives on Value of Indigenous Language and (5) Perceptions of Language Use 6) Public–Private School Dichotomy		Key Themes: (1) Standard Language Ideologies and the (re)Production of English Primacy (2) Translanguaging and Southern Multilingual Practices.

5.2 Teachers' Beliefs and Ideologies

The findings in this section are organized around key themes that emerged from the data: (1) Euro-American English Preference and the Ideology of Social Mobility (2) Parental Pressures and English Language Expectations, (3) Assessment Practices and the Structural Pressure Toward English, (4) Teachers' Valuation of Indigenous Languages, (5) Perceptions of Language Use, and 6) Public–Private School Dichotomy. These themes illustrate the complex and sometimes contradictory beliefs teachers hold toward multilingual practices in their classrooms.

5.21 Euro-American English Preference and the Ideology of Social Mobility

Teachers strongly positioned English as a language of upward mobility, global participation, and future access. They repeatedly described English as more economically valuable than Twi, which shaped their choice to use English as the primary medium of communication even beyond the classroom.

Teacher Isaac articulated this ideology very clearly. When asked why he speaks English both inside and outside the classroom, he explained that English is key to his imagined future mobility.

Extract 1

Researcher (17:32): but the main language you use in communicating with them formally is English. It's interesting, because in the classroom, the main language you use is English and outside of the classroom, the main language you use is English. So, what motivates you to use English both in and outside of the classroom?

Teacher Isaac (18:03): What motivates me is that I know that one day I'll get to some point. That's my main motivation. One day, one day I'll get to some point. And the point that I will be getting to, there will be no need for the Twi language. So, I have to prepare myself so that when I get a chance to go to that place, I'll be able to communicate with different people that I do not know. So, if I don't know those people and I don't understand their language, the language that we will be communicating in may be English. I usually don't change from English to Twi. I speak English very often with students so that even if the person does not understand what I'm saying, he or she will be forced to comply and then speak English with me. So, my target is that maybe I might not be here. I might get an opportunity. I'll be at the top or I will get an opportunity at some point. At that point, there wouldn't be a Twi language. It will only be the English language that we are going to use. So why don't I prepare myself. That's it. If it comes, then I take it. If it doesn't come, that's ok.

Researcher (19:33): You feel like you will get to a certain point in time where Twi will not be needed?

Teacher Isaac (19:37): Yeah

Teacher Isaac's account reflects a belief that English is necessary for future advancement and access to opportunities beyond the local context. His repeated reference to "one day I'll get to some point" suggests that he views English as a form of preparation for a future in which communication will require engagement with people who do not share his local language. Within this framing, Twi is positioned as less relevant to that imagined future, as indicated by his statement that "there will be no need for the Twi language."

His explanation also shows that this belief directly shapes his language practices. He reports using English consistently both inside and outside the classroom in order to prepare himself for this anticipated future. In relation to students, he indicates that he maintains English use even when they do not understand, with the expectation that they will “be forced to comply.” This suggests a belief that consistent exposure to English is necessary, even if it limits immediate comprehension. This perception also constructs English as a necessary investment for upward mobility, while Twi is framed as locally confined and insufficient for higher aspirations.

Overall, the extract shows that Teacher Isaac associates English with future opportunity and wider communication, while viewing Twi as less useful in that context. These beliefs appear to inform both his personal language use and his expectations of students’ language practices.

This ideology, which presented English as essential for upward mobility, was further reinforced by the teachers’ admiration for foreign English accents. They perceived British and American accents as more advanced, beautiful, or culturally desirable. Together, these extracts reveal internalized linguistic hierarchies tied to global power structures.

Extract 2

Teacher Francis (18:54): When I was in high school, I pursued science and technical stuff like physics and math

Teacher Francis (19:03): But when I went to the university, I loved English language, especially, the pronunciation of British or American accents. I really like it. I want to be fluent. That's why I specialized in English.

Teacher Francis (19:19): I am fascinated about language how the native speakers pronounce the words, you see I am a football fan. I listen to Jude Bellingham and the English guys, the way they pronounce their words. Even though, I'm a Ghanaian, I think I like English more than my local language. When the English people speak English, I'm fascinated.

(Researcher comment- Jude Bellingham is a British footballer who plays for a Spanish football club called Real Madrid CF as of January 2026).

Teacher Francis expressed strong admiration for native English accents: *“I really like the English language, especially the pronunciation and British or American accents I listen to Jude Bellingham. I think I like English more than my local language. When English people speak English, I’m fascinated”* (Extract 3)

When asked about colonization and attraction to foreign varieties of English, he acknowledged the argument but insisted his preference was natural and aesthetic: *“With that one they have a point... but naturally, I like it.”* (Extract 4)

He added that he prefers American English in particular: *“I prefer the American English. I love their culture... If I am not a teacher, I would have lived my life as an American.”* (Extract 5)

The extracts indicate that teachers’ beliefs and ideologies extend beyond the functional use of English to include clear preferences for particular global varieties of the language. These preferences reflect the construction of hierarchical distinctions within English itself, where American and British varieties are positioned as more desirable, advanced, or aesthetically appealing.

Teacher Francis explicitly expresses admiration for what he perceives as native English accents, particularly those associated with British and American speakers. His description of being fascinated by how “English people speak English” and his preference for these accents over his local language suggest an internalized valuation of certain forms of English above others. In this account, English serves as a medium of communication and instruction, while more significantly functioning as a site of aesthetic appreciation and personal identification

This orientation is further reinforced through the way these preferences are linked to broader cultural affiliations. Teacher Francis associates American English with an attractive lifestyle and cultural identity, indicating that his preference extends beyond linguistic features to encompass wider social and cultural meanings. His statement that he would have lived his life as an American if not a teacher illustrates the extent to which language preference is intertwined with imagined belonging and aspiration.

There is also some indication that teachers are aware of the possible historical and structural influences shaping these preferences. When prompted about the relationship between colonization and foreign accents, Teacher Francis acknowledges the validity of this perspective but ultimately frames his preference as natural and based on personal preference. This suggests a partial recognition of the ideological dimensions of language preference, alongside a tendency to individualize and normalize these orientations.

The patterns in these extracts point to the reproduction of global linguistic hierarchies in teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Certain varieties of English, particularly American and British, are elevated as more authentic or desirable, while local linguistic resources and localized forms of English are implicitly devalued. In this way, language preferences reflect and sustain broader associations between English, prestige, modernity, and cultural capital.

While earlier extracts emphasize English as a resource for future mobility and global belonging, extract 6 extends this ideology into classroom practice by framing English as a more efficient and effective medium for learning. Here, the preference for English is justified less in terms of aspiration and more through discourses of pedagogical progress, reinforcing its perceived superiority over Twi within educational contexts.

Extract 6

Teacher Sandra (51:03): So, you asked why I think that we should not use Twi. We can use it as a subject, but with the English language, we want them to learn. We want to see if they understand. If you are using Twi, you are just preventing them. We cannot bridge the gap very fast. It will be at a slow pace to me, that's my opinion. So, with the use of the Twi as I said, imagine I can't speak the Twi. I am teaching English. I am teaching RME. I'm teaching history. Won't there be any impact if I use only English? You will even see that the students will be even contributing to those teachers' classes using the English language. They will speak English.

This extract shows a shift in how English is justified in classroom practice, moving from personal preference toward ideas of educational progress and efficiency. Twi is described as slowing down learning and making it harder for students to "bridge the gap" in language

acquisition. In this framing, English is linked to faster learning, improvement, and academic progress, while Twi is positioned as something that limits these processes.

The reference to “bridging the gap” reflects a way of talking about learning in terms of progress and speed. Within this view, English is presented as supporting quicker understanding and smoother progression through learning tasks.

The extract also shows how the use of English is justified in relation to teacher language ability and classroom conditions. By stating “imagine I can’t speak the Twi,” the teacher highlights the practical limitations of using Twi in some teaching contexts. This is used to support the continued use of English across subjects such as RME and history, not only in English lessons.

There is also an acknowledgment that students may use Twi in class, particularly when teachers are unable to control or respond in Twi. In these cases, Twi appears as student-initiated, while English is positioned as the language intended for instruction and participation.

Overall, the extract presents English as the preferred language for teaching and learning, associated with clearer progression and wider classroom use, while Twi is described in relation to its limitations in supporting these processes.

Extending the theme of English as a vehicle for upward mobility, extract 7 provides a more explicit articulation of this relationship by linking language proficiency to educational background and current status. In doing so, it concretizes the broader ideology evident across the extracts in this theme, presenting English as a key resource for navigating and attaining social mobility.

Extract 7

Teacher Rose (08:17):

Yes, I learned English from the private school and became fluent in it. If it wasn’t the private school, I don’t think I would have known how to communicate in English and I would not be here.

This extract explicitly connects English language proficiency to educational trajectory and present positioning. The speaker attributes her fluency in English to attending a private school,

identifying it as the context in which meaningful language acquisition took place. English competence is therefore constructed as an outcome of a particular type of schooling rather than a general feature of education.

The addition of “I would not be here” extends this relationship beyond language learning to personal and professional advancement. English proficiency is positioned as a condition that has enabled her current status, suggesting a link between language ability and access to opportunities. In this way, English is framed as a resource that facilitates progression within educational and occupational spaces.

Alongside this, the extract reinforces a distinction between private and public schooling. Private education is associated with successful English acquisition, while the absence of such schooling is implied to limit communicative ability and, by extension, future prospects. This constructs English proficiency as unevenly distributed, tied to institutional access and educational background

This theme shows how teachers position English as a key resource for upward mobility, global access, and future opportunity. Across the extracts, English is constructed as more valuable than Twi, shaping both classroom practices and language preferences. It is associated with educational and professional advancement, as well as with prestige and desirable global identities. Together, these perspectives reflect an ideology that treats English as a form of social capital, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies in which local languages are viewed as more limited in scope.

5.22 Parental Preferences for English as the Language of Learning

Teachers frequently referenced parental expectations as a major factor influencing their own language practices. Parents were described as viewing English as the main purpose of schooling.

Extract 8

Researcher (9:30): What language do you use often in your teaching?

Teacher Rose (9:35): I use English often because of the experiences I've had. When a parent brings their child to school, they bring their child because they want them to learn

English and that is what most parents think and want because they know that when the children are at home they speak the local language or dialect (e.g., Twi, Ewe, Hausa etc.) and their perception is that they bring their child to school to learn English and not the local languages that are already used at home.

This extract highlights how teachers' language choices are shaped by what they perceive as parental expectations. Teacher Rose presents English as the primary reason parents send their children to school, suggesting that schooling is understood as a space for acquiring skills that are unavailable at home. Since local languages such as Twi, Ewe, or Hausa are already used in everyday family contexts, they are seen as less necessary within the classroom.

In this framing, English becomes the added value of formal education. It is constructed as something parents actively seek for their children, reinforcing its status as a language of opportunity and advancement. This perception places pressure on teachers to prioritize English in their teaching, even when other languages might support learning.

Building on the idea that parental expectations strongly shape teachers' language practices, extract 9 further illustrates how English is framed as both an academic necessity and a pathway to future opportunity. In this account, Teacher Sandra draws on parental encouragement for English learning while also linking English proficiency to students' cognitive development and potential access to wider social and economic opportunities, including international connections.

Extract 9

Researcher (30:01): What motivates you? Why do you choose to teach primarily in English?

Teacher Sandra (30:26): So, what motivates me is, they are learning a new language, and they have to learn it. Yes, and if they are able to, it's a plus. Also, sometimes their parents will even tell us that they speak Twi at home, so when they come to school, they should be able to learn English. I have a child he's very good, but he can't read. My class prefect, he can't speak English fluently. When you tell the whole class to speak English, he will start using sign language, but now he has started learning how to express himself. He is brilliant among the siblings; his father told me that he has a relative who is interested in his son's

development. I think the relative is abroad, the person is very keen on the student. So, if he is able to learn English, he will have many opportunities ahead of him.

The extracts (8 and 9) indicate that teachers construct their language practices in relation to perceived parental expectations, which are consistently framed around the prioritization of English as the central goal of schooling. Across the extracts, English is positioned as more than a medium of instruction, also serving as a desired outcome of education, reflecting a broader ideological orientation shared between parents and teachers.

Teachers describe parents as holding a clear belief that local languages belong to the home domain, while English is viewed as the legitimate language of the school. As Teacher Rose explains, parents bring their children to school specifically to learn English rather than the local languages already used at home. This reflects an underlying monolingual orientation in which languages are separated by context, with English associated with formal learning and local languages associated with informal, domestic use.

The data further show that teachers internalize and reproduce these parental ideologies in their own pedagogical reasoning. Teacher Sandra frames English as something students have to learn, reinforcing its perceived necessity. This suggests that English is constructed as a non-negotiable linguistic resource rather than one option within a broader multilingual repertoire.

In addition, English is associated with aspiration and socioeconomic mobility. Teacher Sandra links English proficiency to future opportunities, particularly in transnational contexts, as seen in the reference to a relative abroad and the belief that learning English will create many opportunities ahead. This reflects an ideology in which English functions as a form of linguistic capital tied to success, advancement, and access to opportunities beyond the local context.

However, the data reveals a tension between this ideology and students' current linguistic realities. Students are described as struggling to meet expectations of English fluency, yet the emphasis remains on increasing English use rather than incorporating familiar languages. This suggests that teachers' beliefs prioritize English acquisition over multilingual flexibility, even when students demonstrate competence in other linguistic resources.

The findings for this theme show that teachers and school officials hold beliefs that position English as the primary purpose of schooling, align with parental expectations that separate home and school language domains, frame English as essential for academic success and future mobility, and marginalize local languages as already acquired and therefore unnecessary in formal instruction. These ideologies collectively shape classroom language practices by reinforcing the dominance of English and limiting the legitimization of Southern multilingual practices within the school context

Extract 10

This extract illustrates how parental expectations for English are translated into strict institutional practices, showing how English-only norms are enforced within the school environment.

Teacher Rose (13:32): I know some private schools that as a parent when you visit your child in school you will not be allowed to talk to your children in the local language. English is used everywhere.

The school space is constructed as linguistically purified, where English is not just preferred but enforced as the only legitimate language, even extending into parent–child interaction. This reflects the same home–school boundary already identified, but in a more intensified form. Local languages are not merely positioned as belonging to the home, they are actively excluded from the school environment. The expectation attributed to parents is no longer just about learning English; it becomes compliance with an English-only norm that signals educational quality and prestige. English here functions as both a pedagogical tool and a marker of institutional legitimacy, reinforcing its dominance by regulating behavior and identity within the school.

The next extract highlights how the prioritization of English intersects with students' differing home backgrounds, revealing how access to English is uneven and shapes learners' experiences in the classroom.

Extract 11

Master Paul (43:05): The English language has an impact. The point is it is our lingua franca even if it is a foreign language. Let's say two children are in the same class. One of these two children is coming from a deprived home where the parents have no educational background, and the other child is from a good home with parents who are educated. You see that in the house of the second child, some parents try to instill the English language into their children, they will tell you, don't call your mother, Mama, call her mummy. They will teach you daddy and father in those ways. So by the time they bring that child to the classroom, he or she has advanced knowledge of certain things, to the detriment of the child from the deprived home. So, when it happens like that, you cannot say one is good, so you should leave the other one when teaching. So, for this matter, you have to make sure that all of them benefit from whatever you are teaching especially when it comes to English.

Here, English is framed as a unifying necessity (“lingua franca”) while simultaneously operating as a mechanism of stratification. The earlier idea of English as linguistic capital is sharpened here. Access to that capital is uneven, shaped by family background and early exposure. Children from educated homes arrive already aligned with the school’s linguistic expectations, while others are positioned as lacking. The teacher’s response, to ensure all students “benefit” from English instruction, does not challenge the dominance of English but instead reinforces it as the common standard everyone must reach. This reproduces the existing hierarchy while presenting it as fairness, positioning English proficiency as both the goal of schooling and the means through which inequality is managed rather than questioned.

Across the extracts for this theme, English is consistently constructed as the central purpose of schooling, shaped by parental expectations and reproduced through teachers’ practices. The boundary between home and school languages becomes institutionalized, with local languages confined to informal domains and English positioned as the legitimate medium of learning and success. Here, English operates as both a resource for opportunity and a mechanism that reproduces inequality, as students’ access to it varies before they even enter the classroom. Overall, the extracts show that schooling reinforces an English-dominant ideology that prioritizes assimilation into English over engagement with learners’ existing multilingual repertoires.

5.23 Assessment Practices and the Systemic Pressure Toward English

Teachers consistently described high-stakes assessment as a central force compelling the use of English in instruction. They noted that examinations, from classroom tests to the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE), are conducted in English, making it difficult to justify extensive use of Twi for content teaching.

Extract 12

Researcher (33:19): You said something that is very interesting. What is the rationale? Or why does this school prefer using English?

Master Paul (33:30): The lingua franca is English, okay? And you know, although we talked about French and Twi, when they go for their final exams, these are isolated subjects. For all the other subjects that they write, all questions are set in the English language. So, if you encourage them to use the local language and they go there to take the exam. They will struggle. Now they are writing about 10 papers, and out of the 10 papers, only two of them are not written in English. So, encouraging a local language is problematic. So, for the English, whether they like it or not, there is nothing you can do about that.

Master Paul explained: *“When they go for their final exams, all questions are set in the English language... out of the 10 subjects, only two of them are not written in English. So, encouraging a local language is problematic”*. (Extract 12)

Other teachers also described the mismatch between students’ spoken and written English abilities. Teacher Francis critiqued assessment practices, noting their unfairness: *“Someone can answer questions orally, but when it comes to writing, the person will not be good, so when you use a written exam alone to assess someone. It is bad.”* (Extract 13)

Teacher Kwaku confirmed that even fluent speakers struggle with writing: *“Some children here can speak English very well, but when you ask them to write it, they struggle.”* (Extract 14)

Teacher Isaac added that although he blends Twi and English, he prioritizes English because students ultimately must write in English: *“Whatever they are going to write, they will write it in English, so why don’t we help them with learning in English?”* (Extract 15)

The extracts indicate that assessment practices function as a significant structural force shaping teachers’ beliefs and language ideologies, particularly in reinforcing the centrality of English in classroom instruction. Teachers consistently frame the use of English as a practical and necessary response to the demands of high stakes examinations, which are conducted predominantly in English.

Teachers also describe the examination system as establishing clear linguistic expectations that extend across most subject areas. As Master Paul explains, while languages such as Twi and French are treated as separate subjects, the majority of examinable content is assessed in English. He notes that students write multiple papers, with only a small number not set in English, making the use of local languages in instruction difficult to justify. Within this framing, English is constructed as the unavoidable language of academic success, and the promotion of local languages is seen as potentially disadvantaging students in formal assessments.

This orientation reflects an ideology in which English is positioned as the legitimate language of evaluation and certification. Teachers present this not as a matter of preference, but as a structural constraint, emphasizing that students must be prepared to operate within an English medium assessment system regardless of their linguistic backgrounds. As a result, the use of English in teaching is framed as a form of preparation for examination requirements rather than solely a pedagogical choice.

At the same time, the data reveal an awareness among teachers of the limitations and inequities embedded in these assessment practices. Several participants highlight a disconnect between students’ oral and written English abilities. Teacher Francis points to the inadequacy of relying solely on written assessments, noting that some students are able to respond effectively in spoken form but are unable to demonstrate their knowledge in writing. Similarly, Teacher Kwaku observes that students who can speak English fluently may still struggle with written expression.

These observations indicate that teachers recognize a mismatch between students' communicative competencies and the modes of assessment used to evaluate them. Despite this recognition, the prioritization of English remains largely unchanged. Teacher Isaac's comment illustrates this alignment, as he justifies the emphasis on English instruction by pointing to the requirement that all written responses must be produced in English. In this sense, even when teachers employ multilingual practices in the classroom, these are subordinated to the ultimate goal of preparing students for English medium written assessment.

The findings show that teachers and school officials hold beliefs that position English as the dominant language of assessment and academic legitimacy. These beliefs are shaped by the structure of the examination system, which compels teachers to prioritize English in order to align instruction with evaluative demands. At the same time, teachers acknowledge the limitations of this system, particularly in its inability to capture students' full linguistic and cognitive abilities. Nevertheless, the structural pressure of assessment sustains an ideology in which English remains central, reinforcing its dominance and constraining the broader use of Southern multilingual practices in classroom instruction. Thus, assessments shape language use in ways that override multilingual policy directives.

5.24 Teachers' Perspectives on Indigenous Language Value

Despite the strong emphasis on English, some teachers also expressed deep appreciation for Twi as a cultural, communicative, and identity-anchoring resource in the society. Teachers rejected views that Twi should be removed from the classroom.

Extract 16

Researcher (18:38): On the other side of this conversation, a lot of people look down on Twi, and there are even calls for Twi to be abolished in the classroom because it creates confusion. What do you think? What's your opinion on the value and importance of Twi in the classroom?

Teacher Kwaku (18:59): Twi is our mother tongue; it is our language. We cannot abolish Twi. Do you get me? For instance, when children come to school, they speak English. But when the school closes and they go home, what language will they use to

communicate? Twi is our language, so it cannot be abolished. At the same time, we must learn English, even though it is not our own language.

Teacher Kwaku strongly defended the value of Twi in and outside of school: *“Twi is our mother tongue so we cannot abolish Twi, when they go home what language will they use to communicate?”* (Extract 16)

Teacher Rose also described the importance of balancing languages: *“If you teach English and they can’t speak their own local language, it is of no benefit, both languages are important, a child shouldn’t go to school to learn only English and do away with Twi.”* (Extract 17)

These views highlight a dual ideology: English is seen as externally valuable, whereas Twi is internally meaningful and socially necessary. The data indicate that, alongside the strong emphasis on English, teachers also articulate beliefs that position Twi as a culturally significant and socially necessary linguistic resource. These perspectives reflect an alternative ideological orientation in which indigenous language use is closely tied to identity, community belonging, and everyday communication.

Teacher Kwaku explicitly frames Twi as inseparable from cultural identity, describing it as “our mother tongue” and emphasizing that it cannot be abolished. His reasoning situates language within the lived realities of students, particularly their movement between school and home. By questioning what language children would use once they return home, he highlights the continued relevance of Twi beyond the classroom and reinforces its role as the primary medium of social interaction. In this account, Twi is constructed not merely as a language of convenience, but as an essential component of cultural continuity and interpersonal communication.

This perspective is further extended through the idea that education should not displace indigenous linguistic competence. Teacher Rose underscores the importance of maintaining both English and Twi, suggesting that proficiency in English alone is insufficient if it comes at the expense of the child’s ability to use their local language. Her statement that it is of no benefit for a child to learn English while losing the ability to speak Twi reflects a belief in the complementary value of multiple languages rather than a hierarchical replacement of one by another.

These accounts point to an ideological stance that resists the marginalization of indigenous languages within formal education. While English is acknowledged as necessary, Twi is simultaneously positioned as indispensable, particularly in relation to identity and social functioning. Teachers' responses suggest that the removal of Twi from the classroom would not only disrupt communication but also undermine students' connection to their linguistic and cultural environment.

The findings for this theme show that teachers and school officials hold beliefs that recognize the importance of indigenous languages as foundational to identity and community life. This orientation supports the continued presence of Twi in educational spaces, even within a broader system that prioritizes English. As a result, teachers' ideologies reflect a degree of tension, as they attempt to balance the perceived necessity of English with the cultural and communicative value of local languages.

5.25 Perceptions of Language Use in the Public-Private School Dichotomy

Teachers invoked widespread beliefs about differences between private and public schools, particularly regarding language use. Private schools were largely perceived as English-dominant spaces.

Teacher Kwaku stated: *"Private schools are known for English; people move their children from public schools to private schools so that they go and speak English."* (Extract 18)

However, teachers also described contradictions between perceived and actual practices. In the private school setting of this study, Twi was reportedly used frequently due to monitoring by education officers. This situation is inconsistent with the notion of private schools being a powerful English medium franchise.

Teacher Rose explained: *"Here, we use Twi more even though it is a private school, if you speak too much English and the education officers ask the children and they did not understand, you have failed."* (Extract 19)

Teacher Rose contrasted this with other private schools where parents are not allowed to speak Twi on campus.

Teachers also criticized Ghana Education Service (GES) policy implementation. Teacher Rose argued that because private schools do not follow the GES requirement to use local languages in lower primary, inequality emerges: *“A child in class two in a private school is far ahead of their public-school counterpart, private schools teach English even at crèche (Kindergarten).”*

(Extract 20)

In the public school, Teacher Isaac described blending languages but still foregrounding English due to assessment-driven demands: *“Sometimes we blend the English and Twi, but we do not speak Twi too much whatever they are going to write, they will write in English.”* (Extract 21)

The data indicate that teachers hold clearly defined beliefs about differences between public and private schools, particularly in relation to language use, with private schools widely perceived as spaces where English dominates. These perceptions reflect a broader ideological distinction in which English medium instruction is associated with quality, advancement, and desirability within the education system.

Teacher Kwaku articulates this view by describing private schools as institutions known for English, noting that parents often transfer their children from public to private schools in order to improve their English proficiency. This account positions English as a key marker of educational value and reinforces the idea that private schooling offers greater access to this linguistic resource.

However, the data also reveal inconsistencies between these widely held beliefs and actual classroom practices. In the private school context of this study, teachers report frequent use of Twi, shaped in part by accountability measures. Teacher Rose explains that the use of Twi is necessary to ensure student comprehension, particularly when education officers evaluate teaching. In this case, the expectation is not simply that English be used, but that students demonstrate understanding, which may require the use of local languages. This suggests that institutional monitoring can influence language practices in ways that complicate the dominant perception of private schools as exclusively English medium environments.

Meanwhile, Teacher Rose contrasts this context with other private schools where the use of Twi is reportedly restricted, including limitations placed on parents’ language use on school premises.

This comparison highlights variation within the private school sector and indicates that language ideologies are not uniformly enacted across institutions.

Teachers also draw attention to disparities linked to policy implementation. Criticism is directed at the uneven enforcement of Ghana Education Service guidelines, particularly those requiring the use of local languages in the early years of schooling. Teacher Rose suggests that private schools often bypass these requirements by introducing English at earlier stages, which she associates with students being academically ahead of their public school counterparts. This framing reinforces the perception of English as a form of advantage while also pointing to structural inequalities between school types.

Within the public school context, Teacher Isaac describes a more flexible approach that involves blending English and Twi. Despite this, English remains foregrounded due to the demands of assessment, as students are ultimately required to produce written work in English. This illustrates how broader systemic pressures intersect with school type, shaping how teachers navigate language use in practice.

The findings show that teachers and school officials reproduce a strong ideological divide between public and private schools, with English positioned as a defining feature of private education. The teachers' accounts reveal that actual language practices are more complex and context-dependent, influenced by factors such as institutional monitoring, policy expectations, and assessment requirements. These dynamics point to a gap between perceived and enacted language practices, highlighting the ways in which competing pressures shape how multilingualism is managed across different educational settings.

The findings from teacher interviews across both the public and private school reveal a web of intersecting ideologies, beliefs, and practical realities that shape teachers' perceptions of Southern multilingual practices. Teachers simultaneously value multilingualism but are constrained by societal expectations, assessment structures, global linguistic prestige, and policy contradictions.

5.26 Summary of Teacher Interview Findings

The findings from teacher interviews across both the public and private school reveal a web of intersecting ideologies, beliefs, and practical realities that shape teachers' perceptions of Southern multilingual practices. Across the extracts, English is consistently positioned by teachers as essential for academic success, upward mobility, and future opportunities, particularly in relation to examinations and parental expectations. Alongside this, teachers articulate a strong appreciation for Twi, which they associate with cultural identity, community communication, and continuity of local traditions. These dual orientations indicate that teachers do not adhere to a single, unified ideology; rather, they navigate a complex interplay between the instrumental value of English and the identity-based value of Twi.

Language practices are further shaped by contextual factors, including school type and institutional expectations. Private schools are commonly perceived as English-dominant spaces, yet in practice Twi is frequently used in Grace Academy, the private school, to ensure comprehension and meet monitoring requirements. In public schools, teachers employ a strategic blend of English and Twi, foregrounding English primarily for assessment purposes. This demonstrates that the enactment of Southern multilingual practices is contingent not only on ideological commitments but also on structural pressures, policy inconsistencies, and classroom realities. The presumed divide between public and private schools is complicated by actual practice, institutional pressures, and policy enforcement.

Overall, teachers' accounts reflect a negotiated multilingual pedagogy in which English is emphasized for its pragmatic and aspirational benefits, while Twi remains vital for cultural, social, and communicative functions. The coexistence of these orientations produces a dynamic and contextually responsive approach to language use in the classroom.

5.3 Classroom Interaction and Southern Multilingual Practices

This section presents findings from audio-recorded classroom interactions in State Government School (SGS) and Grace Academy (GA). While the previous section examined teachers' beliefs and ideologies, this section shifts the focus to observed classroom practices, addressing what teachers and students actually do in instructional contexts. In doing so, it responds directly to the

first and third research sub-questions by identifying multilingual practices in use and examining how these practices align with or diverge from teachers' expressed beliefs.

The analysis is based on naturally occurring classroom discourse, capturing moment-to-moment interaction between teachers and students. This allows for a close examination of how language is used to organize instruction, explain concepts, manage participation, and construct knowledge. The analysis considers how English and Twi are used within lessons, how language norms are enforced, and how students participate in multilingual practices.

The findings are organized around two key themes that emerged from the data: (1) Standard Language Ideologies and the (re) production of English Primacy (2) Translanguaging and Southern Multilingual Practices. These themes illustrate that classroom language use is not fixed but dynamic, shaped by pedagogical goals, interactional needs, and the broader ideological context in which teaching and learning take place.

5.31 Standard Language Ideologies and the (re)Production of English Primacy

This theme examines how English is constructed and enforced as the legitimate language of classroom interaction, reflecting broader standard language ideologies (SLI). Across the teacher interview extracts, English is consistently positioned as the expected medium for instruction, communication, and evaluation, while local languages such as Twi are marginalized. The enforcement of English language use occurs through a combination of teacher directives, corrective feedback, and peer regulation, highlighting how linguistic norms are socially constructed and maintained within the classroom. The interactions show that teachers guide and shape language use while students actively participate in maintaining English as the classroom norm, reinforcing the classroom as a site where SLI is enacted and reproduced.

5.311 Situating English as the Language of the Classroom

This sub-theme presents how English is constructed and enforced as the legitimate language of classroom interaction. The extracts below illustrate how teachers and students orient to English as the expected medium of communication through directives, correction practices, and peer regulation.

Extract 1 is drawn from the beginning of an English lesson where the teacher sets expectations for classroom communication in the presence of an observer (the researcher).

Extract 1 (Class 4, GA)

Teacher (00:09): Now I want everybody to speak English because sir (*the researcher*) is recording. Let's begin. So, we are recording, try to speak what?

Students: English.

Teacher: Don't speak Twi. If you speak Twi you will be punished. So read the keywords. Who is going to read the keywords for me?

In this interaction, the teacher explicitly establishes English as the required language of the classroom. The instruction “I want everybody to speak English” is immediately reinforced by eliciting a choral response from students, “English,” which confirms shared understanding of the expectation.

The reference to “because sir is recording” situates the use of English within a context of observation. English therefore functions as both a classroom norm and a marker of formality and external accountability. However, despite this directive, the teacher frequently used Twi throughout the lesson, indicating a shift between stated expectations and actual classroom practice.

Across classroom interactions, English is consistently positioned as the expected language of learning. Extract 2 further illustrates this pattern during a sentence construction task, where students themselves reproduce the expectation of English use.

Extract 2 (Class 4, SGS)

Teacher (22:04): Are you getting what we are doing here. We are going to use the examples of the prefixes to form sentences. We are going to use the examples to construct or to form a sentence each. Yes, (teacher calls Bediatuo).

Bediatuo: Abraham is disrespectful.

Students (22:47): (*Students talking in the background and one student exclaims*) “Speak English!”

In this extract, English is reinforced as the expected language of classroom interaction through peer intervention. While the teacher guides the sentence construction activity, a student's interjection, "Speak English!" demonstrates that the expectation to use English extends beyond direct teacher instruction. The peer directive functions as a form of social regulation, indicating that students are active participants in upholding English as the legitimate medium of communication. This interaction highlights how standard language ideologies are maintained collectively, with both teachers and students contributing to the enforcement of English norms within the classroom.

Even though the teacher does not respond directly to the students' comment, the utterance itself functions as a form of peer regulation. It highlights that English is treated as the appropriate language for classroom interaction, and deviations are monitored by students themselves.

5.312 Negotiating Correctness in English Through Teacher–Student Interaction

The following interactions during English lessons illustrate how grammatical correction that enforces standard language ideologies (SLI) is facilitated through a combination of teacher guidance and student participation.

This extract takes place during a sentence construction activity in an English lesson, where students are required to produce sentences orally.

Extract 3 (Class 2, SGS)

Teacher (04:22): Who else?

Oteng: Kofi is prepare food.

Teacher (04:39): Is he correct? he said, "Kofi is prepare food". The moment you bring a helping verb "is" the verb after that should be in the present continuous, huh? Kofi is preparing food. It's not "Kofi is prepare food". But he can say that "Kofi prepares food every day". Here we will add "s" to prepare. Kofi prepares food every day.

In this extract, the teacher enforces English as the legitimate classroom language through explicit correction of grammatical accuracy. When a student produces the sentence "Kofi is prepare food," the teacher responds to a student's sentence by first questioning its correctness: "Is he

correct?” This invites the class to evaluate the utterance collectively. The teacher then repeats the student’s sentence, “Kofi is prepare food,” before providing a detailed correction, explaining tense and verb agreement. This interaction shows how English is treated as a rule-governed system, with errors addressed publicly and standard forms reinforced through repetition, explanation, and contrast. The approach highlights the teacher’s role in maintaining English as the authoritative medium of instruction and demonstrates how standard language ideologies are enacted in classroom practices.

Whereas the previous excerpt shows the teacher initiating and enforcing the norm, the following excerpts demonstrate how the teacher guides students in reproducing and sustaining it.

Extract 4 illustrates how multiple students contribute to correcting an error and how the teacher evaluates responses.

Extract 4 (Class 2, SGS)

Teacher (08:00): Okay, you have done well. Let's move on to firewood.

Teacher (08:01): (*Calls Fafa*)

Fafa: My mother has bring firewood. Again. My mother has bring firewood.

Teacher and Students (08:20):

Teacher: Who can correct her? (*Teacher calls Mariam*)

Mariam: My mother brings firewood.

Teacher: It is in the past. (*calls Richard*)

Richard: My mother brought firewood.

Teacher: Very good, clap for him.

In this extract, multiple students actively participate in correcting a grammatical error, while the teacher guides and evaluates their responses. After Fafa produces the sentence “My mother has bring firewood,” the teacher asks, “Who can correct her?” inviting peer correction. Students provide alternative sentences, and the teacher evaluates the responses, identifying one as correct and reinforcing it through praise and collective clapping. This sequence illustrates how English is maintained as a rule-governed system, with correctness negotiated through both teacher guidance and student participation. The extract highlights how the classroom functions as a space where

standard forms of English are collectively recognized, affirmed, and socially enforced, demonstrating the enactment of standard language ideologies through both instruction and peer regulation.

Extract 5- (Class 2, SGS)

Teacher (02:29): We are going to use them in forming sentence. So if you're able to use it in forming a sentence, then it means that we understand the words that I have written on the board. (Teacher calls Margaret).

Margaret: I have prepare rice and stew for you (2x).

Teacher (03:47): (Repeats and writes the example on the board)

Teacher (04:15): Is it supposed to be I have prepare?

Students: No. **Teacher:** The moment she bring the "have", it should be what? In the past. I don't want it in the past tense. I want it in the present.

Similar to the previous extract, this interaction illustrates how correction is managed through both teacher guidance and student participation. When Margaret produces the sentence “I have prepare rice and stew for you,” the teacher repeats it and writes it on the board, highlighting the error. Students are prompted to identify the correct form, reinforcing the expectation for accurate English usage.

This sequence demonstrates how standard forms are collectively recognized and socially enforced, with the teacher structuring the activity to ensure that students both notice and correct deviations from the norm. The extract highlights the classroom as a space where English is treated as a rule-governed system, and both teacher instruction and peer engagement contribute to maintaining English as the legitimate medium of communication.

5.313 Peer Enforcement of Standard English through Ridicule

The following extracts illustrate how standard language ideologies are enforced through explicit teacher correction and peer evaluation, particularly ridicule, while also revealing moments in which students resist or negotiate these evaluative practices.

Extract 6 takes place during a sentence construction activity focusing on the word “finished,” where students are asked to form sentences.

Extract 6 (Class 2, SGS)

Teacher (05:19): Let’s move on, move on to the next one, that is “finished.” (Teacher calls Adams)

Adams: The firewood has finished.

Teacher: (*Repeats Adam’s example*) The firewood has finished. Who else?

Gifty: I have finished the food.

Teacher: You said you have what?

Gifty: finished the food.

Student (05:39): (Another student is called)

Student: I am finished the eating.

All students: Eiiii!! (*choral exclamation expressing the class’s implicit ridicule and disapproval of the student’s mistake*)

Teacher (05:49): I am finished the eating. What is “I am finished the eating”?

This interaction illustrates how English is reinforced as the expected classroom language through both teacher guidance and peer monitoring. During the sentence construction activity, students produce multiple examples using the word “finished,” with the teacher repeating and questioning responses to draw attention to grammatical accuracy. When a student says, “I am finished the eating,” the class reacts with “Eiiii,” signaling collective disapproval and ridicule of the incorrect response. The teacher continues to guide correction by prompting further examples and questioning student choices, maintaining English as a rule-governed system.

The extract demonstrates that standard language ideologies are enacted through teacher instruction and peer regulation, with the social policing of errors reinforced by the class’s collective disapproval and ridicule of incorrect responses.

In extract 7, the correction does not always involve direct teacher explanation. Instead, the interaction includes repetition, questioning, and movement to other responses. At the same time,

the classroom environment allows for humorous ridiculing responses as experienced in the collective “chuckling” (or “Eiii” in extract 6) revealing how students’ answers are shaped by peer influence and shared patterns of participation.

Extract 7 (Class 4, SGS)

Teacher (33:07): Monica said Elizabeth is not faithful.

Teacher (calls Pamela):

Pamela: The girls are neatly than the boys.

Teacher: Pardon, repeat the sentence.

Pamela: The girls are neatly than the boys.

Classroom: (*There are chuckles*)

Student: We are learning (*implying that mistakes are normal when people are learning and not perfect*)

Teacher: “The girls are neatly than the boys” is not correct, it is ungrammatical. Go again, construct a new sentence. Yes. (*Teacher calls Rosemond*)

Rosemond: Adom is neatly dressed.

Teacher: Clap for her. (*Teacher asks students to clap three times*)

Pamela’s utterance is immediately oriented to grammatical correctness, as the teacher interrupts the repetition and labels the construction as “ungrammatical,” reinforcing the expectation of adherence to Standard English forms. When Pamela produced the sentence “The girls are neatly than the boys”, the teacher asked her to repeat the sentence, which draws attention to the form. Following the repetition, there are chuckles from other students, and one student comments, “we are learning,” acknowledging the presence of error within the learning process. The student’s comment, “we are learning,” is particularly significant because it reflects an understanding that errors are a natural and expected part of the learning process. Unlike the earlier peer directive “Speak English,” in extract 2 which functioned as a policing mechanism to enforce correct language use, “we are learning” signals recognition and acceptance of mistakes as part of participation. Also, the student comment “We are learning,” signals a shared awareness of the instability of correctness and a willingness to engage with the learning process even when forms deviate from the standard. This moment of peer response can be read as a soft form of resistance,

where laughter and commentary subtly shift attention away from strict correction toward collective meaning-making.

The teacher then evaluates Pamela's sentence as "not correct" and "ungrammatical," clearly identifying it as deviating from expected English forms. The teacher maintains focus on correctness while allowing students to reattempt their sentences, and correct responses are collectively affirmed through actions such as clapping. For example, Rosemond's restructured sentence is publicly rewarded through praise and clapping three times, reinforcing the standard form while also showing how approval is socially mediated. These moments emphasize how students actively make sense of classroom norms and engage with the process of learning English, showing that peer responses can support both regulation and reflection.

5.314 Summary of Theme

Across the extracts under this theme, English is consistently established as the required language of classroom interaction. This is achieved through direct instructions such as "Don't speak Twi," peer directives such as "Speak English," and repeated correction of student utterances. Teachers and students jointly participate in identifying and correcting errors, often through repetition, questioning, and multiple attempts. Correct responses are affirmed through statements such as "very good" and collective clapping, while errors are labeled as "not correct" or "ungrammatical". Meanwhile, moments such as "Eiiii" and "we are learning" show that participation continues even when errors occur. These practices illustrate how English is maintained as the expected and legitimate language within the classroom.

5.32 Translanguaging and Southern Multilingual Practices

This theme presents how teachers and students draw on both English and Twi in classroom interaction. Unlike the strict English-only orientation seen in Theme One, these extracts show flexible language use for explanation, clarification, participation, and meaning-making. The data illustrate how translanguaging/ southern multilingualism practices emerge in response to pedagogical needs, student understanding, and classroom interactional dynamics.

5.321 Translanguaging (multilingual) Instruction

Explicitly Introducing Instruction as Multilingual

This theme begins with an extract from an English lesson in which the teacher explicitly states that Twi is being used to support understanding and invites student participation by incorporating Twi as a resource for learning.

Extract 8 (Class 4, GA)

Teacher (41:55): Wode sika no kɔ yɛ no, tie meka no Twi ama wa te aseɛ. Wode sika no kɔ yɛ no, ne master hyia wei yɛ no, den na wode ma no. ɔma no den?

Students: ɔma no four-story building.

Teacher: What moral lesson have you learned from this story?

The teacher narrates part of the story in Twi and then asks a question, also in Twi. Students respond using a combination of Twi and English: “ɔma no four-story building.” In this extract, the teacher explicitly signals a shift into Twi: “tie meka no Twi ama wa te aseɛ,” indicating that the explanation is being given in Twi so that students will understand.

After this, the teacher shifts back to English with the question, “What moral lesson have you learned from this story?” This movement shows how both languages are used in sequence to support comprehension and participation.

The extract also shows that students are comfortable responding in mixed forms, drawing on both languages within a single response.

Content Delivery

In this instance, the teacher presents a section of content first in Twi, then repeats the whole section in Twi following that checks for student understanding.

This extract occurs during a lesson where the teacher explains a scenario and checks students’ understanding.

Extract 9 (Class 2, SGS)

Teacher (12:16): Okay. What if, Ante Akoto says she will not go for the firewood. After everything is settled, they will go back home. And she says I'm not going back to the farm to bring you firewood. What will happen again?

Mebe fa wo gya wose menkofa wadee mbrɛ wo, manko anko fa amba, ye settle asem no o, manko akonfa amba wo hwe will there be peace again?

In this extract, the teacher first presents the scenario entirely in English, describing a situation involving refusal to fetch firewood. Immediately after, the teacher repeats and elaborates the same scenario in Twi.

The shift into Twi occurs within the same turn, without pause or separation, and the teacher returns to English at the end with the question “will there be peace again?” This movement between languages shows how the teacher uses both English and Twi to construct meaning.

The Twi portion provides a more detailed and culturally grounded explanation of the situation. By restating the scenario in Twi, the teacher ensures that students have access to the content of the lesson. The use of both languages within a single explanation allows the teacher to maintain the lesson in English while simultaneously supporting comprehension through Twi.

Classroom Management

This extract demonstrates how the teacher employs translanguaging in classroom management. They introduce an activity using both English and Twi stating the original direction in English and then restating it in Twi.

Extract 10 (Class 2, GA)

Teacher (11:36): So, we are going to read together and I will explain it. We are going to start, we are all going to read together. Me be kan na yen nyinaa ya kan, na makyere mo mu.

In this extract, the teacher gives instructions in English and then immediately repeats them in Twi: “Me be kan na yen nyinaa ya kan, na makyere mo mu”. The two versions convey the same meaning, indicating that the teacher is not translating new information but reinforcing the instruction. The use of both languages ensures that all students understand the task.

This practice shows how translanguageing is used at the level of classroom management and task organization. By providing instructions in both languages, the teacher creates clarity and inclusivity in participation.

Explicit Reading Skill Instruction: Vocabulary

This extract occurs during an English lesson where the teacher explains the meaning of “whistle”.

Extract 11 (Class 2, GA)

Teacher (17:39): Do you know whistle? Who has watched a football match before?
Have you seen a whistle before? Ok, how does it look like?

Student: aben

Teacher: Ok, se ye hwe football a, you see the referee they have some metallic object in their mouth. Womo wo dadee bi wo bo hwii hwii (*teacher making sounds of whistle*). 3no na y3fr3 no whistle. Do you get it?

All Students: Yes.

The teacher begins by asking questions in English to engage students’ prior knowledge. A student responds using Twi, “aben.” The teacher then continues the explanation by mixing English and Twi within the same utterance.

The ensuing explanation includes references to familiar contexts such as football and incorporates descriptive elements in Twi, along with sound imitation “hwii hwii.” The teacher concludes by labeling the object in English: “3no na y3fr3 no whistle.”

This interaction shows how meaning is constructed through multiple linguistic and semiotic resources. The teacher uses English, Twi, and sound effects to explain the concept, and students respond with “Yes,” indicating understanding.

5.322 Translanguageing Following Silence and Incorrect Responses

This extract takes place during a vocabulary lesson focusing on prefixes and root words. It highlights moments when translanguageing emerged following periods of student silence or

incorrect responses. In these instances, shifting between languages enables students and teachers to clarify meaning, negotiate understanding, and move the lesson forward.

Extract 12 (Class 4, SGS)

Teacher (13:15): Yes, what is the root word in this prefix? Unripe. Yes, Morgan, yes, Morgan, I'm talking to you, so be on your feet.

(Morgan does not respond)

Teacher (13:44): Yes, Charles, the root word, the original word in unripe.

(Charles does not respond)

Teacher and Students (13:57): Yes, Priscilla.

Priscilla: Un. Un is the original word.

Teacher: oh okay. Yes, Acheampong.

Acheampong: ripe.

Teacher: Do you know what a root word is?

All students: Yes

Teacher (14:20): Word no ankasa no. The root word ye word no ankasa no, yemfa hwee nka ho no, enti eyε ripe. I hope you know the meaning of ripe? What is the meaning of ripe?

The teacher begins the interaction in English, asking students to identify the root word in “unripe.” Multiple students are called, but there is no response from Morgan and Charles. When Priscilla responds incorrectly with “Un,” the teacher continues to prompt other students until Acheampong provides the correct answer, “ripe.”

After this sequence, the teacher shifts into Twi: “Word no ankasa no. The root word ye word no ankasa no, yemfa hwee nka ho no,” before returning to English again. The Twi explanation defines the concept of a root word as the original form of the word without any additions.

This shift occurs after instances of silence and incorrect responses. The teacher’s use of Twi at this point appears to be a response to students’ difficulty in engaging with the concept in English.

By using Twi, the teacher re-explains the concept in a more accessible way, ensuring that students can follow the lesson.

The alternation between English and Twi allows the teacher to maintain the academic focus of the lesson while also supporting comprehension when initial explanations in English do not elicit the expected responses.

5.323 Translanguaging and student voice

This theme highlights how classroom interaction is shaped by student voice through individual questions in both languages of the classroom, collective participation, peer support, shared responses, and humor. The extracts show that even though learning is teacher-directed, it also emerges through student collaboration, joint problem-solving, and social interaction. These practices contribute to the development of a classroom community in which students actively engage with one another.

Question in Twi: (This and following extract demonstrates that students use both languages in languages the classroom)

This extract demonstrates how students respond in Twi during a science lesson. In this extract, Twi allows students to participate in classroom interactions.

Extract 13 (Class 2, GA)

Teacher (15:07): So, what can you do to prevent ringworm? *ɛdɛn na wobɛ yɛ a, kakawerewere no wonnya bi. Obi sɛ wo dware da biara a, wonya bi, obi nso nso sɛ cut your finger nails. Wo dware da biara na wobu wo mmoreɛ no, what again?*

Teacher and Student (15:40): What again? Obour, what again?

Student: *da biara wo dware wie a na wasra. (You should use lotion after bathing each day)*

The teacher asks the question in English and then repeats it in Twi: “*ɛdɛn na wobɛ yɛ a, kakawerewere no wonnya bi*”. The teacher also provides examples using both languages, combining English phrases such as “cut your finger nails” with Twi explanations. When students

respond, they do so in Twi: “da biara wo dware wie a na wasra”. The teacher does not reject or correct the use of Twi but continues the interaction.

This extract shows that student participation is not restricted to English. Students use Twi to express their ideas, and the teacher accommodates these responses within the flow of the lesson. The interaction demonstrates how multilingual practices are used to sustain participation and understanding, with participation indicating comprehension of the subject matter. Without such translanguaging practices, students might have remained silent, as the use of Twi enables them to engage and respond within the lesson.

Question in English (This and previous extract demonstrates that students use both languages in languages the classroom)

This extract occurs at the end of a lesson as the teacher is bringing the session to a close.

Extract 14 (Class 4, SGS)

Teacher (42:08): All right, we have another lesson so we will call it a day. My time is almost up.

Student (Elorm): What is the name of a word that has no prefixes or suffix like faithfulness?

Teacher (42:25): They are all examples of circumfix.

In this interaction, the teacher signals the end of the lesson, indicating that time is up. At this point, a student, Elorm, initiates a question without being prompted. The question relates directly to the topic of the lesson, asking for clarification about words that do not contain prefixes or suffixes.

This moment is notable because student-initiated questions occur infrequently in the dataset. Unlike earlier sequences where the teacher controls turn-taking and prompts responses, the student independently takes the floor to seek clarification.

The teacher responds by linking the question back to the concept of “circumfix,” which had been the focus of the lesson. The interaction is brief and does not develop further, as the lesson is ending.

This extract shows that while classroom interaction is largely teacher-led, there are instances where students initiate contributions, demonstrating engagement with the content, and a willingness to ask questions. This moment extends the interactional space of the classroom by introducing student-led perspectives, allowing insight into how learners interpret, question, and make sense of instructional content beyond teacher-directed sequences.

Collaborative Answer Construction

This extract takes place during an English lesson on prefixes and suffixes, where students are asked to identify a term for words that contain both prefixes and suffixes.

Extract 15 (Class 4, SGS)

Teacher (26:10): The word *disrespectful* here contains a suffix and a prefix, right? So, here is the prefix. Do you agree?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: And then here is the word suffix. So, what name do we give to words with a prefix and then a suffix at the same time? For example, *mismanagement*. What is the name given to these words?

Teacher (26:46): Yes. (Teacher calls a student)

Student: affixes

Teacher: No

Teacher (27:01): Yes. (Teacher calls another student)

Student: affixation

Teacher: Affixation and affixes, they are the same.

Teacher (27:05): yes, yes

Teacher (27:08):

Student: double fixation

Teacher: No

(Two more responses receive “No”)

Students (together): circumfix (the idea started from one or two students and spread to the rest of the class)

Teacher: So, a circumfix is a word that has a prefix and a suffix.

In this interaction, the teacher poses a question that requires students to identify a specific linguistic term. Students respond one after the other with answers such as “affixes,” “affixation,” and “double fixation.” Each response is evaluated by the teacher, with feedback such as “No” or clarification that the terms are not appropriate in this context.

The question remains open across several turns, allowing multiple students to attempt an answer. Rather than one student arriving at the correct response immediately, the interaction progresses through a series of attempts. The correct response, “circumfix,” emerges collectively, beginning with one or two students and then spreading to the rest of the class, who produce it together.

The teacher then confirms the answer and provides a definition: “So, a circumfix is a word that has a prefix and a suffix”. This closes the sequence by establishing the correct term and its meaning. This extract shows how the answer is reached through successive student contributions and teacher evaluation, with the final response being taken up collectively by the class.

5.324 Summary of Theme

Across these extracts, classroom interaction shows frequent movement between English and Twi. Teachers introduce concepts in English and then restate or elaborate them in Twi, particularly in moments of silence, incorrect responses, or complex explanations. Instructions are often given in both languages, and explanations combine English, Twi, and other resources such as examples and sound imitation. Students also participate using both languages, sometimes within the same response. These practices show how meaning is constructed through flexible use of linguistic resources, allowing both teachers and students to draw on their full linguistic repertoires during classroom interaction.

5.4 Summary of Classroom Findings

The classroom findings demonstrate that multilingual practices are dynamic, interactional, and shaped by both pedagogical demands and underlying language ideologies. While English is frequently enforced as the expected language of instruction and participation, teachers and students regularly draw on Twi to support understanding, explanation, and engagement. Classroom interaction reflects a tension between maintaining English as the language of academic legitimacy and using multilingual resources to facilitate comprehension and participation. In addition, learning is not solely teacher-directed but emerges through peer collaboration, shared responses, and collective classroom practices that foster a sense of community.

5.41 Emerging Themes

The findings from classroom interaction across both school contexts reveal a set of interconnected practices that illustrate how multilingualism is enacted in real time. These practices are shaped by instructional goals, student participation, and the need to balance correctness with understanding. Three overarching dynamics are discussed below.

5.411 English is Actively Enforced as the Legitimate Language of Classroom Participation

Classroom interaction shows that English is positioned as the expected and appropriate language for teaching and learning. Teachers explicitly instruct students to “speak English” and discourage the use of Twi, sometimes associating non-compliance with punishment. Students also participate in enforcing this norm by reminding peers to use English during lessons.

In addition to regulating language choice, teachers consistently emphasize grammatical accuracy. Student responses are evaluated based on adherence to standard English forms, and errors are identified, repeated, and corrected through explanation and guided participation. These correction sequences often involve multiple students and include teacher evaluation and collective reinforcement such as clapping.

These practices establish English as the medium of instruction and as a rule-governed system that must be mastered. Classroom interaction therefore reflects a strong orientation toward standard language norms, where correctness and accuracy are central to participation.

5.412 Translanguaging Functions as a Key Resource for Teaching and Learning

Despite the enforcement of English, teachers and students frequently draw on both English and Twi within the same lesson. Teachers shift between languages when explaining concepts, giving instructions, or responding to student difficulty. These shifts often occur after silence, incorrect responses, or when introducing new or complex ideas.

Teachers repeat or elaborate explanations in Twi to ensure understanding, while maintaining English as the overall frame of the lesson. Instructions are commonly delivered in both languages, and explanations combine English, Twi, and other resources such as examples and sound imitation.

Students also participate using multilingual resources. They respond in Twi, English, or a combination of both, and these responses are generally accepted within the flow of the lesson. This flexible language use allows students to engage with content and contribute to classroom interaction even when their English proficiency is still developing.

These practices show that translanguaging is embedded in everyday classroom activity as a practical strategy for meaning making, rather than as a formally structured approach.

5.413 Student voice and Classroom Community Shape Participation and Knowledge Construction

Classroom interaction is characterized by strong elements of student voice and collective participation. Students frequently work together to arrive at answers, with multiple responses building toward a correct solution. In some cases, correct answers emerge from group contributions rather than from a single student.

The community of the classroom also includes shared practices such as choral responses, repetition, and collective clapping, which reinforce participation and create a sense of group

involvement. Students occasionally initiate questions, indicating engagement with lesson content, although such instances are limited.

In addition to academic interaction, the classroom environment includes moments of humor and social exchange. Students respond collectively with expressions such as “ei,” and teachers sometimes use playful questions that connect lesson content to students’ experiences. These interactions contribute to a lively and interactive classroom atmosphere.

These practices show that learning is not only an individual process but also a social one, shaped by collaboration, shared responses, and ongoing interaction among students.

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5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented findings from both teacher interviews and classroom interaction, providing insight into how multilingual practices are understood and enacted in elementary school classrooms in Southern Ghana.

The findings show that teachers' beliefs are shaped by competing pressures, including aspirations for social mobility, parental expectations, assessment requirements, cultural identity, and global linguistic hierarchies. These pressures contribute to a strong emphasis on English as the language of education and success, even as teachers continue to value Twi for its cultural and communicative importance.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates that multilingualism in these classrooms is not a fixed or uniform practice. Instead, it is shaped by ongoing negotiation between ideology and practice, policy and reality, and institutional expectations and classroom needs. English and Twi coexist within this space, each serving different but interconnected functions in the teaching and learning process.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the key findings of the study and develops their implications for language-in-education policy, teacher practice, and theoretical understandings of multilingual education in Ghanaian, African and Global Southern contexts. Building on the analysis of classroom interaction and teacher interview data, it shifts the focus from description and interpretation toward synthesis, evaluation, and broader significance. In doing so, it situates the empirical findings within ongoing debates on multilingual education, standard language ideologies, and the role of indigenous languages in formal schooling.

A central issue addressed here is the persistent mismatch between official policy frameworks, and everyday classroom realities. Although national language-in-education policy continues to privilege English as the dominant medium of instruction beyond the early grades, the findings of this research demonstrate that teaching and learning are routinely accomplished through fluid movement between English and Twi. This indicates that multilingualism is not an occasional support strategy but a foundational feature of classroom practice. The discussion therefore considers what this disjuncture means for the design and implementation of language policy in multilingual educational contexts.

The chapter also reflects on how teachers navigate the tension between their ideological commitments and their instructional practices. Interview data show that English is consistently associated with academic achievement, institutional credibility, and learner competence. However, classroom interaction reveals that such outcomes are only achieved through sustained translanguaging, particularly the use of Twi to support explanation, clarification, and participation. This reveals a structural tension in which multilingual practices are pedagogically indispensable even when they are not fully recognized within dominant language ideologies.

Attention is also given to the implications of these findings for pedagogy and teacher professional development. Many of the multilingual strategies observed in classrooms are enacted in practice but rarely conceptualized as deliberate teaching approaches. Instead, they are often treated as informal or situational adjustments. This gap between practice and professional recognition has important consequences for how teaching quality is understood and evaluated. It

suggests the need for a more explicit pedagogical framing of multilingualism as a structured resource for learning rather than a deviation from English-medium instruction.

Finally, the chapter situates the study's findings within broader theoretical discussions of language, power, and subjectivity. Drawing on Afro-communitarian thought and Fanon's account of colonial subjectivity and the psychopolitics of language, it argues that language in education cannot be understood as a neutral conduit for knowledge transmission. Instead, it operates as a site where recognition, legitimacy, and learner identity are produced and regulated. From this perspective, multilingual classrooms are not transitional spaces on the way to monolingual English proficiency, but enduring relational systems in which knowledge is co-constructed through the interaction of multiple linguistic resources.

Overall, these discussions underscore the need to rethink dominant assumptions about language, learning, personhood, and educational success in multilingual African contexts. The chapter therefore provides a final synthesis of the study while highlighting its implications for more inclusive and context-responsive approaches to language-in-education policy and practice.

6.2 Teacher Beliefs and Ideologies

6.21 Euro- American English Preference and the Ideology of Social Mobility

One of the most consistent patterns across teacher interviews is the construction of English as a language of mobility, futurity, and social elevation. What stands out is the depth and consistency with which language is tied to imagined life trajectories. Teachers rarely describe English as just one resource among others. It is more often positioned as the pathway through which students can move beyond the perceived limitations of their immediate environment. Within this framing, English becomes closely associated with economic advancement as well as broader forms of transformation, including becoming a different kind of person, inhabiting new spaces, and accessing forms of social recognition that seem less available within the local linguistic order. In the process, the indigenous language is actively repositioned as limited in scope, anchored to the present, and less aligned with the kinds of futures that teachers and students are encouraged to pursue.

This dynamic is particularly evident in Teacher Isaac's recurring formulation, "one day I'll get to some point." This phrase makes visible how the future is being imagined and structured. It constructs the future as both open and conditional, something that must be prepared for through present linguistic discipline. English, within this framing, is not simply useful for that future. It is constitutive of it. The future "point" becomes imaginable and intelligible only through English, while Twi is positioned as inadequate for reaching that point. When Isaac states that "there will be no need for the Twi language," he moves beyond a pragmatic observation and signals a temporal hierarchy of languages. Twi is anchored to the present, intimate and familiar, yet bounded in reach, while English is projected forward as the language of expansion and possibility. What emerges here is a reorganization of linguistic value across time, where continuity with indigenous language practices gives way to an orientation toward futures more readily imagined through English. The tension here extends beyond language choice, reflecting instead two temporalities, one that values continuity with local linguistic life and another that requires partial detachment from it in order to move forward.

From a Fanonian perspective, this reflects a form of colonial temporal subject formation in which the subject is split between lived reality and aspirational projection (Fanon, 2008). Fanon's (2008) argument that language carries an entire worldview is particularly useful here because it highlights how adopting English is not simply about communication, but about aligning oneself with a particular system of value. Isaac's narrative illustrates this alignment clearly. The future self he imagines is one that exists comfortably within English, while the present self remains partially embedded in Twi. This creates a subtle but persistent disjuncture, where the present is something to be worked through, and the future is something to be approximated through linguistic practice. These patterns reveal English as both a tool for advancement and a constant reminder of not yet having arrived.

Institutional structures reinforce this orientation. English dominates examination systems, certification processes, and formal assessment, meaning that academic success is most visibly and legitimately expressed through English proficiency. Teachers are therefore operating within a system that materially rewards English use. However, their narratives suggest that this is not experienced simply as external pressure. Instead, institutional value becomes internalized and comes to function as common sense. Speaking English is equated with being serious, disciplined,

and academically capable. What emerges here is a deepening of institutional logics through their internalisation, as teachers reproduce English dominance not only because they must, but because they come to understand it as necessary for learning and success, even when this belief sits uneasily alongside their awareness of students' linguistic realities.

The affective dimension of this belief becomes particularly visible in Teacher Francis' reflections on British and American accents. His admiration for "native pronunciation" is not framed in terms of intelligibility, but in terms of correctness, beauty, and authority. This suggests that English is not only valued functionally, but also aesthetically and emotionally. In Fanonian terms, this can be understood as the epidermalization of linguistic hierarchy, where the body itself becomes a site where value is read and performed through speech (Fanon, 1967). Francis' desire to emulate American or British speech patterns indicates that language is operating as a marker of legitimacy that exceeds communication. The tension here lies in the gap between the local speaker's reality and the idealized linguistic forms they are encouraged to approximate but can never fully embody.

This tension becomes even more pronounced in Francis' statement that had he been able to choose freely, he would have "lived his life as an American" if not a teacher. This goes beyond admiration and points to a deeper identification with an imagined life elsewhere. Language here becomes a vehicle for projecting oneself into an alternative social and cultural identity. Yet this projection is inherently unstable. It is aspirational but not fully attainable, producing a form of identification that is always partial. English, in this sense, offers the promise of belonging while simultaneously reinforcing distance from the very identities it invokes. The result is a layered tension between aspiration, identification, and the limits of linguistic and social mobility.

Alongside these colonial continuities, Isaac's narrative is also shaped by neoliberal ideologies of self-improvement and individual responsibility (Ball, 2012). Isaac's emphasis on "preparing for an opportunity" reflects a broader discourse in which individuals are expected to anticipate and adapt to uncertain futures. Within this logic, English proficiency becomes a form of linguistic capital that enhances employability, mobility, and access to global opportunities (Park & Wee, 2012), while also requiring continuous development in order to remain competitive. This framing shifts responsibility onto the individual, where success depends on one's willingness to adopt the

“right” linguistic practices, often obscuring structural inequalities by presenting language acquisition as a matter of effort and discipline. English is thus positioned as both an opportunity and an obligation, promising mobility while demanding constant self-regulation.

From an Afro-communitarian perspective, particularly Menkiti’s conception of personhood as socially achieved, Isaac’s orientation toward English can be interpreted as part of a broader moral project of becoming. Personhood, in this framework, is attained through participation in socially valued practices that confer recognition. In Isaac’s account, English functions as one such practice. It functions as a means of demonstrating readiness for inclusion in a valued social order, rather than simply a tool for communication. English proficiency becomes a marker of moral worth, evidence of aspiration, discipline, and alignment with socially sanctioned forms of progress. What this reveals is a moral valuation that elevates English while implicitly devaluing other linguistic practices that are equally central to students’ lived identities.

This moral framing also reveals a significant displacement in the locus of community. In Afro-communitarian thought (e.g., Gyekye, 1997; Menkiti, 2004; Wiredu, 2009), personhood is cultivated through participation in local social and linguistic life. However, in Isaac’s narrative, the relevant community is no longer primarily the Twi-speaking environment, but an imagined global English-speaking space. Belonging is not abandoned but relocated. This produces what can be described as *displaced communitarianism*, where the desire for recognition remains, but the site of that recognition shifts outward. The implication here is profound. The very framework that emphasizes relational belonging is reoriented in a way that distances individuals from the immediate communities through which personhood is traditionally realized.

This shift has important implications for how social value is constructed. Rather than deepening engagement with local linguistic practices, becoming a person becomes associated with the ability to move beyond them. English is positioned as a bridge to wider recognition, while Twi is framed as limiting that movement. Isaac’s statement that he “might not be here and might get an opportunity where there wouldn’t be a Twi language” underscores this orientation toward exit, suggesting that success is tied to leaving behind one’s current linguistic and social context. Yet this creates an unresolved tension. The local remains the site where individuals are formed, even as it is discursively positioned as something to be transcended.

The disciplinary dimension of this framework becomes evident in Isaac's insistence that students must "be forced to comply" with learning English. This language is revealing. It indicates that the adoption of English is not left to choice, but is actively enforced as part of pedagogical practice. What is framed as preparation for future opportunity simultaneously functions as regulation in the present. Students are not only taught English. They are required to orient themselves toward it, even when comprehension is limited. The tension here lies in the dual role of English as both enabling and constraining. It opens pathways to imagined futures while narrowing the range of legitimate linguistic expression in the classroom.

This dynamic is reflected in classroom interactions, where English operates as the primary register of epistemic legitimacy. Teachers frequently validate knowledge through English, even when students demonstrate understanding in local languages. Responses are translated, reformulated, or repeated in English before being recognized as correct. Students, in turn, learn to shift into English in order to secure approval. These practices illustrate how linguistic hierarchy is reproduced through everyday interaction, not only through explicit prohibition but through subtle processes of validation and correction. The tension here is that students' existing knowledge is both acknowledged and rendered insufficient until it is expressed in English.

From a Fanonian perspective, this reflects the internalization of linguistic hierarchy, where speakers begin to evaluate their own speech through the imagined gaze of authority (Fanon, 1967). From an Afro-communitarian standpoint, it introduces a distortion in the process of recognition. If personhood depends on being acknowledged within a shared communicative field, then privileging English restructures that field in ways that unevenly distribute recognition. Participation becomes conditional, tied not only to what is said, but to how and in which language it is said.

This theme highlights a central tension between two competing moral and ideological logics. On one hand, there is a communitarian orientation grounded in local linguistic belonging, where languages like Twi are central to identity, relationality, and everyday meaning-making. On the other, there is a future-oriented, globally aligned framework in which English is positioned as the necessary medium for mobility, recognition, and full personhood. Teachers' narratives

consistently privilege the latter, yet they do so within contexts where the former remains deeply embedded in students' lives.

English in these classrooms operates simultaneously as a resource, an aspiration, and a disciplinary force. Its dominance is sustained not only through institutional structures, but through desire, moral reasoning, and projected futures. At the same time, this dominance produces ongoing tensions between present and future, local and global, belonging and mobility, recognition and exclusion. These tensions are not resolved within classroom practice, but actively lived and negotiated, shaping how multilingualism is understood, enacted, and valued in everyday educational contexts.

Overall, these dynamics speak directly to the broader project of southernizing multilingualism, which this study advances. Rather than treating multilingualism as a neutral or universally applicable framework, the findings in this sub-section foreground how it is shaped by historically sedimented hierarchies, moral economies, and locally situated aspirations. In the Ghanaian classroom context, multilingualism extends beyond the coexistence of languages to how those languages are differentially valued, imagined, and mobilized in relation to futures of mobility, recognition, and personhood. Southernizing multilingualism, in this sense, requires a shift away from abstract celebrations of linguistic diversity toward an engagement with the uneven conditions under which languages operate. It involves taking seriously how teachers' preferences for English are not merely ideological impositions, but are entangled with legitimate desires for social advancement, while also reproducing exclusions that marginalize local linguistic resources. This perspective reframes multilingualism as a site of negotiation rather than harmony, where pedagogical choices are shaped by the intersection of colonial legacies, neoliberal aspirations, and communitarian values. By situating multilingual practice within these intersecting forces, this theme highlights how teachers' approaches to multilingual education are shaped by overlapping ideological, historical, and aspirational logics.

6.22 Parental Expectations and the Social Normalization of English Dominance

A central factor shaping multilingual practices in the classroom is teachers' perception of parental expectations, which are consistently described as privileging English as the primary outcome of schooling. Across interviews, teachers emphasize that parents see schooling as an

opportunity for English acquisition rather than further development of indigenous languages. As Teacher Rose explains, “When a parent brings their child to school... they bring their child because they want them to learn English... their perception is that they bring their child to school to learn English and not the local languages already used at home.” This framing positions English as the central purpose of education, while local languages are assumed to already exist within the home environment. In this sense, schooling becomes socially defined as the institutional site for English learning, while Twi and other indigenous languages are relocated to the domain of domestic life and everyday interaction.

This perception is reinforced in Teacher Sandra’s account, where parental expectations are again invoked as justification for prioritizing English. She notes that “sometimes their parents will even tell us that they speak Twi at home, so when they come to school, they should be able to learn English,” linking this expectation to broader aspirations for mobility and opportunity. She further connects English proficiency to future advancement, explaining that students who acquire English “will have many opportunities ahead of him,” particularly in relation to family aspirations and imagined connections beyond Ghana. These accounts illustrate how English is positioned not only as the object of schooling but as the anticipated outcome of educational investment, while indigenous languages are framed as already fulfilled within the home.

Within this logic, a socially normalized division of linguistic labour emerges in which English is associated with schooling, assessment, and future opportunity, while Twi is associated with intimacy, familiarity, and domestic social life. This division is not simply descriptive but ideological in its effects. It establishes a hierarchy in which English becomes embedded within institutional systems of knowledge, evaluation, and mobility, while Twi is positioned as already given and therefore outside the remit of formal education. What appears as a practical separation between home and school languages actively reproduces a broader ordering of linguistic value, where only English is fully aligned with recognised forms of achievement and advancement.

From a Fanonian perspective, this pattern reflects the internalisation of historically produced language hierarchies into everyday social expectation. Fanon’s concept of sociogenesis is useful here in showing how such beliefs are not individual opinions but socially sedimented ways of structuring reality. The assumption that schooling is primarily about English acquisition reflects

a historical reconfiguration in which colonial language hierarchies continue to define what counts as education itself. English is not simply preferred; it is presupposed as the natural medium of learning, success, and development.

However, other aspects of teachers' narratives complicate any straightforward account of English dominance. Teacher Sandra's account also shows that Twi remains indispensable in classroom explanation, particularly when students struggle with conceptual understanding. This reveals a disjunction between the ideological framing of English as the language of schooling and the pedagogical reality in which comprehension often depends on indigenous language mediation. Rather than existing outside the system, Twi operates within it as an enabling resource for meaning-making.

This is where institutional language value (Prah, 2009) becomes crucial. English is structurally privileged because it is embedded in formal mechanisms of assessment and certification that define academic success. Yet this structural privilege does not remove the need for multilingual mediation in practice. Instead, it produces a contradiction between what is institutionally rewarded and what is pedagogically required. Teachers therefore operate within a system that demands English while continuously relying on Twi to sustain learning.

Afro-communitarian thought further interrogates this picture by framing language as a medium of relational existence rather than simply a tool for instruction (Menkiti, 1984). From this perspective, the separation between home and school languages obscures the fact that learning itself is a communal process embedded in social relations. Twi is not only a support mechanism but part of the communicative infrastructure through which meaning is shared and sustained.

What emerges, therefore, is not a stable hierarchy but a fractured linguistic ecology in which English dominates institutional recognition while Twi sustains lived intelligibility. These roles are continuously negotiated in practice, producing a system in which language use is shaped by overlapping demands of assessment, comprehension, and social belonging.

Parental expectations are central to maintaining this configuration of 'English dominance'. Teachers consistently describe parents as viewing English as the primary purpose of schooling, reinforcing a division in which local languages are assumed to already be acquired and therefore

unnecessary in formal education. Within this framing, English becomes the main object of investment, while Twi is positioned outside the scope of schooling.

Existing research also supports this pattern, showing that in many African contexts English is associated with economic mobility and educational success (Norton, 2014; Probyn, 2009; Trudell & Piper, 2014). In Ghana, similar studies have found strong parental preferences for English-medium instruction even when it poses challenges for learning outcomes (Davis et al., 2015). The present study builds on this literature by showing how these parental ideologies are not only external pressures but are actively taken up and reproduced by teachers themselves. Teachers frequently justify their language practices by appealing to parental expectations, reinforcing these ideologies within their own pedagogical practice.

Meanwhile, classroom realities challenge this alignment. Students are often described as struggling with English, yet some pedagogical responses tend to involve increased exposure to English rather than greater use of familiar linguistic resources. This persists even though research suggests that multilingual approaches would better support comprehension and learning outcomes (Milligan et al., 2016; Erling et al., 2021). In practice, language choices are shaped less by pedagogical effectiveness alone than by wider beliefs about English that circulate across home, school, and institutional contexts.

This theme contributes to the project of southernizing multilingualism by shifting attention from language as a classroom or policy issue to language as a socially embedded practice shaped through everyday expectations about schooling, mobility, and responsibility. Instead of treating English dominance as something explained only by curriculum or pedagogy, the findings show how it is produced through parental expectations that circulate across home and school life, and that are taken up by teachers as part of their decision-making.

In this sense, multilingualism in the Ghanaian context is not organised only through institutional rules but through locally grounded ideas about what education is for. Parents' association of schooling with English learning helps to establish a division in which English is linked to formal education and future opportunity, while indigenous languages are positioned as already acquired within the home. This shows how language hierarchies are sustained through social meanings that extend beyond the classroom. However, the findings complicate any simple view of this

process as top-down. Teachers do not only respond to institutional expectations but also actively reproduce and interpret parental beliefs in their own practice. This means that English dominance is not just imposed but socially reinforced through everyday pedagogical reasoning. However, the continued reliance on Twi in teaching also shows that this order is not complete in practice.

Overall, the theme highlights that multilingualism is shaped through intersecting social, institutional, and relational forces. This supports a southernizing approach by showing that language practices in Ghanaian classrooms cannot be understood apart from the social worlds in which they are embedded, where ideas about education, responsibility, and future life strongly shape what counts as valuable language use.

6.23 Assessment Practices and the Structural Enforcement of English Dominance

Teachers consistently described high-stakes assessment as a central force compelling the use of English in instruction. Across accounts, they emphasized that examinations from classroom tests through to the Basic Education Certificate Examination are conducted in English, making extensive use of Twi difficult to justify for content teaching. As one teacher explained, the majority of subjects are assessed in English, with only a small number of papers not requiring English, which limits the space for local language use in preparation for exams. Within this framing, English is constructed as the unavoidable medium through which academic success must be demonstrated.

This is reinforced in teachers' descriptions of classroom realities where assessment outcomes depend on written English performance, even when students demonstrate understanding orally or through discussion in Twi. Several teachers note that students who can respond effectively in spoken form or in local languages often struggle when required to produce written answers in English. One teacher pointed out that this creates a situation where oral competence does not translate into examination success, while another observed that even fluent English speakers may still fail to perform adequately in written assessments. These accounts show how assessment practices privilege a narrow form of linguistic expression that does not fully reflect students' communicative abilities.

What emerges is an assessment system that positions English as the legitimate language of evaluation and certification. Teachers describe this as a practical constraint that shapes instructional decisions across all subject areas. Even when alternative linguistic resources are pedagogically useful, they are often secondary to the requirement that students be prepared to operate within an English-medium assessment regime.

From the perspective of institutional language value (Prah, 2009), this structure ensures that English is continuously reinforced as the language of success. Because assessment is conducted in English, it becomes the primary route through which knowledge is validated, ranked, and certified. However, the significance of this extends beyond incentive structures. It also shapes the very way knowledge is imagined within schooling. Knowledge becomes increasingly defined as something that can be translated into English in a written examination format, rather than something that exists independently of linguistic expression. In this sense, assessment does not only measure knowledge; it actively shapes what is understood as knowledge in the first place.

Fanon's framework helps deepen this point by showing that systems of evaluation do not merely test learning but produce regimes of intelligibility. In Fanonian terms, colonial structures persist most effectively when they define the conditions under which knowledge becomes recognisable as knowledge. The examination system functions in a similar way here: it determines not only what is valued, but what is allowed to count as knowing. Students may demonstrate conceptual understanding in multiple ways, yet if this understanding cannot be rendered in English, it remains institutionally invisible. What is at stake, then, is not simply performance, but recognition and the existence of knowledge, along with its capacity to render both knowledge and learners visible, legible, and institutionally real.

This logic is clearly illustrated in Teacher Isaac's statement that "whatever they are going to write, they will write it in English." Writing becomes the ultimate endpoint of learning, and because writing is tied to English, English becomes the endpoint of learning itself. This collapses the distinction between instruction and assessment. Teaching is no longer oriented toward understanding as such, but toward preparing students to produce acceptable written English responses. In this way, learning is gradually reorganised around the requirements of examination rather than around communicative or conceptual mastery. This orientation is not necessarily

pedagogically “incorrect” in context, but it functions to further consolidate English as the default medium through which learning is made visible, assessed, and ultimately validated.

Meanwhile, teachers repeatedly point to a persistent mismatch between comprehension and evaluation. Students are often described as understanding concepts more effectively when they are explained in Twi, particularly in moments of difficulty or abstraction. However, this understanding must ultimately be reproduced in English in order to be recognised. This creates a split in the learning process: comprehension is frequently multilingual and relational, while assessment is strictly monolingual. Twi enables access to meaning, but English determines whether that meaning counts.

Afro-communitarian thought makes this split particularly visible by reframing learning as a relational and collective process rather than an individual cognitive output. From this perspective, understanding is located not solely in the mind of the learner, but emerges through interaction, shared explanation, and communicative accessibility. Twi therefore functions as part of the relational infrastructure through which knowledge is produced and sustained in practice. However, assessment systems do not recognize this relational dimension. They privilege individual, written, English-mediated outputs as the only valid form of knowledge demonstration, thereby fragmenting the communicative process through which learning actually occurs.

What results is a system in which multilingualism is essential for learning but insufficient for recognition. Students learn through multiple linguistic resources, but they are evaluated through a single linguistic register. English is therefore required not because it is always the most effective medium for understanding, but because it is the only medium through which understanding becomes institutionally legible.

Existing research supports this pattern, showing persistent misalignment between language policy and classroom practice in Ghana (Ansah, 2014; Reilly et al., 2022; Yevudey, 2017). However, this study extends that literature by showing how the misalignment is structurally produced through assessment systems themselves. Teachers are not choosing English over other languages in a straightforward way; they are working within an evaluative architecture that defines English as the only viable medium for demonstrating success. Even when multilingual

approaches are recognised as pedagogically effective, they are difficult to sustain because they do not align with the language of assessment.

This is reinforced by teachers' own reflections on the limitations of written examinations. Teacher Francis, for example, critiques the narrow focus on written English, noting that students' oral competencies are often ignored. Similarly, Teacher Kwaku observes that learners who are able to speak English fluently may still struggle significantly in written assessments. These observations point to an awareness that the assessment system captures only a partial version of students' linguistic and cognitive abilities. However, despite this awareness, teachers continue to align their instruction with examination demands.

Rather than producing resistance, this awareness is absorbed into what can be understood as structural realism under constraint. Teachers recognise the limitations of the system but continue to operate within it because it defines the conditions under which success is measured. In this sense, assessment shapes instructional practice beyond external influence; it organizes what is practically possible within the classroom. Alternative approaches remain imaginable but difficult to sustain within this dominant evaluative framework.

Importantly, this also reshapes the role of indigenous languages within pedagogy. Twi is frequently used to support explanation, clarify meaning, or bridge comprehension gaps, but it is rarely positioned as a legitimate medium of assessment or knowledge production. Instead, it functions as a transitional resource, oriented toward eventual reproduction in English. This limits the epistemic status of multilingual practice, positioning it as a means rather than a valid endpoint of learning.

This theme contributes to the project of southernizing multilingualism by repositioning assessment as a central site where epistemic authority is produced and distributed in Ghanaian classrooms. Multilingualism here is seen beyond the question of teacher choice or classroom interaction alone; evaluation systems actively structure the conditions under which languages acquire value within education. Southernizing multilingualism therefore involves examining how knowledge is rendered legible through assessment regimes that privilege English as the dominant medium of academic visibility. What emerges is not only a hierarchy of languages, but a wider configuration in which epistemic recognition itself is organised through English-mediated forms

of expression. This shifts analytical attention away from treating languages as interchangeable resources toward understanding how institutional systems determine which linguistic practices can enter the domain of valued knowledge. By foregrounding assessment, the study situates multilingualism within the material and institutional conditions of Southern educational contexts, where language use is shaped through the intersection of evaluation, aspiration, and legitimacy rather than abstract policy ideals.

Despite the structural dominance of English across classroom practice, teachers consistently articulate strong and affective commitments to indigenous languages, particularly Twi, that cannot be reduced to functional or instrumental explanations. Twi is repeatedly described as more than a communicative tool. It is framed as foundational to social identity, intergenerational belonging, and the everyday continuity of community life. In these accounts, language is not experienced primarily as an academic resource but as part of the lived fabric through which students are recognised as members of a social world.

This is clearly reflected in Teacher Kwaku's insistence that "Twi is our mother tongue; it is our language. We cannot abolish Twi... when they go home what language will they use to communicate?" (Extract 11). His response does more than defend Twi as useful. It situates it within a continuum of life beyond schooling, where language is not defined by institutional value but by social necessity. The classroom, in this framing, cannot sever learners from the linguistic practices that sustain their everyday existence outside school. Twi is therefore positioned as indispensable not because it supports learning outcomes, but because it anchors social continuity.

6.24 The Dual Ideology of Language Value: English and Twi in Ghanaian Schooling

Despite the structural dominance of English across classroom instruction, teachers consistently articulate strong and affective commitments to indigenous languages, particularly Twi, that cannot be reduced to pedagogical convenience or instrumental explanations. Twi is repeatedly described as foundational to students' identity formation, social belonging, moral development, and communicative survival beyond the classroom. Across accounts, some teacher from indigenous languages as part of the lived social world through which students are recognised as intelligible participants in community life.

This is evident in Teacher Kwaku's account, where he insists that "Twi is our mother tongue; it is our language. We cannot abolish Twi... when they go home what language will they use to communicate?". His reasoning moves beyond the classroom and into the broader social ecology of language use. Twi is not defended here as academically useful but as socially indispensable. The question he raises is not about performance within schooling but about communicative life outside it. In this framing, the legitimacy of Twi is grounded in continuity between school and home, where language functions as the medium through which social existence is sustained across spaces.

Teacher Rose develops a complementary but equally important position when she argues that "if you teach English and they can't speak their own local language, it is of no benefit... a child shouldn't go to school to learn only English and do away with Twi". This statement introduces a critical pedagogical claim: that English-only instruction produces an incomplete form of education. Her emphasis suggests that educational value cannot be measured solely through acquisition of English proficiency, but must include the maintenance of indigenous linguistic competence. Twi is therefore not external to education but constitutive of its meaningfulness.

A key distinction emerges when this teacher-led dual ideology is set against the earlier discussion of parental expectations. While parents, as described earlier in this discussion, predominantly frame schooling as an investment in English acquisition and treat Twi as already secured within the home, some teachers are operating within a different register of necessity. For parents, English functions primarily as an outcome of schooling and a marker of future success, whereas Twi is largely external to the school domain. Teachers, however, encounter Twi not as a completed domestic resource but as an active pedagogical infrastructure required for meaning-making in real time. It becomes central to explanation, clarification, and ensuring conceptual accessibility, particularly when English fails to secure understanding. This difference matters analytically because it shows that the dual ideology of language value is not simply a reproduction of parental beliefs within schooling. Instead, it reflects a pedagogical condition in which English is required for institutional validation and examination, while Twi remains indispensable for producing comprehension. The two languages therefore operate across different logics of necessity: one oriented toward external recognition, the other toward internal intelligibility

From an Afro-communitarian perspective, the accounts of teachers who value indigenous languages reflect a deeper understanding of language as relational infrastructure rather than cognitive instrument. Learning is distributed beyond the individual learner and emerges through interaction, shared interpretation, and communicative participation within a social community. Language functions as a medium of instruction and simultaneously forms part of the ethical and relational conditions through which personhood is constituted and sustained. The insistence that Twi “cannot be abolished” expresses this ontological position: that education is inseparable from the linguistic world that produces social belonging and intelligibility.

However, Fanon’s framework complicates this affirmation by revealing how indigenous language valuation is often produced within an already hierarchical linguistic field. Even when Twi is strongly defended, it is frequently positioned in relation to English as complementary, affective, or domestic, while English remains the language of institutional legitimacy, certification, and imagined upward mobility. This means that Twi does not exist outside linguistic hierarchy; it is articulated within it. Its affirmation occurs within conditions where English continues to define what counts as formal knowledge and valued competence.

Teacher narratives, however, show that this hierarchy is not stable in practice. Across classroom interactions, Twi is not confined to identity work or informal communication but becomes central to the production of understanding. Teachers describe constantly shifting between English and Twi depending on students’ comprehension levels. When abstract ideas become difficult, instruction frequently moves into Twi to establish meaning before returning to English for formal articulation. This movement is not exceptional but routine, suggesting that multilingual mediation is structurally embedded in how teaching and learning actually unfold.

This reveals a critical gap between institutional ideology and pedagogical practice. English is constructed as the language of academic legitimacy, yet Twi is often the medium through which that legitimacy becomes accessible in the first place. Fanon’s notion of English as an “invisible standard” helps explain why English retains authority even when it is insufficient for comprehension (Fanon, 2008). However, the findings challenge this by showing that English’s functioning is continuously dependent on indigenous language mediation. Without Twi, the intelligibility of classroom knowledge is significantly weakened. Afro-communitarian thought

extends this insight by arguing that understanding is not contained within individual linguistic systems but emerges through relational communicative processes that are inherently multilingual.

Within this dual ideological structure, English and Twi are assigned different but unequal forms of value that operate simultaneously within the same pedagogical space. English is consistently associated with formal education, external mobility, examination success, and imagined futures of economic advancement. It is the language through which academic achievement is measured, certified, and socially recognised. Twi, by contrast, is associated with identity, emotional grounding, cultural continuity, and everyday communicative life. It enables participation, supports comprehension, and sustains relational engagement in ways that English alone cannot consistently achieve.

Importantly, teachers do not necessarily experience this division as contradictory. Instead, they navigate it pragmatically within the constraints of classroom life. English is required for written production, assessment preparation, and institutional accountability, while Twi is required for explanation, clarification, and ensuring that students actually understand what is being taught. This produces a layered linguistic economy in which different languages are mobilised for different dimensions of learning, rather than a simple substitution of one for the other.

However, this layering is not neutral. It produces a structured asymmetry in which English retains ultimate authority because it is the language through which knowledge must be formally demonstrated. Twi may be essential for understanding, but it rarely functions as the language of validation. This creates a persistent disjunction between how knowledge is acquired and how it is recognised, a disjunction that teachers navigate daily but cannot resolve within existing institutional structures.

Existing research supports this pattern, showing that indigenous languages in African educational contexts are often socially valued but institutionally marginalised (Ansah, 2014; Bonney, 2022). The present study extends this literature by demonstrating that this marginalisation is not only external but reproduced within classroom practice itself. Teachers simultaneously affirm Twi as essential while structuring instruction around English due to assessment demands and institutional expectations. This produces a form of constrained multilingualism in which

indigenous languages are necessary for learning but rarely granted epistemic authority within formal evaluation systems.

Simultaneously, the data resists a reading of this system as fully closed or deterministic. The repeated and insistent defence of Twi across interviews signals that indigenous language value persists as a strong ideological and affective force that cannot be fully absorbed into English dominance. Teachers do not simply abandon Twi in favour of English; they continuously negotiate between them, even when institutional pressures push toward English prioritisation. This indicates that the linguistic field is marked by ongoing friction rather than complete hierarchy.

The dual ideology of language value therefore does not resolve into coherence or synthesis. Instead, it persists as a structured and productive instability in which English and Twi remain mutually necessary but asymmetrically valued within Ghanaian schooling.

From this perspective, southernizing multilingualism involves recognising that indigenous languages are not peripheral supplements to dominant language systems but central to how knowledge is actually produced and sustained in practice. The data shows that Twi is not merely a cultural resource to be preserved alongside English, but a constitutive medium through which learning becomes possible in the first place. At the same time, English cannot be reduced to an external imposition, since it is also deeply embedded in local aspirations, pedagogical routines, and structures of evaluation that shape everyday schooling.

What becomes evident is a multilingual reality that cannot be adequately captured through binaries of dominance and resistance or through additive models of language inclusion. Instead, it requires an analytical shift that begins from the epistemic conditions of the Global South, where language is simultaneously institutional, affective, and relational. In this sense, the study contributes to southernizing multilingualism by foregrounding how multilingual practice is lived, negotiated, and structurally constrained within African schooling contexts, rather than assumed from policy frameworks developed elsewhere.

6.25 The Public-Private School Dichotomy and the Myth of English Purity

A central ideological framework shaping teachers' understandings of multilingual practice is the public–private school dichotomy, which repeatedly appears in interview narratives as a commonsense explanation for differences in language use, student achievement, and educational quality. This binary is not simply descriptive; it functions as an interpretive lens through which teachers, parents, and wider educational actors make sense of linguistic practice in schooling. Within this framing, private schools are imagined as spaces of strong English dominance, discipline, and linguistic “correctness,” while public schools are associated with more flexible, fluid, or “mixed” language use. However, the findings from teachers and classroom observations in both settings demonstrate that this distinction is not empirically stable. Instead, it operates as a socially powerful narrative that only partially corresponds to the complexity of classroom realities.

Teacher Kwaku articulates a widely circulating version of this perception when he explains that private schools are known for English and that parents often transfer their children from public to private institutions specifically so that they can “speak English.” This statement is analytically significant because it reveals that school choice is not only about academic performance but about access to a particular linguistic identity. English becomes something that can be “acquired” through institutional placement, and private schooling becomes the perceived mechanism for producing that outcome. What is being sought is not only better instruction, but immersion in a space where English is assumed to dominate everyday interaction.

This reveals a deeper symbolic economy of schooling in which language operates as a proxy for institutional value (Park & Wee, 2012). Private schools are interpreted as more disciplined and more academically serious partly because they are believed to produce stronger English speakers. English here functions as a visible sign of educational quality, even before any assessment takes place. Language does not only reflect perceptions of school quality; it actively produces and stabilises those perceptions within the social imagination. Schools are judged through anticipated linguistic outcomes, and English proficiency becomes the criterion through which institutional legitimacy is both assigned and recognised.

However, this symbolic economy does not consistently align with classroom practice. Teacher Rose's account introduces a critical disjunction between perception and lived reality. In

describing the private school context in this study, she explains that Twi is used extensively in classroom interaction, partly due to the presence of monitoring by education officers who evaluate teaching in terms of student comprehension. This shifts the evaluative focus from linguistic form to pedagogical effectiveness. Teachers are not rewarded for exclusive English use alone; they are also required to demonstrate that learning is taking place, which often necessitates translation, explanation, and movement between English and Twi.

This finding is analytically important because it shows that the ideological association between private schooling and English exclusivity is not sustained by institutional practice alone. Instead, private schools operate under multiple and sometimes competing logics: one that demands the performance of English dominance for symbolic and reputational reasons, and another that requires intelligibility and comprehension for pedagogical accountability. It is within this tension that multilingual practice becomes necessary rather than optional.

From a Fanonian perspective, this gap between ideology and practice is not incidental. Fanon's analysis helps explain how English retains its authority even when it is not fully sufficient for communication. The idea of English as the marker of educational modernity and legitimacy persists as an ideological horizon that structures expectations about schooling. However, what Fanon also helps illuminate is the way this horizon is never fully realised in practice. English functions as a symbolic standard that schools orient toward, but its authority depends on constant supplementation by other linguistic resources that enable actual understanding.

What the findings complicate further is the assumption that English dominance is produced simply by institutional type. Across both public and private schools, teachers describe frequent movement between English and Twi to ensure comprehension, particularly when introducing abstract or conceptually difficult material. English may dominate in official instruction and assessment, but it is rarely sufficient on its own to secure understanding. Twi therefore functions as an infrastructural language of explanation, without which the pedagogical process would be significantly weakened and, in some cases, cannot be sustained. This reveals that multilingual practice is not an exception to English-medium instruction but a condition of its functionality.

Afro-communitarian thought deepens this analysis by shifting attention from language as a system of codes to language as relational practice. From this perspective, learning is not an

individual cognitive achievement but a socially produced process that depends on shared intelligibility. Understanding emerges through interaction, responsiveness, and communicative accessibility between teachers and learners. What appears, from a policy perspective, as “translanguaging” or deviation from English purity is therefore better understood as the relational work through which learning is made possible. Twi is not supplementary in this process; it is constitutive of it.

Within this analytical frame, the public–private distinction becomes less a reflection of linguistic reality and more a narrative through which inequality is interpreted and legitimised. Private schools are imagined as English-exclusive spaces because English continues to function as the dominant marker of educational value. Yet this imagined purity is not sustained in practice. Instead, it is continuously interrupted by the demands of comprehension, which require multilingual mediation across both school types. The difference between public and private schooling therefore lies not in the presence or absence of multilingualism, but in how multilingual practice is ideologically framed and institutionally regulated.

This is further complicated by variation within the private sector itself. Teacher Rose notes that in some private schools, the use of Twi is actively discouraged, even among parents and staff, reinforcing the perception of English exclusivity. However, her own account shows that in other private institutions, Twi is widely used due to accountability pressures and the need to demonstrate student understanding. This internal variation demonstrates that the private sector cannot be treated as a uniform linguistic space. Instead, it is shaped by different configurations of monitoring, parental expectation, and pedagogical pragmatism.

Teacher Isaac’s description of blending English and Twi in public school settings reinforces this point from the opposite direction. Even in contexts perceived as linguistically flexible, English remains dominant in relation to assessment demands. Instruction may be multilingual, but evaluation remains monolingual. This creates a structural continuity across both sectors: regardless of school type, teachers are ultimately oriented toward preparing students for English-mediated assessment. This means that the public–private distinction does not mark two separate linguistic systems but two positions within a shared evaluative structure.

What becomes evident, therefore, is that the dichotomy between public and private schooling functions more as an ideological simplification than an accurate description of linguistic practice. It reduces a complex continuum of multilingual negotiation into a binary opposition that obscures the shared structural conditions shaping both contexts. English dominance is not produced differently in public and private schools in this study; it is reproduced across both through assessment systems, institutional expectations, and broader societal beliefs about language and success.

However, the persistence of this dichotomy reveals something important about how inequality is understood in educational discourse. Private schools are often seen as more effective because they are believed to produce stronger English proficiency, while public schools are seen as lacking in this regard. However, the data suggests that this perception is shaped more by ideological associations than by consistent differences in practice. Both contexts rely on multilingual mediation for learning, even if only one language is recognised as the legitimate medium of success.

Ultimately, what this theme reveals is not a clear opposition between two types of schools, but a shared linguistic condition structured by the symbolic authority of English. Multilingual practice is present across both schools, but it is unevenly recognised, differently regulated, and consistently subordinated to the demands of English-mediated evaluation. The public–private dichotomy therefore obscures more than it reveals, masking the deeper continuity that defines both educational spaces: the simultaneous necessity and dominance of English within Ghanaian schooling.

6.26 Summary

Across all themes in this section, the findings show that English in Ghanaian schooling is consistently constructed as the “primary” language of mobility, aspiration, and institutional legitimacy. Teachers, parents, and assessment systems collectively reinforce the idea that English is the medium through which success is achieved and recognised. It is tied to imagined futures of economic advancement, social transformation, and global belonging, making it more than a classroom language. It becomes a moral and symbolic pathway to becoming and achieving personhood. At the same time, Twi and other indigenous languages are sometimes strongly

valued for identity, cultural continuity, and everyday communication, but this value is largely positioned within the present and within domestic or relational life rather than institutional success. Across contexts, this produces a temporal and ideological hierarchy in which English is future oriented and upward looking, while Twi is grounded in immediacy and social belonging.

However, the data consistently complicates any stable or totalising account of English dominance. Although English is institutionally privileged through assessment systems, parental expectations, and social ideologies of prestige, teachers indicate that classroom practice depends heavily on multilingual mediation. Teachers repeatedly shift between English and Twi to secure comprehension, meaning that Twi functions as an infrastructural language of explanation that sustains learning, even when it is not formally recognised as such. This creates a persistent tension between what is valued for recognition, English, and what is required for understanding, Twi. These dynamics cut across both public and private schools, undermining assumptions of English purity in private education and revealing instead a shared structural condition in which multilingual practice is indispensable but unevenly valued. Overall, what we see is not a stable hierarchy or clear binary, but a fractured and continuously negotiated linguistic system shaped by aspiration, assessment regimes, social expectations, and relational practices of meaning making.

6.3 Classroom Interaction and Southern Multilingual Practices

6.3.1 Standard Language Ideologies and the Construction of English as Institutional Norm

Across the classroom interactions, English extends beyond serving as the medium of instruction and is actively installed as the legitimate language of schooling through repeated, situated acts of regulation, performance, and alignment. What becomes clear in the data is that English does not pre-exist as an unquestioned norm; rather, it must be continuously invoked, clarified, and enforced in order to hold its position. This makes the classroom a site where language ideology is not abstract but materially enacted through talk.

This process is especially visible in Extract 1, where the teacher states, “Now I want everybody to speak English because sir is recording.” The phrase “because sir is recording” is not incidental; it situates English within a regime of visibility and accountability. The classroom is momentarily reoriented toward an imagined external (the researcher’s) gaze, and English

becomes the language through which the classroom presents itself as legitimate. The follow-up elicitation, “try to speak what?” with the choral student response “English,” demonstrates that this expectation is not only imposed but collectively ratified. Students show that they already recognise English as the appropriate answer, suggesting that this norm has been sedimented through repeated prior interactions.

The escalation to “Don’t speak Twi. If you speak Twi you will be punished” transforms this expectation into a boundary backed by sanction. Twi is explicitly excluded, not framed as a resource but as a violation. What is important here is that this prohibition is stated *before* any actual use of Twi occurs in the extract. This anticipatory regulation suggests that multilingual practice is expected and must be pre-emptively controlled. In other words, the teacher’s directive reveals an awareness that English-only interaction is not the natural state of the classroom but something that must be actively produced against the grain of students’ linguistic repertoires. This reflects broader patterns in Ghanaian schooling, where English is often positioned as the legitimate language of instruction while local languages are treated as inappropriate within formal educational spaces (Edu-Buandoh & Otchere, 2019; Owoo 2024)

Yet, the same lesson later includes the teacher’s use of Twi, which exposes a contradiction between ideological positioning and pedagogical necessity. This contradiction is not marginal; it is structurally revealing. It shows that English operates as an idealised norm rather than a consistently realised practice. The repeated need to instruct “speak English” indicates that the norm is fragile, requiring constant reinforcement. English dominance, therefore, is not a stable condition but an ongoing accomplishment that depends on continuous interactional work.

From an analytical perspective, this instability highlights the tension between institutional visibility and pedagogical intelligibility (Makalela, 2015). English is required to signal alignment with institutional expectations, particularly under observation, yet it is not always sufficient to sustain understanding. The classroom is thus pulled between two logics: one that demands English as a marker of legitimacy, and another that requires flexible language use to make meaning accessible. This tension underpins much of the interactional data that follows in this section.

This tension becomes even more visible when English is examined as a performative rather than purely communicative resource. In Extract 1, the directive to “speak English” in the presence of the researcher does not simply organize interaction; it stages the classroom as a particular kind of institutional space. English functions here as a display language, one that signals order, discipline, and academic seriousness to an external audience. The classroom is momentarily transformed into a site of performance, where linguistic behaviour is calibrated not only for internal understanding but for external recognition. This suggests that English carries a representational burden: it is the language through which the classroom demonstrates that it is functioning “properly” as a school.

At the same time, this performative function introduces a layer of disjuncture between what is said and what is done. While English is foregrounded as the visible marker of legitimacy, the underlying communicative practices of the classroom remain more complex and multilingual. The fact that the teacher later shifts into Twi indicates that pedagogical interaction cannot be sustained through English alone. This tension between language ideology and classroom practice has been widely noted in the literature. Heller (2007) captures this tension between language ideology and practice, and García and Wei (2014) suggests this dynamic as an example of the fluid realities of translanguaging. These studies explain how English can operate as a surface norm, one that is most rigidly enforced at moments of heightened visibility, but become more flexible in the flow of teaching. The norm, therefore, is not evenly applied; it intensifies under observation and loosens in practice, exposing the situational nature of its enforcement.

This situational enforcement also highlights the role of anticipation in maintaining English as the institutional norm. The pre-emptive warning against Twi suggests that teachers are not simply responding to language use as it occurs but are actively managing the possibility of deviation. This forward-looking regulation indicates that multilingualism is treated as an ever-present potential that must be contained. In this sense, English is enforced retrospectively through correction and prospectively through instruction. The classroom becomes a space where language use is governed in advance, shaping what students feel able or permitted to say before they even speak.

Furthermore, the collective responses of students, such as the choral repetition of “English,” demonstrate how institutional norms are internalised and reproduced through routine participation. These responses are not neutral; they reflect an alignment with the expectations being set by the teacher. Students show that they know what the “right” answer is, even when the question is not about content but about language itself. This suggests that English has become embedded in the procedural fabric of classroom life, where knowing how to respond appropriately includes knowing which language to use. The norm is therefore sustained not only through explicit instruction but through habitual, taken-for-granted patterns of interaction. In Ghanaian classrooms, Opoku-Amankwa (2009) demonstrates how English-only expectations become naturalised through everyday pedagogical routines, gradually shaping what counts as appropriate participation. Probyn (2009) similarly observes in South African schools how dominant language ideologies are reproduced through mundane classroom interaction, even in contexts where translanguaging is pragmatically necessary.

However, this apparent internalisation should not be read as complete or uncontested. The need for repeated directives, warnings, and reminders indicates that alignment with English is continually being re-secured rather than simply assumed. Students may recognise the expectation, but this does not eliminate the need for reinforcement. The classroom thus operates as a space of ongoing calibration, where alignment with English is repeatedly checked, confirmed, and, when necessary, reasserted. This reinforces the idea that English primacy is not a static condition but a dynamic process that unfolds through interaction.

These dynamics suggest that the construction of English as the institutional norm is both fragile and forceful. It is fragile because it depends on constant reinforcement, anticipation, and repair. It is forceful because it is backed by sanctions, tied to visibility, and embedded in routines of participation that shape how students engage with classroom activity. The classroom, in this sense, becomes a site where language ideology is not only articulated but continuously enacted, negotiated, and stabilized through everyday interaction.

6.32 Correction, Normativity, and the Pedagogical Production of Standard English

Correction sequences across the extracts reveal how English is constructed not only as the required language but as a highly regulated system of correctness that must be mastered through

disciplined practice. Importantly, correction is not a peripheral activity; it is the central mechanism through which English is taught, evaluated, and normalized.

In Extract 3, the student utterance “Kofi is prepare food” becomes the starting point for an extended pedagogical sequence. The teacher’s initial question, “Is he correct?” does more than check understanding; it recruits the class into a collective evaluative stance. Students are positioned as judges of correctness, even before the teacher provides the answer. The teacher then repeats the incorrect form, isolating it for attention, before delivering a metalinguistic explanation: “The moment you bring a helping verb ‘is’ the verb after that should be in the present continuous... Kofi is preparing food.” This explanation does several things simultaneously. It identifies the error, provides the correct form, and articulates the rule that governs it. English is thus presented as a system that can be rationally understood and systematically applied.

This pattern is deepened in Extract 5, where the sentence “I have prepare rice and stew for you” is written on the board. Writing the sentence externalises the error, turning it into a shared object of analysis. The teacher’s question, “Is it supposed to be I have prepare?” prompts a collective rejection (“No”), after which the correct form is introduced. The movement from oral production to written representation and back to corrected form demonstrates how correction is layered across modalities. It is not a fleeting moment, but a structured process that stabilizes the standard form through repetition and visibility.

Extract 4 further illustrates how correction is distributed but hierarchically organised. After a student says, “My mother has bring firewood,” the teacher invites multiple students to propose corrections. Responses such as “My mother brings firewood” and “My mother brought firewood” are evaluated in turn, with the teacher ultimately confirming the correct form and reinforcing it through “Very good, clap for him.” The act of clapping is not merely celebratory; it is regulatory. It publicly marks the correct form as the one that should be recognised and emulated, embedding grammatical correctness within a system of social reward.

In these events, standard language is established through repetition, applause, and public visibility. Similar dynamics have been documented in other African classroom contexts. In Kenyan classrooms, Bunyi (2005) shows how tightly controlled interactional routines privilege

English accuracy, and Kiramba (2019) similarly observes that in multilingual science classrooms, normative language forms are continually reinforced through teacher regulation. These studies underscore how classroom interaction operates as a site where linguistic norms are actively constructed and sustained through everyday pedagogical practices.

Across these extracts, several patterns emerge. First, errors are consistently made public. They are repeated, written, and discussed in front of the class, making deviation visible. Second, correction is iterative. Students are often required to attempt multiple versions before arriving at the correct form, as seen in sequences where they are told to “go again.” Third, correctness is finalised through teacher authority. While students participate in the process, it is the teacher who determines when the correct form has been achieved.

From an evaluative standpoint, this reveals that English is both a communicative tool but an epistemic standard. To know something in the classroom is not only to understand it conceptually but to be able to express it in grammatically correct English. This aligns knowledge with linguistic form, such that correctness becomes a condition for recognition. Simultaneously, the reliance on error as a pedagogical resource shows that learning is inherently unstable. Students move through cycles of incorrect and correct forms, suggesting that mastery is always in process rather than fully achieved.

This centrality of correction also reveals how normativity is pedagogically produced rather than simply transmitted. The repeated cycles of error, evaluation, and repair do not just teach students grammatical rules; they habituate students into orienting themselves toward a particular standard as the measure of legitimate participation. In Extract 3, for instance, the shift from “Kofi is prepare food” to “Kofi is preparing food” is a grammatical adjustment and a moment in which the student’s utterance is recalibrated to align with an external norm. Over time, these micro-adjustments accumulate into a broader disposition: students learn to anticipate correction, monitor their own speech, and orient toward an idealised version of English even before it is explicitly demanded. Normativity, therefore, is not imposed in a single moment but sedimented through repeated interactional routines.

Also, the data shows that this process depends heavily on the visibility of error. Errors are not treated as private misunderstandings but as public pedagogical resources. When sentences are

repeated aloud, written on the board, or collectively evaluated, they become shared reference points through which the class constructs an understanding of what counts as correct English (Bunyi 2005). This publicness intensifies the stakes of participation. Students are not only producing language; they are doing so under conditions where their utterances may be scrutinised, reformulated, or rejected in front of their peers. In Extract 5, the inscription of “I have prepare rice and stew for you” on the board transforms a single student’s mistake into a collective learning event, but it also amplifies the visibility of deviation, reinforcing the idea that correctness is something that must withstand public examination.

This emphasis on public correction also intersects with the temporal organisation of learning. Correction sequences often interrupt the forward movement of the lesson, creating pauses in which the focus shifts from content to form. In extract 4, for example, the progression of the activity is temporarily suspended as multiple students attempt to correct “My mother has bring firewood.” These interruptions suggest that mastering standard English is not an auxiliary goal but a primary one that can override the flow of content instruction. Learning becomes punctuated by moments where language itself becomes the object of attention, reinforcing the idea that linguistic accuracy is foundational to all other forms of classroom knowledge.

However, this strong orientation toward correctness also produces a narrowing of what counts as acceptable knowledge demonstration. Students may demonstrate partial understanding or communicative intent, but these are not sufficient unless they are expressed in the correct grammatical form. In extract 3, the original sentence “Kofi is prepare food” clearly conveys meaning, yet it is treated as incorrect and therefore inadequate. The communicative success of the utterance is subordinated to its grammatical form. This reveals an important tension: language is being taught as a system of rules to be mastered, but this emphasis can overshadow the role of language as a medium for meaning making. Students learn that intelligibility alone is insufficient; legitimacy requires alignment with standardised forms.

At a deeper level, these correction practices also shape how students come to understand their own linguistic competence. Because correctness is publicly evaluated and socially reinforced, students are positioned within a continuum of more or less competent speakers based on their proximity to the standard. Praise words from the teacher such as “Very good” and collective

clapping, as seen in extract 4, does more than affirm a correct answer; it signals that the student has successfully aligned with the expected norm. Conversely, repeated corrections or the need to “go again” can position students as not yet meeting that standard. This creates a subtle hierarchy within the classroom, where linguistic performance becomes a key marker of academic and social positioning.

Yet, despite this strong regulatory framework, the findings also suggest that correction is not experienced as purely restrictive. The iterative nature of these sequences, where students are given multiple opportunities to reformulate their responses, indicates that learning is structured as a process of approximation. Several studies (e.g., Brock-Utne, 2007; Probyn, 2009; Kiramba, 2019; Milligan et al., 2016) document similar patterns in African classroom where tightly managed participation often combines discipline with rehearsal, repetition, and scaffolded collective learning.

Students are not excluded for producing incorrect forms; rather, they are drawn into cycles of refinement. This creates a paradoxical dynamic: correction simultaneously constrains and enables participation. It enforces a specific standard while also providing the means through which students can gradually move toward it.

These patterns show that the pedagogical production of Standard English is a complex, layered process. Correction functions as both a teaching strategy and a mechanism of norm enforcement, making English visible as a rule-governed system while also embedding it within social practices of evaluation and recognition. The classroom emerges as a space where linguistic form is tightly regulated, yet continuously negotiated through interaction, repetition, and collective participation.

6.33 Peer Regulation, Affect and the Social Enforcement of English Norms

The findings show that the maintenance of English norms extends beyond teacher authority into the domain of peer interaction, where students actively participate in regulating one another’s language use. This peer regulation operates both explicitly and implicitly, demonstrating that standard language ideology is embedded within the social dynamics of the classroom.

In extract 2, the student directive “Speak English!” interrupts ongoing activity, indexing English as a norm that is actively enforced through peer regulation. This intervention is particularly significant because it occurs without teacher prompting. The student takes on a regulatory role, enforcing the norm in real time. This indicates that English has become a shared expectation, internalised to the point where students feel authorised to correct one another.

Affective responses further intensify this regulation. In extract 6, the student utterance “I am finished the eating” is followed by a collective “Eiiii!” from other students. This reaction is immediate, loud, and communal. It marks the utterance as incorrect before the teacher intervenes, demonstrating that peers are highly attuned to deviations from standard forms. Similarly, in extract 7, the sentence “The girls are neatly than the boys” triggers laughter and chuckling, again signalling peer evaluation.

These reactions function as forms of social sanction. They do not only identify errors; they attach an emotional weight to them. Students learn both what is correct and how incorrectness is perceived within the group. This creates a powerful incentive to conform, as linguistic deviation becomes associated with public embarrassment or disapproval.

However, peer regulation is not uniform in its effects. While some reactions reinforce strict adherence to norms, others introduce nuance. The presence of laughter, for example, can be read both as a ridicule and as a form of shared engagement with the learning process. The ambiguity of these responses suggests that peer interaction is not purely disciplinary but also participatory, contributing to the collective shaping of classroom norms.

What becomes particularly significant in extract 7 is not simply that correction occurs, but how multiple, competing orientations to correctness are layered within the same interactional moment. The sequence begins in a familiar pattern: Pamela produces “The girls are neatly than the boys,” the teacher asks for repetition, and this repetition itself functions as a spotlighting device, isolating the utterance as an object of scrutiny. Before the teacher delivers an explicit evaluation, however, the classroom responds affectively through chuckling. As in extract 6, where “Eiii!” immediately marks deviation; this laughter operates as a form of peer surveillance, signalling that the utterance has already been positioned as incorrect within the collective ear of the classroom. Peer interaction operates as a simultaneously disciplinary and participatory

process, contributing to the collective shaping of classroom norms as students actively reproduce and negotiate expectations through routine interaction (Martin-Jones, 2000; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009; García & Wei, 2014).

Yet what distinguishes this extract is the interruption of this affective policing by the student's comment, "we are learning." This brief utterance performs a subtle but analytically important shift. While the laughter aligns with earlier patterns of ridicule and norm enforcement, "we are learning" reframes the same moment through a different interpretive lens. Instead of treating Pamela's error as a failure to meet a fixed standard, it positions the error as evidence of participation within an ongoing process. The contrast here is not simply between correctness and incorrectness, but between two competing models of what classroom participation means.

In earlier extracts, such as extract 2, the directive "Speak English!" operates as a clear policing mechanism. It reinforces a bounded norm: participation is legitimate only when it conforms to English use. Similarly, in extract 6, the collective "Eiii!" functions as a form of immediate social sanction, attaching embarrassment to deviation and reinforcing the idea that correctness is a prerequisite for acceptable participation. In both cases, peer responses align closely with standard language ideology by treating language as a fixed system that must be adhered to in order to maintain one's standing within the classroom.

The "we are learning" comment in extract 7, however, disrupts this alignment without fully overturning it. It does not reject the importance of correctness, nor does it challenge the teacher's authority to evaluate the utterance as "ungrammatical." Instead, it temporarily suspends the moral weight of error. In doing so, it introduces a process-oriented understanding of language learning that coexists uneasily with the dominant correctness-oriented framework. The laughter marks the error as socially noticeable, but the verbal intervention reframes it as pedagogically meaningful rather than socially deficient.

This contrast becomes even more analytically significant when considered alongside the teacher's subsequent response. The teacher proceeds to label the sentence as "not correct" and "ungrammatical," and then redirects the activity by inviting another student to produce a correct form. Rosemond's response, "Adom is neatly dressed," is immediately affirmed through praise and collective clapping. This restores the dominant evaluative order of the classroom:

correctness is recognised, rewarded, and made visible, while error is corrected and moved past. The institutional logic of standard language ideology remains intact, and the interaction ultimately resolves in favour of the standard form.

However, the presence of “we are learning” ensures that this resolution is not total. It leaves behind a trace of an alternative orientation, one in which participation is not contingent on immediate correctness. From an analytical perspective, this moment reveals that the classroom is not governed by a single, uncontested ideology, but by overlapping and sometimes conflicting frameworks (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). On one level, there is a strong orientation toward English as a rule-governed system, where correctness is publicly evaluated and socially enforced. On another level, there are emergent orientations that recognise learning as iterative, collective, and necessarily imperfect.

This is where the contrast with earlier peer interventions becomes most important. The two statements produced by students independently, “Speak English!” and “we are learning,” show contrasting orientations to participation. “Speak English!” enforces linguistic conformity as a condition of participation, aligning with a model of personhood in which legitimacy is tied to adherence to prescribed forms. By contrast, “we are learning” reopens participation as developmental. It suggests that belonging within the classroom community is not suspended by error but sustained through engagement with it. The difference, then, is not only linguistic but relational: one positions the learner in relation to a fixed standard, while the other positions the learner within a shared process of becoming.

From a broader analytical standpoint, this tension illustrates how standard language ideology is both reproduced and subtly negotiated within classroom interaction (Heller, 2007; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). The dominant pattern across extracts shows that English norms are maintained through a combination of teacher authority, peer regulation, and affective responses that attach value to correctness. Yet moments like “we are learning” demonstrate that this system is not fully closed. Students are not only enforcers of norms but also interpreters of what those norms mean for participation, error, and learning. These openings in the otherwise normative structure of classroom interaction have been widely noted in studies of multilingual pedagogy. Makalela (2015) argues that multilingual pedagogies, as observed in such classroom interactions, can

reframe non-standard responses as valuable resources for learning, while Probyn (2015) similarly demonstrates how classroom mediation can transform moments initially perceived as failure into opportunities for understanding.

Crucially, the “we are learning” comment does not amount to resistance in a straightforward sense. The students do not reject English, nor do they challenge the correction that follows. Instead, the intervention operates at the level of framing. It shifts how the moment is understood without altering the institutional outcome. This makes it analytically significant because it reveals the coexistence of multiple logics within the same classroom space: a dominant logic of standardisation and evaluation, and a secondary, more relational logic that acknowledges the provisional nature of learning.

The contrast between ridicule (“Eiii,” laughter) and reflexive commentary (“we are learning”) shows that peer regulation is not monolithic. It operates along a spectrum, from strict enforcement to empathetic reframing. This spectrum is crucial for understanding how English primacy is sustained. It is not maintained solely through rigid discipline, but also through forms of participation that allow students to remain engaged even when they fall short of the standard. In this way, the classroom becomes a space where standard language ideology is continuously reproduced, but also subtly reshaped through the very interactions that sustain it.

6.34 Translanguaging and Southern Multilingual Practices

It is important to clarify the relationship between the conceptual framing of Southern multilingualism and the analytic use of translanguaging in this section. While Southern multilingualism provides the broader epistemic and geopolitical lens through which multilingual practices are understood in this study, translanguaging is employed here as the fine-grained analytic term to describe the concrete interactional processes observed in classroom discourse. From this perspective, translanguaging is not treated as a separate or competing framework, but as one of the primary ways in which Southern multilingual practices become empirically visible in pedagogical settings. It captures the dynamic movement across languages, registers, and semiotic resources through which meaning is jointly constructed in real time. Thus, translanguaging is read as a situated expression of Southern multilingualism in action, where epistemic work is accomplished through fluid linguistic integration rather than separation.

6.341 Translanguaging as Instructional Framing and Meaning Construction

Across the classroom data, translanguaging is not used as an occasional explanatory tool but as an embedded instructional logic through which meaning is actively constructed. Rather than treating English and Twi as separate systems that alternate, the data shows that teachers routinely combine them within single pedagogical sequences to scaffold comprehension and sustain engagement (García, & Flores, 2012).

In extract 8 (Class 4), the teacher signals a shift into Twi: “tie meka no Twi ama wa te asee” (I am saying this in Twi for you to understand), making the linguistic choice explicitly visible. This metalinguistic framing is important because it makes the teacher’s linguistic choice intentional. Twi is not used because English has failed in a random sense, but because the teacher anticipates a comprehension gap and pre-empts it. Immediately after this shift, students respond in a hybrid form: “*ɔma no four-story building*”, combining Twi grammar with English lexical content.

What is analytically significant here is that meaning is not completed in either language alone. The moral lesson question that follows in English only becomes answerable because Twi has already structured the narrative understanding. This shows that comprehension is being co-produced across languages rather than transmitted in one and decoded in another.

From a Southern multilingual perspective, this challenges the idea that English is the primary carrier of knowledge. Instead, in this classroom, English functions as the formal framing language, while Twi functions as the epistemic access route that makes participation possible. Without Twi, the response space is narrowed; with it, students can enter meaningfully into the task. This aligns with Canagarajah’s (2011) argument that communicative competence in multilingual settings emerges through the strategic orchestration of semiotic resources across languages, rather than through the mastery of a single autonomous linguistic system.

Building directly from this, what becomes particularly significant is that translanguaging here functions beyond “translation work,” operating instead as epistemic design. The teacher is not switching languages to restate content; rather, the sequencing of English and Twi structures what kinds of understanding become possible in the first place. In extract 8, the initial framing in Twi (“tie meka no Twi ama wa te asee”) does not merely clarify meaning but reorganises the

interpretive conditions of the task. It signals that comprehension is expected to be constructed relationally rather than individually decoded from English alone. This means that the cognitive entry point into the lesson is linguistically plural from the outset, even when English remains the official instructional medium.

Simultaneously, the student response “oma no four-story building” is analytically revealing because it shows that learners are not operating in language-separated compartments. Instead, they are producing what can be understood as hybrid semiotic forms that reflect simultaneous orientation to both linguistic systems. The response is not a failure to separate languages but an indication that separation is not the operative logic of meaning-making in this classroom moment. The embedding of English lexical material within a Twi syntactic frame suggests that students are assembling meaning through available resources rather than conforming to strict linguistic boundaries. This complicates any assumption that translanguaging is purely teacher-driven; it is also structurally mirrored in student production.

A further layer of interpretation emerges when considering how authority is redistributed in these moments. Although the teacher initiates the translanguaging move, epistemic authority does not remain exclusively with the teacher during meaning construction. Instead, authority becomes partially delegated to shared interpretive labour. The teacher provides the bilingual scaffold, but the students complete the meaning-making process through uptake, adaptation, and response. This produces a temporary flattening of epistemic hierarchy, where understanding is not simply transmitted downward but assembled across participants. However, this redistribution is unstable, because the return to English in the final question reasserts institutional linguistic order.

This instability is important because it reveals that translanguaging in this context is not ideologically neutral. Even when it enables comprehension, it operates within a system where English retains ultimate evaluative authority. The moral lesson question in English at the end of extract 8 functions as a re-centering mechanism, repositioning English as the language through which understanding is ultimately required to be demonstrated. Thus, while Twi opens access to meaning, English closes the circuit of recognition. This dual movement suggests that translanguaging is simultaneously enabling and regulating, expanding participation while still directing it toward a predetermined linguistic endpoint. This pattern reflects Flores and Rosa’s

(2015) argument that multilingual practices are often shaped by raciolinguistic ideologies and institutional hierarchies that privilege dominant language norms.

From a more critical perspective, what is unfolding here can be read as a layered form of epistemic mediation. Twi mediates access to conceptual understanding, but English mediates access to institutional legitimacy. This creates a split between knowing and being recognised as knowing. Students may demonstrate comprehension through hybrid or Twi-embedded responses, yet that knowledge only becomes institutionally legible when re-expressed or aligned with English framing. Such a distinction reflects what Heugh (2015) describes as the unequal valuation of languages within multilingual education, where different languages are positioned for different epistemic functions. The classroom therefore produces two parallel epistemic registers: one grounded in interactional understanding, and another grounded in formal validation. Translanguaging operates at the intersection of these registers, enabling movement between them but not dissolving their asymmetry.

This configuration has implications for how participation itself is conceptualised. Participation in these classes involves more than speaking alone, requiring movement across linguistic resources in ways that align with collective meaning-making. However, this participation is unevenly valued depending on its proximity to English. While Twi enables entry into the interaction, English determines the final visibility of contribution. This means that translanguaging is best understood not as a symmetrical blending of languages, but as a structured negotiation of access, where linguistic resources are differentially weighted within the production of knowledge.

6.342 Translanguaging as Pedagogical Repair After Breakdown

A second pattern in the data is that translanguaging emerges most clearly at moments of breakdown, particularly silence, confusion, or incorrect responses. In these cases, Twi is not simply supportive but restorative: it reopens interactional space when English-based instruction fails to generate uptake.

This is evident in extract 12 where students are repeatedly unable to define the root word in “unripe”. After multiple failed attempts and silence from Morgan and Charles, the teacher shifts into Twi: *“Word no ankasa no. The root word ye word no ankasa no, yemfa hwee nka ho no.”*

This shift is not superficial. It comes after sustained breakdown in English interaction. Importantly, once the concept is re-explained in Twi, the correct answer “ripe” becomes available and the lesson progresses.

What this shows is that Twi functions as a repair mechanism for learning in the classroom especially when there is epistemic blockage. English alone is insufficient in that moment to sustain progression. The teacher does not abandon English, but repositions Twi as the medium through which conceptual clarity is restored (Clegg & Afitska, 2011).

From an Afro-communitarian perspective, this moment can also be understood as a form of relational repair grounded in the idea that personhood and knowledge are constituted through participation in shared social and linguistic life. The breakdown is therefore not only cognitive but also relational: students are temporarily excluded from the shared epistemic and communicative space of the classroom. The shift into Twi restores this space by re-establishing intelligibility and enabling students to re-enter collective meaning-making. In this sense, Twi does not merely function as a pedagogical aid, but as a medium through which relational participation and epistemic inclusion are reconstituted within the learning process.

However, from a Fanonian perspective, this moment remains structurally constrained, as Twi is only activated retrospectively after failure within English. It becomes necessary for comprehension, yet remains positioned within a hierarchy in which English retains institutional authority as the primary language of institutional validation and epistemic legitimacy.

Building on this, the timing of the shift into Twi is analytically crucial because it shows that translanguaging is not pre-emptive in this instance but reactive. The teacher does not begin with bilingual explanation but resorts to Twi only after repeated breakdowns in English uptake. This sequencing matters because it positions English as the default epistemic pathway that must be attempted first, even when it is not effective. Twi therefore enters the interaction as a corrective

intervention rather than an equal instructional option, which subtly reproduces a hierarchy of linguistic legitimacy even while it enables understanding.

What is also important in extract 12 is the way silence operates as a diagnostic signal. The absence of student response from Morgan and Charles is not treated as neutrality but as evidence of conceptual blockage. This silence triggers a shift in pedagogical strategy, suggesting that participation in English is being used as a proxy for understanding. However, the fact that silence persists until the intervention in Twi indicates that non-response is not necessarily lack of knowledge, but potentially lack of access to the linguistic form required to express it. This raises a critical tension between epistemic competence and linguistic expression, where the classroom momentarily equates understanding with English-mediated articulation.

The introduction of Twi, “Word no ankasa no...,” therefore functions as more than clarification; it reorganises the epistemic conditions of the task. It reframes the concept of “root word” not as a purely linguistic abstraction but as something anchored in everyday explanatory logic. This shift in register is significant because it moves from technical grammatical terminology toward relational explanation grounded in shared linguistic experience. In doing so, Twi reduces the cognitive distance between concept and learner, making the abstract more materially accessible. This suggests that comprehension emerges less through translation than through a shift in epistemic framing that aligns with students’ lived linguistic resources.

However, the fact that the correct answer “ripe” emerges immediately after the Twi explanation demonstrates a temporal relationship between language mode and cognitive uptake. The sequence implies that understanding is not evenly distributed across languages but becomes possible at specific moments of linguistic alignment. However, this should not be read as Twi being inherently superior for comprehension; rather, it indicates that access to meaning is contingent on alignment between instructional language and learners’ available interpretive frameworks. The pedagogical success of the moment therefore depends on the flexibility of linguistic mediation rather than the inherent capacity of either language.

From an Afro-communitarian perspective, this moment is particularly significant because it foregrounds the relational nature of knowing. The breakdown in English does not simply interrupt learning; it disrupts the shared communicative space between teacher and students. The

shift into Twi restores this space by re-establishing mutual intelligibility, allowing students to re-enter the interaction as full participants. Knowledge production here is therefore inseparable from communicative inclusion, meaning that epistemic progress depends on maintaining relational coherence within the classroom.

However, from a Fanonian perspective, this repair remains structurally ambivalent because it reinforces the asymmetry between languages. Twi is mobilised as a recovery tool rather than a legitimate medium of instruction in its own right. Its use is conditional and temporally restricted to moments of failure within English. This means that even though Twi enables comprehension and restores participation, it does not displace English as the language of validation and academic authority. Instead, it operates within a corrective economy where its value is defined by its capacity to restore access to English-based learning outcomes.

6.343 Translanguaging as Instructional Scaffolding in Content Delivery

Beyond repair, translanguaging also functions as a proactive scaffolding mechanism during content explanation. In extract 9, the teacher first presents a scenario in English involving refusal to fetch firewood, then immediately re-expresses the same situation in Twi within the same turn: “*Meɛ fa wo gya wose menkofa wadeɛ mbrɛ wo...*”

What is important here is that the Twi version is not a translation in the strict sense. It is an expansion. The teacher adds cultural and relational detail that is not fully captured in the English version. The question “*will there be peace again?*” anchors the discussion back into English, but only after Twi has enriched the contextual understanding.

This produces a layered epistemic structure. English provides the academic framing, while Twi provides socio-cultural intelligibility. Meaning is therefore distributed rather than duplicated. This directly complicates monolingual assumptions about instruction. The classroom is not operating in parallel languages but in a blended system where conceptual depth is often produced through linguistic movement. This dynamic aligns with Hornberger’s (2003) continua of biliteracy framework, which insists that knowledge in multilingual settings is often distributed across languages rather than contained within a single code. It also reflects García and Wei’s (2014) argument that bilingual meaning-making emerges through the coordinated use of a

speaker's full linguistic repertoire, where different linguistic resources carry distinct but complementary functions. The implication is that understanding is not simply transferred but thickened through multilingual articulation. The shift into Twi is not redundancy; it is epistemic amplification.

What becomes particularly significant in this scaffolding function is that Twi is doing interpretive work that English alone does not fully accomplish within the interactional moment. The English framing introduces the scenario in an abstracted, decontextualised way, but it is the Twi expansion that embeds the situation within familiar social relations and culturally legible dynamics. This means that comprehension is not merely linguistic but also socio-cultural, and translanguaging becomes the mechanism through which abstract content is anchored in lived experience. In this sense, Twi does not sit alongside English as a parallel code; it actively reshapes what the content means in context.

A further analytical layer emerges when considering how temporality operates in this sequence. The teacher does not delay the Twi explanation or separate it into a different instructional phase; instead, it is embedded within the same turn. This immediacy suggests that translanguaging is not being used to remediate misunderstanding after it occurs, but to pre-emptively structure understanding before it stabilises. The flow between English and Twi therefore produces a continuous interpretive field rather than a segmented bilingual exchange. This continuity is important because it indicates that meaning is being assembled in real time through linguistic layering rather than through post-hoc clarification.

The expansion of the scenario in Twi also introduces relational and moral dimensions that are less explicitly articulated in the English version. The firewood refusal scenario is not only described as an event but as a socially embedded interaction involving obligation, conflict, and potential resolution. This means that Twi is carrying pragmatic and ethical nuance that reframes the cognitive task from simple comprehension to relational interpretation. The question "will there be peace again?" then operates not just as a comprehension check but as an evaluative pivot, requiring students to synthesise both linguistic frames into a coherent moral judgement.

From an epistemological standpoint, this layered structure challenges the assumption that academic knowledge is best transmitted through a single, standardised linguistic form. Instead,

the data suggests that conceptual depth is often produced through accumulation across linguistic registers (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). English provides abstraction and institutional framing, while Twi provides contextual density and relational grounding. Meaning therefore emerges through the interaction between abstraction and embodiment, rather than through abstraction alone. This complicates traditional views of academic language proficiency (Canagarajah, 2013), which tend to privilege linguistic uniformity over interpretive richness.

Meanwhile, the scaffolding function of translanguaging reveals that comprehension is treated as an achievement that must be actively constructed, not assumed. The teacher does not expect students to infer the full meaning from the English version alone, which indicates an implicit recognition of its limitations as a sole medium of instruction. Twi thus becomes a pedagogical tool for reducing interpretive distance, allowing students to move from partial understanding to fuller conceptual grasp. However, this also implies that English, in its isolated form, is insufficient for sustained meaning-making in this classroom context.

From an Afro-communitarian perspective, this practice is particularly significant because it situates understanding within relational accessibility. Knowledge is not simply transmitted to isolated individuals but built through shared interpretive resources that include culturally familiar linguistic frames. Twi becomes the medium through which collective intelligibility is maintained, ensuring that students remain within the epistemic community of the classroom. Without this linguistic grounding, participation risks becoming fragmented, as students would be required to operate within an abstract system disconnected from their communicative lifeworlds.

However, from a Fanonian lens, this scaffolding function remains structurally constrained because English retains its position as the final anchoring language of academic legitimacy. Even though Twi enriches and expands meaning, the interaction ultimately returns to English through the evaluative question. This return is not neutral; it recentres institutional authority within English while positioning Twi as a supportive but non-dominant epistemic resource. Thus, while translanguaging enhances understanding and deepens engagement, it does so within a hierarchy where English remains the language through which knowledge is formally recognised and assessed.

6.344 Multimodal Translanguaging and Semiotic Expansion

The findings also show that translanguaging extends beyond spoken language into multimodal and sensory resources. Extract 11 (the whistle explanation) is particularly important here. The teacher begins in English, introduces Twi explanation (“*sɛ yɛ hwe football a...* ”), and then uses sound imitation “*hwii hwii*” while describing the whistle and officiating in sports. Students respond with “Yes,” indicating comprehension.

What matters here is that understanding is not produced through language alone. It is produced through a combination of English, Twi, gesture, and sound (Kress, 2015). The concept of “whistle” becomes intelligible because it is anchored in shared sensory experience, not because it is linguistically decoded in English. This directly challenges the assumption that English is the sole bearer of academic meaning. Instead, meaning is distributed across linguistic and embodied resources.

An important point in this multimodal sequence is that language is no longer functioning as a self-contained system of meaning. Instead, it operates alongside gesture, sound, and culturally familiar reference points to produce a composite understanding. The teacher’s movement from English description to Twi contextual framing and then to the embodied sound “hwii hwii” shows that comprehension is being assembled across multiple semiotic layers. Each layer contributes something different: English introduces the academic label, Twi situates the concept within familiar experience, and sound reproduction materialises the object in perceptual form. Meaning therefore emerges through orchestration rather than translation.

A further analytical point concerns the role of sound imitation as epistemic evidence. The “hwii hwii” imitation is not decorative or illustrative in a superficial sense; it functions as a cognitive anchor that allows students to link abstract vocabulary to sensory memory. The whistle is not simply defined but enacted, and this enactment reduces the distance between linguistic abstraction and perceptual recognition. This suggests that understanding is being grounded in embodied cognition, where knowledge is validated through sensory alignment rather than verbal explanation alone. In this sense, the classroom moment reveals that academic concepts become accessible when they are re-embedded in experiential forms of knowing.

The students' response "Yes" should also be read as more than passive confirmation. Within this multimodal context, it signals that comprehension has been achieved through convergence of multiple representational modes rather than through linguistic decoding alone. The brevity of the response is analytically important because it indicates that understanding does not require extended verbal articulation when meaning has already been stabilised through embodied and multilingual scaffolding. This suggests that comprehension in this classroom is often registered affectively and interactionally rather than exclusively linguistically.

From a theoretical perspective, this challenges monolingual assumptions about how academic knowledge is transmitted and validated (Hofer & Jessner, 2025). The idea that English alone carries conceptual meaning is disrupted by the fact that students appear to grasp the concept only after it has been multimodally reconstructed. The whistle is understood not because of its lexical definition but because of its integration into a sensory and cultural frame. This means that academic understanding is not reducible to language proficiency but is distributed across semiotic systems that include sound, gesture, and shared cultural experience.

From a Southern epistemological standpoint, this multimodal layering is particularly significant because it repositions knowledge as situated and relational rather than abstract and detached. The teacher does not attempt to elevate the concept into purely formal English definition but instead brings it closer to students' everyday experiential world. Twi and sound imitation function as mediating tools that translate abstraction into familiarity. This reflects an epistemic orientation in which knowing is inseparable from lived perception, and where meaning is validated through recognisability within shared social contexts.

However, it is also important to note that this multimodal expansion does not eliminate the structural dominance of English within the classroom. English still initiates the sequence and provides the official label for the concept "whistle," which suggests that institutional legitimacy remains tied to English terminology. Twi and embodied resources enhance understanding, but they do not replace the role of English as the academic anchor. Thus, while meaning is distributed across semiotic modes, recognition of that meaning within the educational system remains partially dependent on English framing, preserving the underlying hierarchy even within moments of rich multimodal engagement.

Importantly, this multimodal translanguaging also reshapes the teacher's role from a transmitter of linguistic definitions into a curator of interpretive access. Rather than relying on verbal explanation alone, the teacher actively assembles a semiotic environment in which meaning becomes reachable through multiple entry points. The sequence of English term, Twi contextualisation, and sound imitation shows a deliberate pedagogical layering that anticipates different forms of learner engagement. This suggests that teaching here moves beyond solely delivering content to designing pathways into understanding, where each modality compensates for the limitations of the others.

Also, this curation reveals an implicit recognition that linguistic abstraction alone is insufficient for many learners in this context. The need to enact the whistle rather than just define it implies that comprehension is unevenly distributed when instruction remains purely verbal. Multimodal translanguaging therefore becomes a response to epistemic inequality in access to English-based explanation, allowing students to bypass linguistic barriers through sensory recognition. However, this also subtly confirms that English explanation on its own does not guarantee shared understanding, even when it remains the official instructional medium.

From an Afro-communitarian perspective, this moment is particularly significant because it foregrounds learning as a shared perceptual experience rather than an individual cognitive achievement. The collective "Yes" response is not simply agreement but a sign that the group has successfully entered a shared interpretive space. Knowledge here is not privately acquired and then displayed, but publicly realised through coordinated understanding. The multimodal resources thus function as tools for sustaining communal intelligibility, ensuring that no participant is excluded from the epistemic moment due to linguistic limitation.

However, from a Fanonian perspective, this expanded accessibility remains circumscribed by the continued symbolic authority of English. Even as meaning is achieved through sound and Twi, the concept is still ultimately named and validated in English. This means that while multimodal translanguaging expands the routes to understanding, it does not fundamentally redistribute the hierarchy of recognition. English remains the language through which knowledge is formally stabilised, even when comprehension is achieved through more plural and embodied means.

6.345 Student Translanguaging as Participation and Epistemic Agency

Students are not passive recipients of translanguaging practices; they actively shape them. In extract 13, students respond to a health question in Twi: “*da biara wo dware wie a na wasra.*” The teacher does not correct or reject this response but continues the interaction.

This is significant because it shows that participation is not restricted to English competence. Students are able to contribute meaningfully through Twi, and that contribution is epistemically valid within the interaction. This disrupts the idea that English is the only legitimate channel of knowledge expression. Instead, knowledge is being co-constructed through multilingual participation.

Similarly, in extract 14, a student, Elorm asks a metalinguistic question in English at the end of the lesson about “circumfix.” This shows that students are able to move between languages to ask questions depending on epistemic need, not constraint.

What is particularly important in extract 13 is that student participation through Twi is not treated as deviation but as legitimate epistemic contribution within the interactional flow. The response “*da biara wo dware wie a na wasra*” is not reformulated into English before being taken up; instead, it is allowed to stand as meaningful within its own linguistic form. This indicates that intelligibility is being negotiated locally rather than imposed through a strict English-only filter. In this moment, understanding is validated through functional relevance to the question rather than conformity to a particular linguistic code.

This has broader implications for how epistemic authority is distributed in the classroom. While teachers remain structurally positioned as evaluators, the moment of uptake without correction suggests a temporary loosening of linguistic gatekeeping. The teacher’s decision not to translate or correct the Twi response allows student knowledge to circulate as valid within the interaction. This does not eliminate hierarchy, but it does introduce moments of epistemic permeability where student contributions can enter the lesson without being reformulated into English first.

At a deeper level, this challenges the assumption that knowledge must be linguistically standardised to be educationally legitimate. The Twi response functions as a complete and coherent expression of understanding within the interactional context, even though it does not

align with formal English academic registers. This suggests that comprehension and expression are not being evaluated solely through grammatical conformity, but through their ability to respond meaningfully to the pedagogical prompt. In this sense, epistemic validity is locally constructed rather than externally imposed.

From a Southern multilingual perspective, this moment reflects a form of linguistic realism grounded in everyday communicative practice (Heugh et al., 2017). Students are not required to suspend their full linguistic repertoires in order to participate; instead, they draw on available resources to produce meaning in the most immediate and accessible form. Twi becomes not an auxiliary code but a primary medium of explanation. This shifts the epistemological centre of the classroom from standardised language competence toward situated communicative effectiveness.

In contrast, extract 14 introduces a different but complementary dimension of student agency through metalinguistic questioning. Elorm's question about "circumfix" in English demonstrates strategic awareness of when English is necessary for institutional alignment. Unlike extract 13, where Twi is used for direct response, here English is mobilised to access technical disciplinary knowledge. This indicates that some students are attuned to the epistemic demands of different classroom moments.

What is analytically significant is that this English-based question occurs at the end of the lesson, a moment when the formal instructional structure is loosening. The student independently initiates a clarification request, indicating ownership of the learning process. This suggests that epistemic agency is not limited to providing answers but also includes the ability to identify gaps in understanding and seek clarification across linguistic boundaries. The student is actively managing their own learning trajectory within the multilingual environment.

These extracts reveal that student translanguaging is not merely reactive but also strategically adaptive. Students shift between Twi and English depending on whether the goal is participation, comprehension, clarification, or institutional alignment. This flexibility undermines any static view of learners as bound to a single linguistic register. Instead, they operate as dynamic agents navigating a multilingual repertoire in response to shifting epistemic and interactional demands.

6.35 Collaborative Knowledge Construction Through Multilingual Interaction

Several extracts show that knowledge emerges collectively rather than individually. In extract 15 (affix/circumfix sequence), students produce multiple incorrect responses (“*affixes*,” “*affixation*,” “*double fixation*”) before the class collectively arrives at “*circumfix*. ”

What is important here is not just the correctness of the final answer but the process through which it is reached. Knowledge is produced through accumulation, correction, rejection, and repetition. Even though the teacher ultimately validates the answer, the epistemic work is distributed across the class.

This pattern is consistent with Southern relational epistemology: knowledge is not located in an individual mind but emerges through interaction. However, this collaborative production still operates within English as the final evaluative code. So even collective knowledge is filtered through institutional language norms.

What is particularly significant in extract 15 is that error is not treated as epistemic failure but as an integral part of the knowledge production process. The sequence of responses (“*affixes*,” “*affixation*,” “*double fixation*”) does not interrupt learning; instead, it generates the conditions through which the correct concept becomes intelligible. Each incorrect attempt functions as a stepping stone that refines the collective understanding of the target term. This reframes error not as deviation from knowledge but as a necessary mechanism through which knowledge is gradually assembled.

At an interactional level, the teacher’s role in this sequence is less about delivering knowledge and more about curating the trajectory of collective reasoning. By repeatedly evaluating responses with “No” and allowing successive attempts, the teacher structures a space in which epistemic exploration is socially distributed. Importantly, the teacher does not immediately provide the correct answer, which means authority is temporarily suspended to allow student-generated hypotheses to circulate. This creates an environment where knowledge is transmitted less as a one-way process and more as something actively negotiated.

The collective emergence of “*circumfix*” is therefore not a moment of individual brilliance but of cumulative alignment. The term becomes visible only after multiple interpretive failures,

suggesting that understanding is achieved through convergence rather than immediacy. What appears as a correct answer at the end of the sequence is in fact the product of layered cognitive and linguistic experimentation. This highlights that epistemic resolution in the classroom is often delayed, requiring sustained collaborative engagement rather than instant retrieval.

From a Southern multilingual perspective, it is also important that this entire process unfolds within English, yet it is not purely a matter of linguistic competence. The difficulty students experience is not only about vocabulary knowledge but about conceptual abstraction within a second-language framework. This suggests that English here is functioning simultaneously as medium and barrier: it is the language through which knowledge is being constructed, but also the linguistic system that makes that construction more laborious. The collaborative nature of the task therefore compensates for the limitations of individual linguistic proficiency.

At a deeper level, this interaction reveals that epistemic authority is partially redistributed among students during the process of collective reasoning. Each student's contribution, even when incorrect, reshapes the trajectory of the discussion. This means that knowledge production is not linear but accumulative, with each response altering the interpretive field for subsequent participants. The classroom becomes a space of distributed cognition, where meaning is assembled across multiple voices rather than residing in a single authoritative source.

However, this distributed cognition is still framed within a bounded evaluative system. The teacher ultimately determines when the correct answer has been reached, which means that student contributions remain subordinate to institutional validation. Even though students collectively generate the path to "circumfix," they do not control the criteria by which correctness is finally established. This introduces a structural asymmetry between collaborative production and authoritative closure.

This tension is important because it shows that collaboration does not automatically imply epistemic equality. While students are actively involved in generating knowledge, the final validation of that knowledge remains governed by the teacher's evaluative authority. In this sense, collaboration operates within a guided framework rather than an open epistemic democracy. The classroom therefore produces shared intellectual labour but not shared epistemic sovereignty.

From a Southern epistemological perspective, however, this collaborative structure still represents a meaningful departure from individualised models of learning dominant in Eurocentric educational paradigms. Knowledge is treated less as an internal possession and more as a relational achievement emerging through interaction. The iterative process of guessing, correcting, and refining reflects a communal orientation to learning where understanding is built through collective participation rather than isolated performance.

However, it is important to recognise that this relational epistemology is not fully detached from institutional linguistic hierarchies. Because the entire sequence is mediated through English, access to participation is still shaped by varying levels of language proficiency. This means that while collaboration expands epistemic engagement, it does so unevenly, with linguistic competence influencing the ease of contribution. The communal structure of knowledge production is therefore always already entangled with linguistic stratification.

What emerges overall is a hybrid epistemic system in which communal reasoning and institutional language norms coexist in tension. Students co-construct knowledge through shared trial and error, yet the legitimacy of that knowledge is ultimately filtered through English as the standard of correctness. This produces a layered epistemology where meaning is collectively generated but selectively validated.

In conclusion, this pattern of collaborative knowledge construction points toward a broader southernization of multilingual classroom practice in which learning is fundamentally relational rather than individual. However, this relationality is not free from constraint; it operates within the enduring architecture of linguistic hierarchy. The finding therefore suggests a partial reconfiguration of epistemic authority, where communal participation becomes central to knowledge production, but institutional validation continues to anchor it in English. This tension does not negate the emergence of Southern epistemologies but instead reveals how they are actively negotiated within constrained multilingual educational spaces.

6.36 Structural Tension: Complementarity and Hierarchy

Across all extracts, a persistent tension emerges between functional multilingualism and institutional monolingual ideology. On one hand, Twi is essential for explanation, repair, participation, and comprehension. On the other hand, English remains the language of

assessment, correction, and final validation. This means that translanguaging does not replace English dominance but operates within its structure. It expands access to knowledge but does not redefine the criteria for recognition.

From a Fanonian perspective, this reflects a continued hierarchy of linguistic value: English remains tied to legitimacy and institutional success. From an Afro-communitarian perspective, however, Twi is central to sustaining the relational conditions of learning. Without it, participation collapses. The classroom data therefore shows a dual system: English governs evaluation, while multilingualism governs understanding.

Across the dataset, what first appears as a functional coexistence between English and Twi is better understood as a structured asymmetry. The classroom does not simply alternate between languages in a neutral way; instead, it assigns them different epistemic and institutional roles. English repeatedly appears at the point of evaluation, correction, and closure, while Twi is most visible at the point of entry, clarification, and repair. This distribution is not accidental but reflects an underlying hierarchy in which languages are differentially valued within the same interactional system.

This asymmetry becomes particularly visible when examining how lessons move toward closure. In extract 12 (root word discussion), for instance, students may initially struggle with the concept in English, and Twi is introduced to reframe understanding, but the final validation still returns to English-based terminology (“ripe” as the correct root word). Even when comprehension is achieved through multilingual mediation, institutional recognition is anchored in English lexical and grammatical framing. This suggests that understanding is multilingual, but legitimacy is monolingual.

In extract 11 (whistle explanation), a similar pattern emerges but in a more expanded semiotic form. Twi, English, and sound (“hwii hwii”) collectively produce comprehension, yet the final naming of the concept is still anchored in English (“whistle”). This reveals a subtle but persistent evaluative hierarchy: multilingualism expands cognitive access, but English consolidates epistemic authority. The system thus relies on multilingual input while still reserving monolingual output for validation.

From a Fanonian perspective, this structure reflects what can be described as linguistic stratification of recognition. English operates as a gatekeeping mechanism that determines which forms of knowledge become institutionally visible, which makes it more than a language. Even when students demonstrate understanding through Twi or hybrid forms, this knowledge must be translated into English to acquire legitimacy. This creates a split between lived understanding and institutional recognition, where the former is necessary but insufficient.

However, an Afro-communitarian reading complicates this hierarchy by foregrounding relational intelligibility. In extract 13 (health instruction), when students respond in Twi (“da biara wo dware wie a na wasra”), the teacher continues the interaction without correction. In this moment, comprehension is sufficient for participation. This suggests that within the lived ecology of the classroom, intelligibility is not exclusively tied to English. Instead, relational participation is maintained through shared understanding, regardless of linguistic form.

The tension, therefore, is not simply between two languages but between two competing logics of what counts as knowledge. One logic is institutional and evaluative, privileging standardised English forms as the endpoint of learning. The other is relational and processual, privileging shared meaning-making as the condition of learning itself. These logics coexist but are not equivalent; they operate at different moments of the pedagogical sequence.

This becomes especially clear when examining correction sequences such as extract 15 (circumfix task). The emergence of the correct answer through collective trial and error demonstrates that epistemic production is distributed. However, the final recognition of “circumfix” still functions as closure in English, even though the pathway to that answer was multilingual, collaborative, and iterative. This indicates that while knowledge is socially produced, it is institutionally finalised through a narrow linguistic channel.

What is particularly significant is that this structure does not eliminate multilingual agency but channels it. Students are actively engaged in meaning-making, but their contributions are differently valued depending on linguistic form. Twi contributions are often treated as transitional or explanatory, while English contributions are treated as definitive or evaluative. This creates an implicit hierarchy of epistemic weight, even within collaborative interaction.

From a Southern multilingualism perspective, this hierarchy is not simply a limitation but also a site of negotiation. The classroom is not a failed monolingual space; rather, it is a hybrid epistemic environment where linguistic resources are strategically mobilised to sustain learning under uneven conditions. Twi does not function as a subordinate system but as a necessary infrastructure for sustaining participation in contexts where English alone would produce exclusion or silence.

Meanwhile, the persistence of English as the language of validation means that multilingual practices operate within constraints that they do not fully overturn. Translanguaging expands communicative and cognitive space, but it does not fundamentally redistribute institutional authority. This is the key contradiction running through the dataset: multilingualism is pedagogically indispensable but structurally subordinate.

Bringing these dimensions together, the classroom reveals a dual epistemic architecture. One system governs understanding through multilingual, relational, and processual interaction. The other governs recognition through monolingual, standardised, and evaluative closure. Rather than resolving into one coherent system, these logics remain in productive tension. It is precisely this tension that sustains classroom functioning, but it also exposes the limits of linguistic inclusion within existing institutional frameworks. A Southernized reading of multilingualism therefore does not treat this as a transitional stage toward English dominance, but as evidence of an already existing, relationally grounded epistemology that is continuously active beneath and alongside institutional hierarchy.

6.37 Summary

The classroom data demonstrates that Southern multilingualism is not an optional strategy but a necessary condition for sustaining interaction, comprehension, and participation. Teachers and students move fluidly between English and Twi to explain concepts, repair breakdowns, and construct meaning collaboratively.

However, this multilingual practice remains structurally contained within an English-dominant institutional framework. English retains authority as the language of correctness and evaluation,

while Twi operates as the language of access and relational understanding. This produces a layered linguistic system in which meaning is collectively constructed but selectively validated.

What emerges across the dataset is not a classroom that oscillates between two equal linguistic systems, but one in which translanguaging is indispensable precisely because the dominant institutional framework is insufficient on its own. English provides the formal architecture of schooling, but it is repeatedly the case that this architecture cannot sustain comprehension without recourse to Twi. This creates a paradox in which the dominant language is pedagogically dependent on the very linguistic resources it ideologically marginalises.

This dependence is most visible in moments where instruction breaks down or stalls. In extract 12 (root word task), for instance, sustained silence from Morgan and Charles signals that English alone is not producing uptake. It is only after the teacher shifts into Twi (“Word no ankasa no...”) that conceptual clarity is restored. Ideologically, however, this shift does not reconfigure the status of Twi; it is treated as a temporary corrective device rather than a legitimate epistemic medium. This reveals a key ideological contradiction: Twi is essential for understanding but not authorised for formal validation.

This contradiction reflects a broader standard language ideology embedded within the classroom. English is consistently positioned as the language of correctness, discipline, and academic legitimacy, while Twi is positioned as auxiliary, affective, and explanatory. Even when Twi is central to producing understanding, it rarely becomes the language through which knowledge is officially recognised. This ideological split produces what can be described as a “dual valuation system,” where languages are not only functionally different but hierarchically ordered.

From a Fanonian perspective, this hierarchy is not neutral but psychopolitical. English functions as a marker of institutional belonging and intellectual legitimacy, meaning that students are implicitly positioned as more “knowing” when they can reproduce concepts in English. Twi, by contrast, becomes associated with proximity, familiarity, and the everyday, but not with formal epistemic authority. This produces a subtle form of linguistic subject formation in which recognition is mediated through adherence to the dominant code.

However, an Afro-communitarian reading complicates this hierarchy by shifting the focus from linguistic form to relational participation. Across multiple extracts, particularly where students respond in Twi without sanction (e.g., health instruction in Extract 6), intelligibility rather than linguistic conformity becomes the basis of engagement. In these moments, what matters is not whether language conforms to institutional standards but whether it sustains shared understanding and participation. This suggests that relational epistemology persists beneath institutional regulation, even if it is not formally recognised.

Ideologically, then, the classroom is not a space of linguistic uniformity but a site of competing epistemic logics. One logic is institutional and standardising, seeking to stabilise meaning through English as a uniform code. The other is relational and adaptive, sustaining meaning through flexible deployment of multilingual resources. These logics do not simply coexist; they continuously intersect, producing moments of alignment and tension within the same interactional sequences.

Importantly, Southern multilingualism in this context does not function as resistance in a straightforward sense. While it expands participation and enables comprehension, it does not fully displace the authority of English. Instead, it operates within what can be described as a “managed multilingualism,” where linguistic flexibility is permitted insofar as it ultimately supports progression toward English-based validation. This containment ensures that multilingual practices remain functional but not transformative of institutional hierarchy.

At the same time, this containment is never fully stable. The very necessity of Twi for comprehension exposes the limits of English as a self-sufficient system of knowledge transmission. Each moment of translanguaging implicitly reveals that understanding is distributed across linguistic resources, not housed in a single code. This creates an underlying ideological tension between what the system claims (English sufficiency) and what the interactional data demonstrates (English dependency on multilingual support).

Ultimately, the data suggests that Southern multilingualism is both enabling and constrained: enabling because it allows learning to proceed in practice, and constrained because it is systematically subordinated to English in principle. Meaning is therefore produced through multilingual collaboration but disciplined through monolingual validation. This produces a

layered ideological structure in which knowledge is socially and linguistically co-constructed but institutionally filtered through a hierarchy that privileges English as the final arbiter of correctness.

6.4 Synthesis of Teacher Ideologies and Classroom Practices

This section integrates findings from teacher interviews and classroom interaction data to construct a unified but internally contradictory account of multilingual education in the two Ghanaian school contexts. Rather than treating teacher beliefs and classroom practices as separate analytical domains, the synthesis demonstrates that they operate as a single ideological-practical system. However, this system is not coherent; it is characterised by tension, negotiation, and constant reworking. Teachers articulate strong normative commitments to English in interviews, yet these commitments are repeatedly reconfigured through translanguaging practices in classroom interaction. The result is a pedagogical ecology where ideology and practice are mutually constitutive but never fully aligned.

6.4.1 Ideological Alignment: English as Intellectual Legitimacy, Moral Order, and Institutional Visibility

Across the interview data, teachers consistently construct English as the language of intellectual legitimacy, academic success, and moral discipline. English is more than the medium through which lessons are delivered; it functions as the condition that defines what it means to be a “proper learner.” This framing is ideologically loaded because it links language proficiency to moral and cognitive evaluations of students, positioning English competence as evidence of seriousness, effort, and intellectual capacity (Bonney, 2022; Owusu, 2022). In this sense, English becomes more than a communicative tool; it becomes a normative standard through which learners are judged as educational subjects.

What is particularly significant is that this discourse does not remain abstract in interviews but is actively reproduced in classroom interaction. In one classroom interaction involving surveillance and the remark “sir is recording,” the teacher’s directive “Now I want everybody to speak English because sir is recording” situates English within a field of visibility and accountability. English here is not only pedagogical; it is performative under observation. The presence of an

external evaluator intensifies the ideological demand for English, transforming language choice into a public demonstration of institutional compliance. Students' choral response ("English") further shows that this norm is already socially internalised, suggesting that the ideology has been sedimented through repeated institutional exposure.

However, the follow-up instruction "try to speak what?" illustrates that English is not automatically sustained even under surveillance. It must be explicitly elicited and repeatedly reinforced. This repetition is analytically important because it reveals that English does not function as a stable or naturalised medium of interaction. Instead, it is an achievement that requires continuous regulatory work within classroom discourse. The ideology of English dominance is therefore not simply reflected in practice; it is actively produced through interactional enforcement.

This theme shows that English operates as an ideologically charged institutional norm that extends beyond pedagogy into moral and social regulation of learners. However, what the classroom data makes clear is that this ideological alignment is not a settled or self-sustaining reality but an ongoing accomplishment that must be repeatedly produced through teacher directives, student compliance, and moments of externalised surveillance. The positioning of English as intellectual legitimacy is therefore less a description of actual communicative practice and more a normative aspiration that requires constant reinforcement in interaction. This sets up the central tension that runs through the rest of the analysis: while English is consistently framed as the defining marker of a "proper learner," its authority is continuously negotiated, enacted, and at times destabilised within the multilingual realities of classroom life.

6.42 Ideological Contradiction: English as Ideal and Twi as Pedagogical Necessity

Across the interview data, teachers construct English as the primary medium of intellectual development and institutional success, while simultaneously acknowledging, sometimes indirectly, that Twi is essential for comprehension. This produces a layered ideological structure in which English is associated with correctness, discipline, and future mobility, whereas Twi is framed as a remedial or supportive tool for understanding difficult content. The contradiction here is not accidental but structurally embedded in the realities of multilingual classrooms where learners' dominant repertoires are not exclusively English-based. As Owu-Ewie and Eshun

(2019) and Agbozo and ResCue (2020) show, teachers in their studies routinely rely on code-switching and translanguaging despite policy expectations of English dominance.

This tension becomes more visible in classroom interaction. Teachers frequently shift into Twi during explanation, clarification, or repair sequences, even when interviews emphasise English as the ideal instructional language. These shifts are not framed as deviations from policy or ideology; rather, they occur as practical responses to moments of breakdown. For instance, when students fail to respond to questions posed in English, teachers often re-express the same concept in Twi to restore comprehension and participation. This suggests that Twi is not external to pedagogy but integral to its functioning.

Importantly, this duality exposes a gap between ideological aspiration and instructional reality. English is positioned as the language of academic authority in interviews, but classroom data demonstrate that this authority is frequently dependent on multilingual mediation. Without Twi, many interactional sequences stall, indicating that English alone is insufficient to sustain meaning-making. This reveals that what appears as a coherent ideology of English primacy is, in practice, a hybrid system sustained through linguistic flexibility.

Thus, the relationship between English and Twi is not oppositional but interdependent. English provides the formal structure of instruction, while Twi ensures epistemic accessibility. However, this interdependence remains ideologically unacknowledged in teacher discourse, which continues to privilege English as the symbolic centre of education.

This sub-theme reveals that the supposed opposition between English and Twi is in fact an unresolved ideological tension embedded within everyday pedagogical practice. While English is consistently upheld in teacher discourse as the idealised medium of academic achievement and institutional legitimacy, classroom interaction demonstrates that this ideal cannot be sustained without continual reliance on Twi for explanation, clarification, and repair. The contradiction is therefore not a failure of implementation but a structural condition of multilingual education in practice: English is positioned as the language of aspiration, yet Twi repeatedly emerges as the language of access. This produces a form of pedagogical dependence that is largely unacknowledged in ideology but clearly visible in interaction, revealing that effective teaching in these contexts is always multilingual, even when framed otherwise.

6.43 Translanguaging as an Embedded Pedagogical Practice Rather Than an Exception

One of the strongest points of convergence between teacher interviews and classroom data is the implicit reliance on translanguaging practices, even though teachers rarely name them as such. While interviews foreground English as the official language of instruction, classroom interaction shows that meaning-making consistently relies on fluid movement between English and Twi.

In practice, translanguaging appears in multiple forms: explanation of concepts in Twi after English introduction, bilingual repetition of instructions, and incorporation of student responses in Twi into lesson progression. These are not isolated events but recurrent instructional patterns that structure how teaching unfolds. Crucially, they are not framed by teachers as violations of language policy but as pedagogical necessities that ensure comprehension.

This becomes particularly evident in moments of conceptual difficulty. When students fail to respond to English questions, teachers often switch into Twi not to replace English but to re-anchor meaning. This suggests that translanguaging is not supplementary but foundational to sustaining pedagogical flow. It functions as the mechanism through which abstract academic content is made locally intelligible.

What is crucial here is that translanguaging is not explicitly theorised by teachers in interviews, yet it is consistently enacted in practice. This disjuncture highlights a gap between ideological articulation and pedagogical action. Teachers may ideologically prioritise English, but their instructional effectiveness depends on multilingual flexibility. In this sense, and in line with García and Wei (2014) and Makalela (2015), translanguaging can be understood as the mobilisation of an integrated linguistic repertoire, where English and Twi are not separated systems but jointly drawn upon in meaning-making. Also, Southern multilingualism (translanguaging) emerges not as a deviation from English-medium instruction but as its operational condition of possibility.

Overall, this sub-theme shows that translanguaging is not an occasional or compensatory strategy but a structuring principle of classroom pedagogy that quietly underpins how teaching and learning are actually accomplished. Even where English is foregrounded as the official medium

in teacher discourse, the classroom demonstrates that instructional meaning is continually produced through movement across English and Twi. Instead of existing outside the logic of instruction, these shifts constitute the very means through which instruction becomes intelligible and actionable for students. This means that translanguaging should not be understood as an exception to the “real” language of teaching, but as the underlying condition that allows that language or even learning to function at all in practice.

6.44 Standard Language Ideology as Practice: Regulation, Correction, and Social Enforcement

The interview data strongly reflect standard language ideology (Milroy, 2001), particularly in the emphasis on grammatical correctness, formal English usage, and the restriction of Twi in instructional space. Teachers also regularly associate English correctness with intelligence and academic competence (Opoku-Amankwa & Brew-Hammond, 2011). However, classroom data reveal that this ideology is not only teacher-imposed but socially reproduced through interaction among students as well.

Teachers frequently enforce English through correction, repetition, and directive speech acts (“speak English”), but students also participate in regulating language use through peer correction, laughter, and collective responses to perceived errors. This indicates that linguistic norm enforcement is distributed across the classroom rather than centrally controlled by the teacher.

Yet, the enforcement of correctness is not absolute. Incorrect responses are not always excluded; instead, they are often incorporated into pedagogical sequences as learning opportunities. Teachers may reframe incorrect answers, use them as examples, or guide students toward correction through scaffolding. This suggests that standard language ideology is operational but flexible, allowing room for pedagogical adaptation.

This points to a negotiated order rather than a rigid system of linguistic exclusion, where norms are asserted but also continually reworked through interaction. The ideology of correctness is maintained, but its application is mediated by the practical demands of teaching and learning.

In sum, this sub-theme demonstrates that standard language ideology in the classroom is a lived and enacted system that is continuously produced through interactional practice. While English correctness is consistently upheld as the normative standard, its enforcement is neither uniform nor absolute, as both teachers and students participate in shaping when and how deviations are treated as errors, teachable moments, or acceptable approximations. The classroom therefore becomes a site where linguistic norms are actively negotiated rather than simply applied, revealing that standard language ideology persists not because it is rigidly enforced, but because it is constantly reproduced, adjusted, and revalidated through everyday pedagogical interaction.

6.45 Student Agency and the Redistribution of Linguistic Authority

Although the interview data position classroom language use as largely teacher-directed, classroom interaction reveals significant student agency in shaping linguistic practice. Students are not passive recipients of language norms but active participants in their negotiation and transformation.

Students respond in multiple languages, initiate clarification questions, and collectively construct answers during extended sequences of discussion. For example, in collaborative answer construction tasks, students often contribute successive responses that gradually converge toward the correct answer, demonstrating distributed participation in knowledge production.

Student-initiated questions further disrupt the assumption of strictly hierarchical interaction. Even though rare, these moments show that learners actively engage with epistemic content and use both English and Twi strategically to seek clarification. The ability to switch languages depending on epistemic need indicates that students are not constrained by rigid linguistic boundaries but operate within flexible repertoires.

This challenges the interview-based assumption that linguistic authority is exclusively teacher-controlled. Instead, authority is continuously negotiated in interaction, with students playing an active role in shaping the linguistic and epistemic flow of classroom discourse.

This sub-theme shows that student agency is not peripheral to classroom multilingualism but central to how linguistic authority is continuously redistributed in practice. Although teachers are positioned in interview discourse as the primary regulators of language use, classroom

interaction demonstrates that students actively participate in shaping when, how, and in which language knowledge is produced and validated. Through multilingual responses, collaborative reasoning, and strategic questioning, learners subtly reshape the flow of instruction and contribute to determining what counts as intelligible participation. This indicates that linguistic authority in the classroom is not fixed at the level of teacher control but is dynamically negotiated through interaction, revealing a more fluid and participatory structure of classroom language practice than interview accounts alone suggest.

6.46 Beyond Alignment and Contradiction: From Ideology to Practice

The synthesis demonstrates that the relationship between teacher ideology and classroom practice cannot be reduced to either alignment or contradiction. Instead, what emerges is an entangled system in which ideology and practice mutually constitute each other while remaining internally inconsistent.

Teacher beliefs about English provide the normative framework for instruction, but classroom practice continuously exceeds and reshapes this framework through multilingual interaction. At the same time, these multilingual practices do not replace English ideology but enable its continued functioning as the dominant institutional language.

This means that English dominance is not a stable structural fact but an ongoing accomplishment produced through interactional work. Similarly, multilingualism is not an external alternative system but a constitutive condition of English-medium education itself.

The relationship between the two is therefore infrastructural rather than oppositional: English depends on multilingualism for its pedagogical viability, while multilingualism is structured by the institutional authority of English.

Overall, this sub-theme highlights that ideology and practice in the classroom cannot be separated into opposing categories or neatly aligned domains, because each continuously shapes and is shaped by the other in real time interaction. What appears in teacher discourse as a stable commitment to English is repeatedly reworked in practice through multilingual negotiation, while what emerges in classroom interaction as flexible multilingual practice is still ultimately oriented toward sustaining the institutional authority of English. The result is a deeply

interdependent system in which neither ideology nor practice can be understood in isolation, as both are continuously co-produced through the everyday realities of teaching and learning. This entanglement therefore captures the core dynamic of multilingual classrooms: not contradiction to be resolved, but interdependence to be understood.

6.5 Final Synthesis: A Relational and Hybrid Model of Classroom Multilingualism

6.51 Final Synthesis

Bringing together teacher interviews and classroom interaction data reveals a relational model of multilingual education shaped by ideological commitment, pedagogical necessity, and interactional negotiation. Teachers articulate strong ideological commitments to English as the language of academic success and institutional legitimacy, yet classroom practice demonstrates that this commitment is only operationally viable through sustained multilingual mediation.

Two and other linguistic resources are not peripheral but central to explanation, comprehension, and participation. Students also actively shape this system through multilingual responses, collaborative reasoning, and epistemic questioning. The classroom therefore emerges as a co-constructed space where linguistic norms are simultaneously imposed, enacted, and transformed.

The key insight is that multilingual education in these contexts is not a transitional phase toward English monolingualism but a stable hybrid system in which English authority is continuously produced through multilingual practice. Ideology and interaction are not separate domains but interwoven dimensions of the same pedagogical reality. This paradox is central to understanding how classroom communication functions.

The relational and hybrid model of classroom multilingualism proposed here emerges from the synthesis of two analytically distinct but empirically intertwined data sources: teacher interviews and classroom interaction. At the ideological level, teachers consistently articulate English as the language of academic success, institutional legitimacy, and cognitive development. This positioning reflects a strong commitment to English as the normative standard of schooling. However, the classroom data complicate this ideological clarity by showing that English alone cannot sustain the interactional demands of teaching and learning. Instead, instruction is

continually stabilised through multilingual mediation, particularly through the strategic use of Twi alongside English.

Bringing together teacher interviews and classroom interaction data reveals a multilingual classroom system shaped by the interplay of ideological commitments and situated pedagogical demands. Teachers consistently position English as the language of academic success and institutional legitimacy, reflecting a strong normative orientation toward English within schooling. However, classroom interaction data show that this orientation cannot be realised in practice without recourse to additional linguistic resources.

In everyday instruction, Twi and other languages are regularly mobilised to support explanation, clarify meaning, and sustain student participation. These practices are not incidental but integral to how teaching and learning proceed. At the same time, students actively engage with and contribute to this multilingual environment through their responses, questions, and collaborative meaning-making, indicating that classroom communication is jointly produced rather than unilaterally delivered.

What emerges is a classroom context in which English remains symbolically central but is operationally dependent on multilingual practices. This creates a productive tension between ideological positioning and interactional necessity, where the maintenance of English as the primary language of instruction relies on the very multilingual resources it is often assumed to exclude.

This synthesis highlights a key empirical insight: the relationship between language ideology and classroom practice is not one of straightforward implementation. Instead, it is characterised by ongoing negotiation, where institutional expectations and communicative realities intersect in complex ways. It is from this tension that the relational and hybrid model proposed in this study is developed

6.52 Relational Hybrid Model

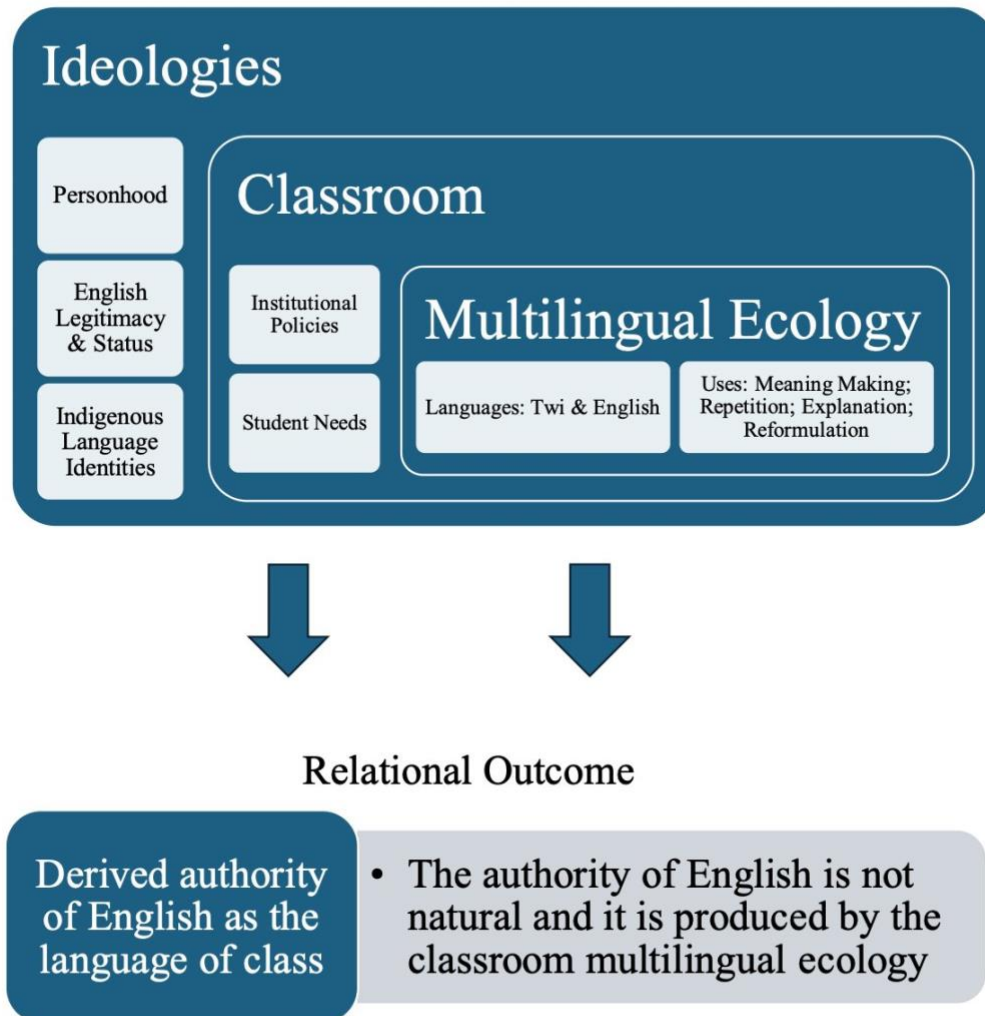
The relational and hybrid model of classroom multilingualism proposed in this study conceptualises language use in Ghanaian primary classrooms as a recursive and co-constituted system in which ideology, interaction, and epistemic practice are mutually dependent processes

that continuously produce one another. This relational configuration is represented schematically in Fig. 3.

Figure 3

The Relational and Hybrid Model of Classroom Multilingualism

Hybrid Relational Model



As illustrated in Figure 3, the model centers on the recursive relationship between ideology, interaction, and epistemic practice. These dimensions are not separate domains but they are

mutually constitutive: ideological commitments to English are reproduced through interaction, while interactional practices are shaped by the epistemic demands of teaching and learning.

The model does not treat language ideologies as external beliefs subsequently enacted in classroom practice. Instead, it understands ideological positioning, particularly the privileging of English as the language of academic legitimacy and upward mobility, as something reproduced and reworked through everyday pedagogical interaction. In this sense, ideology is not a background structure acting upon classroom life; it is an emergent feature of that life, continually stabilised and unsettled through practice.

Within this relational system, classroom interaction is the central site through which linguistic and epistemic realities are produced. Teaching and learning unfold through fluid and adaptive multilingual practices, including translanguaging, repetition, reformulation, elicitation, and collaborative meaning-making. These practices constitute the conditions under which instruction becomes intelligible and workable, emerging in relation to situated pedagogical needs rather than a fixed monolingual framework. English, in this sense, does not operate as a self-sufficient medium of instruction; its pedagogical effectiveness is continuously dependent on the strategic mobilisation of indigenous linguistic resources, particularly Twi, which enable explanation, clarification, and participation.

Twi and other indigenous languages therefore function as epistemic infrastructure within the classroom ecology. They provide the linguistic and cultural resources through which abstract concepts are grounded, misunderstandings are resolved, and participation is made possible for students. Far from occupying a peripheral or remedial position, these resources are central to the production of learning itself. Without them, instructional sequences frequently stall or lose coherence, showing that comprehension is constructed through multilingual mediation rather than transmitted through English alone.

Students are not passive recipients within this system but active agents in its continual formation. Through their use of multilingual repertoires, collaborative reasoning, and epistemic questioning, they participate in shaping the communicative and cognitive direction of classroom activity. Their practices often initiate shifts in language use, prompt reformulations of teacher

explanations, and contribute to the negotiation of meaning in real time. In doing so, students help constitute the very conditions under which knowledge becomes teachable and intelligible.

Teachers, likewise, operate as mediators who navigate between ideological expectations and interactional demands rather than unilateral transmitters of linguistic policy. While they may articulate strong commitments to English as the normative language of schooling, their instructional practice demonstrates continual responsiveness to the multilingual realities of comprehension and engagement. This produces a dynamic tension in which English is maintained as the language of institutional authority, yet it is only functionally sustained through systematic recourse to other linguistic resources.

What emerges from this configuration is not a transition toward monolingualism nor a stable division between languages, but a hybrid and relational ecology of practice in which linguistic authority, pedagogical necessity, and epistemic access are continuously negotiated. English authority is not pre-given; rather, it is recursively produced through multilingual interaction. Meanwhile, multilingual practices do not stand in opposition to this authority but are precisely what make its classroom enactment possible.

The model therefore reframes classroom multilingualism as a problem to be managed or a transitional phase toward linguistic convergence, instead positioning it as a stable yet internally dynamic system of co-construction. Ideology and interaction are not opposing forces but interwoven dimensions of the same pedagogical reality, each continually shaping and being shaped by the other. In this sense, the classroom operates as a relational field in which meaning, authority, and participation are not transmitted from a single source but emerge through ongoing, situated negotiation among participants.

Overall, the relational and hybrid model conceptualises classroom multilingualism as a recursive system in which ideological commitments to English, multilingual interactional practices, and epistemic mediation are mutually constitutive. Ideology and practice are therefore understood as analytically inseparable, forming a relational system in which pedagogical demands actively structure the multilingual ecology of the classroom and shape what counts as English, what counts as instruction, and how academic authority is produced in context. Within this system, English functions through multilingual resources rather than independently of them, being

continually enacted through interaction with languages such as Twi, which are central to comprehension, participation, and knowledge construction. Teachers and students function as co-constructors of meaning, and classroom communication emerges through ongoing negotiation within shifting linguistic and pedagogical conditions rather than fixed boundaries between languages or instructional roles.

This model provides a framework for understanding how multilingual resources actively shape the conditions of teaching, learning, and academic authority within classroom practice. It foregrounds language as a relational and emergent process through which educational meaning and institutional legitimacy are continuously co-produced in context. From this perspective, linguistic diversity is not an external challenge to be managed but a constitutive feature of classroom life that makes learning possible in the first place.

6.6 Implications for Study

6.6.1 Implications for Language-in-Education Policy and Multilingual Education

A central implication of this study is that current language-in-education policy frameworks, particularly those that formally privilege English beyond the early grades, do not fully reflect how learning actually unfolds in multilingual classrooms. Across the classroom data, meaning-making is consistently achieved through fluid movement between English and Twi.

Translanguaging therefore emerges as a constitutive feature of pedagogy in practice (García & Wei, 2014). However, policy discourse and teacher ideological framing continue to position English as the primary marker of academic success, institutional legitimacy, and educational quality (Opoku-Amankwa & Brew-Hammond, 2011).

This reveals a structural misalignment between policy assumptions and classroom realities. Language-in-education policy in Ghana is grounded in a model of language separation, in which English is treated as the principal medium of knowledge transmission, while Ghanaian languages are positioned as early instructional tools or informal supports (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Owu-Ewie, 2006). As a result, multilingual education risks remaining additive rather than transformative, expanding linguistic access without fundamentally reconfiguring how knowledge is valued, produced, and hierarchically organised.

However, classroom interactions in this study demonstrate that these boundaries of language separation are routinely blurred in practice. Teachers draw on Twi to explain concepts, sustain participation, and repair breakdowns in understanding, even within English-medium lessons. This indicates that multilingualism is not external to pedagogy but already embedded within it (Heugh & Stroud, 2019), even when it is not explicitly recognised in policy design.

From an Afro-communitarian perspective (Menkiti, 2005), this misalignment carries ethical as well as pedagogical significance. If learning is fundamentally relational and grounded in shared intelligibility, then policies that restrict legitimate classroom communication to English risk narrowing the conditions under which students are recognised as full epistemic participants. Language policy, in this sense, does not only organise instruction but also shapes epistemic inclusion and exclusion within knowledge production processes (de Sousa Santos, 2015).

A more responsive policy framework would therefore require a shift away from strictly additive or transitional models of multilingual education toward an integrative and relational approach that recognises translanguaging as a normal and legitimate instructional practice. This does not imply the rejection of English, but rather its repositioning within a multilingual ecology where Ghanaian languages are not treated as temporary scaffolds or subordinate supports. Instead, English and Twi should be understood as jointly constitutive of conceptual development, participation, and learning progression.

Crucially, the findings highlight that multilingual education cannot be achieved through policy reform alone. Teacher interviews reflect strong ideological commitments to English, shaped by broader institutional expectations, assessment regimes, and societal associations between English proficiency and academic success (Ansah, 2014; Mfum-Mensah, 2005). This means that even where multilingual practices are enacted in classrooms, they remain constrained by the continued symbolic dominance of English. Effective policy transformation must therefore extend beyond language-in-education guidelines to include the evaluative and assessment structures that do not reinforce English as the primary measure of educational achievement.

Teacher practice also reflects a deeper gap between what teachers do and how they understand what they do. While multilingual mediation is central to effective instruction, these practices are often described as informal or incidental rather than recognised as structured pedagogical

strategies. This under-theorisation limits their visibility within professional discourse and constrains their development as intentional pedagogy, even though evidence shows that such practices are central to sustaining comprehension and participation in multilingual classrooms (Reilly et al., 2022; Yevudey & Agbozo, 2019).

For teachers, these findings underscore the importance of recognising Southern multilingualism (translanguaging) not as a remedial adjustment, but as a core instructional resource already embedded in everyday practice. The classroom data show that teachers naturally rely on multilingual strategies to sustain comprehension and participation. However, because these practices are often not formally acknowledged within policy or training frameworks, they remain under-theorised and inconsistently supported. Teacher education and professional development should therefore explicitly frame Southern multilingualism as an intentional and principled pedagogy rather than an informal response to difficulty.

Importantly, this also requires rethinking how teaching is evaluated. If English-only instruction continues to be implicitly positioned as the benchmark of “effective teaching,” multilingual pedagogies will remain marginalised, even when they demonstrably support learning. Teachers need institutional recognition that pedagogical success in multilingual classrooms depends on linguistic flexibility rather than monolingual adherence.

In an overarching sense, the findings suggest that multilingual education should not be conceptualised as a transitional pathway toward English monolingualism, but as a stable and necessary condition of learning in linguistically diverse contexts such as Ghana. A meaningful reconceptualisation of language-in-education policy must therefore begin from the empirical reality of classroom interaction, where knowledge is consistently co-produced through multilingual negotiation rather than linguistic separation.

6.62 Implications for Teachers and Classroom Practice

For teachers, the findings highlight a critical disjuncture between ideological positioning and instructional practice. While interviews show that teachers often associate effective teaching with strict English use, classroom data demonstrate that successful pedagogy is only sustained through multilingual mediation. Teachers routinely shift between English and Twi to clarify

meaning, manage classroom participation, and repair breakdowns in understanding. These practices are not exceptional but constitutive of how lessons actually unfold, aligning with broader evidence that multilingual classrooms routinely rely on flexible language practices even where policy is more restrictive (Reilly et al., 2022; Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015, 2019).

However, many of these Southern multilingual practices remain implicit rather than theorised. Teachers frequently describe them as informal adjustments rather than structured pedagogical strategies. This suggests a gap between what teachers do and how they understand what they do, a tension that reflects wider findings that teachers often reproduce monolingual ideologies even within multilingual repertoires (Yevudey & Agbozo, 2019; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). As a result, multilingual practices are pedagogically effective but conceptually undervalued, limiting their potential to be developed systematically.

This finding points to the need for teacher education programmes that explicitly engage with Southern multilingualism as a pedagogical framework rather than treating it as deviation from English-medium instruction. Such training should focus not only on language switching as a technique but on how multilingual explanation supports conceptual clarity, how collaborative student talk contributes to knowledge construction, and how linguistic flexibility can be used strategically to scaffold academic English rather than replace it. This aligns with research showing that multilingual instructional approaches enhance comprehension and learner engagement while supporting stronger academic outcomes (Aroge et al., 2025; Ankohmah et al., 2012; Trudell, 2023).

Crucially, teachers must also be supported to critically reflect on how language practices shape participation and recognition in the classroom. The findings show that English is often implicitly associated with correctness and intellectual ability, while Twi is positioned as supportive but secondary. These associations are not neutral; they influence which students are seen as competent contributors. This reflects broader evidence that literacy in Ghana is frequently defined through English proficiency, reinforcing hierarchical language ideologies rooted in colonial histories (Opoku-Amankwa & Brew-Hammond, 2011; Atintono & Nsoh, 2018). From an Afro-communitarian perspective, this raises important questions about how pedagogical

practices either expand or restrict the conditions for relational inclusion within learning communities.

Also, the study does not position teachers as the origin of these hierarchies. Rather, they operate within broader institutional and policy systems that prioritise English, often requiring them to navigate competing expectations between policy mandates and learners' communicative needs. Consequently, meaningful change requires institutional recognition of multilingual pedagogy so that teachers are not required to reconcile conflicting expectations individually.

Overall, the findings show that teachers' classroom practice is already grounded in multilingual mediation despite dominant monolingual ideologies. However, this practice remains under-theorised and constrained by institutional expectations that privilege English, limiting its pedagogical development. Strengthening teacher education and policy support for Southern multilingualism is therefore essential for aligning pedagogy with classroom realities and fostering more inclusive, effective learning environments.

6.63 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and educational theory by demonstrating that classroom language practices are simultaneously epistemic, symbolic, and relational. Drawing on Afro-communitarian philosophy, Fanon, and postcolonial sociolinguistics, the study demonstrates that language in Ghanaian classrooms cannot be seen as a neutral medium of instruction; rather, it functions as a key site where knowledge, identity, and personhood are actively produced, negotiated, and evaluated.

Afro-communitarianism is particularly useful in reframing learning as a relational process in which participation and recognition are central. Within this framework, multilingual interaction is not an obstacle to learning but a condition for epistemic inclusion. Students become knowers not only through individual cognition but through participation in shared communicative spaces.

Fanon's theory of the colonial encounter further reveals how English operates as a symbolic marker of legitimacy that shapes how students perceive themselves as learners. Meanwhile, classroom data show that this symbolic order is not absolute; it is continuously interrupted by moments of multilingual collaboration and shared understanding.

The study also complicates simplistic interpretations of translanguaging as resistance. While it enables participation and facilitates understanding, it does not fully dismantle the authority of English. Instead, it operates within a layered system of linguistic negotiation where hierarchy and collaboration coexist.

6.7 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations are acknowledged. First, the study is based on a relatively small number of classroom settings, which limits the extent to which findings can be generalised across different educational contexts in Ghana or beyond. While the data provide rich interactional insight into classroom discourse, broader institutional variation is not fully captured.

Second, the analysis draws primarily on classroom recordings and teacher interviews. Although this provides detailed discourse-level insight into language practices, it does not fully account for wider institutional dynamics such as curriculum design, examination systems, or school-level policy enforcement, all of which may further shape language use in classrooms.

Third, student perspectives are only indirectly represented through classroom interaction and are not directly elicited through interviews. As a result, learners' reflections on language use, identity, and classroom experience remain partially inferred rather than explicitly articulated.

Fourth, while the study draws on Afro-communitarianism, Fanon, and sociolinguistic theory, the integration of these frameworks involves navigating distinct epistemological traditions. Although this interdisciplinary approach is analytically productive, it also requires careful interpretive balance to avoid overextending conceptual alignment.

Finally, my position as a Ghanaian researcher facilitated rapport with teacher participants through shared language, cultural context, and lived experience. This insider status enabled access to participants' narratives and meanings in ways that may not have been readily available to an external researcher. However, this proximity also presents a methodological limitation, as it may have constrained critical distance and reflexive objectivity. While shared linguistic and cultural frames enhanced depth of engagement, they also required sustained reflexive attention to ensure analytical rigor throughout the research process.

6.8 Conclusion

This study set out to examine how multilingual practices in Ghanaian classrooms are shaped by, and in turn shape, ideologies of language, learning, and personhood. The analysis demonstrates that classroom interaction is characterised by a persistent tension between the ideological dominance of English and the practical necessity of multilingual communication.

Teacher interviews reveal strong ideological commitments to English as the primary language of academic success and institutional legitimacy. However, classroom data show that learning is consistently achieved through Southern multilingual practices that integrate English and Twi in fluid, responsive, and context-dependent ways. This exposes a significant disjuncture between language ideology and pedagogical reality.

Drawing on Afro-communitarian theory and Fanon's postcolonial critique, the study shows that language in the classroom is not merely a medium of instruction but a relational space through which knowledge, identity, and personhood are produced and evaluated. While English often operates as a symbolic marker of educational legitimacy, classroom interaction demonstrates that such legitimacy is continuously negotiated through multilingual engagement rather than unidirectional transmission.

Ultimately, the study argues that multilingual classrooms should not be conceptualised as transitional spaces oriented toward monolingual English competence. Instead, they should be understood as stable relational systems in which knowledge, participation, and identity are co-constructed through multiple linguistic resources. From this perspective, Southern multilingualism is not an exception to learning, but its everyday condition in Ghanaian educational contexts.

This reconceptualization has significant implications for how language, education, and human development are understood in multilingual African settings, particularly in challenging monolingual assumptions that continue to shape policy and pedagogy.

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Appendix A: Codebook for Multilingual Classroom Practices

Code	Category	Definition	When to Apply	Example
TL-EXP	Translanguaging	Use of a Ghanaian language (e.g., Twi) to explain, clarify, or expand meaning when English is insufficient	Concept clarification; vocabulary explanation; rephrasing academic content	Teacher switches to Twi to explain “prepared”
TL-SOC	Translanguaging	Use of a local language for moral, affective, or culturally grounded communication	Discipline, moral instruction, emotional emphasis	Teacher uses Twi to stress respectful behavior
L-ENG-GH	Localized English	Locally normative English structures reflecting Ghanaian English usage	Widely accepted local forms not treated as errors	“Firewood has finished”; “She tell the truth”
L-ENG-HYB	Localized English	Hybrid English forms influenced by Ghanaian language structure	Clear transfer from local language; less conventional forms	“My mother has bring”; “I am finished the eating”
SCL-CULT	Sociocultural Linguistic	References to local cultural knowledge and lived experiences	Mentions of farming, firewood, chieftaincy, community life	Reference to gathering firewood

SCL-PED	Sociocultural Linguistic	Pedagogical practices rooted in communal/local traditions	Call-and-response; choral reading; group recitation	Whole class repeats vocabulary together
SCL-COM	Sociocultural Linguistic	Norms governing culturally appropriate communication in class	Instructions about naming, respect, participation norms	“Don’t just say ‘I’, mention the name”
INT-PRAG	Interactional	Routine classroom discourse for organization and cohesion	Greetings, commands, ritual talk	“Stand up”; “Sit down”; “Good morning”
INT-PEER	Interactional	Student-to-student influence on participation and language use	Copying answers; peer correction; teacher regulating peer behavior	Students echo another student’s answer
MOD	Instructional Mode	Teacher metatalk about language structure or task instructions	Grammar explanation; task framing; instructional clarification	“We are using present tense”
IDEO-ENF	Language Ideology	Enforcement of Standard English norms and correctness	Explicit correction; right/wrong judgments; pronunciation correction	“That is wrong—say it this way”

AFB	Affective Positioning	Positive feedback and emotional reinforcement	Praise, encouragement, affirmation	“Clap for him”; “Good job”
ERR	Error Identification	Explicit recognition of a student error by teacher or peers	When an error is identified or corrected	Teacher highlights incorrect tense
CMT	Classroom Management	Procedural, non-instructional talk for organizing classroom activity	Giving directions; managing behavior; structuring tasks	“Write in your exercise book”
READ	Reading Mode	Reading aloud directly from a text	Textbook reading; shared reading	Student reads sentence from book
REP	Repetition Pedagogy	Teacher-led repetition for reinforcement and memorization	Choral repetition; drilling; echoing forms	“Say it again: prepared”

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Consent Form

Teacher Interview Consent Form

Consent for Exempt Research

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Multilingual Language Practices in Ghanaian Classrooms: A Comparative Case Study

Principal Investigator: Edwin Dartey

Telephone Number: 059-734-4493

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sinfrey Makoni

Faculty Advisor Telephone Number: 814-863-2431

You are being invited to volunteer to participate in a research study as a teacher. This summary explains information about this research.

The goals of this study are to:

- describe patterns of language use in English and Twi by teachers and students in elementary classrooms in Ghanaian public and private schools.
- understand teachers', parents, and school officials' perceptions and attitudes towards the languages used in the classroom; and
- generate knowledge which will inform future curriculum and instructional methods in this context.

For six weeks in the summer of 2024, The PI will observe, and audio-record teacher and learners' use of language in your classroom. The PI will also conduct a single interview with you as a teacher after week 3 to discuss your reflections on language use in the classroom. The interview will last approximately 40 minutes. These interactions will involve all that is said between teachers and learners during teaching and learning.

- o Breach of confidentiality: Every effort will be made to make sure that your identity remains anonymous. During transcription of audio recordings, no original names will be transcribed into notes. The PI will create a word document to record the original names of participants and their corresponding codes. That document will be only saved on the PI's laptop with a password to prevent any accidental exposure should the laptop be stolen
- Information collected in this project may be shared with other researchers during future collaborations and for publications, but we will not share any information that could identify you.

If you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you should contact Edwin Dartey via 059-734-4493 or Dr. Sinfree Makoni. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject or concerns regarding your privacy, you may contact the Human Research Protection Program at 814-865-1775.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may decide to stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.

Your participation implies your voluntary consent to participate in the research.

If you do not wish to participate, please indicate below.

.....
(signature)

Appendix C: School Official Interview Consent Form

School Official Interview Consent Form

Consent for Exempt Research

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Multilingual Language Practices in Ghanaian Classrooms: A Comparative Case Study

Principal Investigator: Edwin Dartey

Telephone Number: 059-734-4493

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sinfree Makoni

Faculty Advisor Telephone Number: 814-863-2431

You are being invited to volunteer to participate in a research study as a school official. This summary explains information about this research.

The goals of this study are to:

- describe patterns of language use in English and Twi by teachers and students in elementary classrooms in Ghanaian public and private schools.
- understand teachers', parents, and school officials' perceptions and attitudes towards the languages used in the classroom; and
- generate knowledge which will inform future curriculum and instructional methods in this context.

For six weeks in the summer of 2024, the PI will observe, and audio-record teacher and learners' use of language in classrooms. The PI will also conduct a single interview with you as a school official after week 4 to discuss your school's language policy and how multiple languages are used for teaching and learning in classrooms. The interview will last approximately 40 minutes.

- o Breach of confidentiality: Every effort will be made to make sure that your identity remains anonymous. During transcription of audio recordings, no original names will be transcribed into notes. The PI will create a word document to record the original names of participants and their corresponding codes. That document will be only saved on the PI's laptop with a password to prevent any accidental exposure should the laptop be stolen.
- Information collected in this project may be shared with other researchers during future collaborations and for publications, but we will not share any information that could identify you.

If you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you should contact Edwin Dartey via 059-734-4493 or Dr. Sinfree Makoni. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject or concerns regarding your privacy, you may contact the Human Research Protection Program at 814-865-1775.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may decide to stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.

Your participation implies your voluntary consent to participate in the research.

If you do not wish to participate, please indicate below.

.....
(signature)

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions for Teachers

Can you let me know your linguistic background (e.g., the number of languages you speak) and your general history of learning foreign and indigenous Ghanaian languages?

What are some of your experiences with multilingualism as a teacher?

What are some of your reflections on the value and use of Ghanaian languages in your classroom or any other classes you have managed?

What recommendations would you give to policy makers and Ghana Education Service to help them formulate a better language in-education policy?

Interview Questions for School Officials

What are some of your experiences with monitoring how the Ghanaian educational language policy is implemented in classrooms?

In what does the language policy impact language practices in classrooms?

What are some of the challenges associated multilingual education and in what ways can these challenges be addressed?

What are some of the unique aspects of the school (day to day activities) that facilitates or hinders the implementation of the language policy?

What recommendations would you give to policy makers and Ghana Education Service to help them formulate a better language policy?

Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Approval



PennState

Office for Research Protections

Human Research Protection Program
Office of The Senior Vice President for Research
The Pennsylvania State University
101 Technology Center
University Park, PA 16802

814-865-1775

irb-orp@psu.edu
research.psu.edu/irb

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

Date: May 28, 2024

From: Stephanie Flohr, PhD, IRB Analyst

To: Edwin Dartey

Type of Submission:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Multilingual Language Practices in Ghanaian classrooms: A Comparative Case Study
Principal Investigator:	Edwin Dartey
Study ID:	STUDY00024888
Submission ID:	STUDY00024888
Funding:	Not Applicable
Documents Approved:	• Most Recent_HRP 591 (0.03), Category: IRB Protocol • Observation Guide (0.01), Category: Data Collection Instrument • Revised Interview Questions (0.02), Category: Data Collection Instrument

The Human Research Protection Program determined that the proposed activity, as described in the above-referenced submission, does not require formal IRB review because the research met the criteria for exempt research according to the policies of this institution and the provisions of applicable federal regulations.

Continuing Progress Reports are **not** required for exempt research. You must notify the IRB when the exempt research study is closed/completed by completing a continuing review in CATS IRB.

Changes to exempt research only need to be submitted to the Human Research Protection Program in limited circumstances described in the below-referenced Investigator Manual. If changes are being considered and there are questions about whether IRB review is needed, please contact the Human Research Protection Program.

You will receive annual reminder notifications from CATS until the study is closed.

ID 71

University



VITA

Edwin Dartey

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and African Studies , Pennsylvania State University	2026
MA in Applied Linguistics , Ohio University	2021
BA in English , Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	2018

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

-
- Dartey, E.A.** (2025). Languages are not the problem: re-thinking language planning in post-colonial Ghana through African and Africana philosophical frameworks. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096251365487>
- Qiu, X., Wang, Y., **Dartey, E.A** & Kim, M. (2024). Interactional metadiscourse in expert and student disciplinary writing: Exploring intrageneric and functional variation. *English for Specific Purposes*. 73, 124-140 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2023.10.007>
- Dartey, E. A.** (2026). Teaching away from home: understanding African transnational teaching experiences at a North American University. In R. Jain., J.C. Chen & E., Trinh (Eds.) *Humanizing language pedagogies and teacher education research: Critical perspectives on identities, pedagogies and research*. Bloomsbury. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/humanizing-language-teaching-and-teacher-education-in-transnational-spaces-9781350525665/>

SELECTED GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS

Pennsylvania State University	
NFMLTA/MLJ Dissertation Writing Support Grant	2025
J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School, Fox Dissertation Completion Award	2025
Gil Watz Graduate Dissertation Fellowship in Languages and Linguistics	2025-2026
Graduate Scholar in Residence Program, Humanities Institute	2025
Superior Teaching and Research (STAR) Award, College of Liberal Arts	2025
Liberal Arts Research and Graduate Studies Office (RGSO) Dissertation Release	2025
Africana Research Centre Dissertation Fellowship, Africana Research Center	2024