Language Policies in Nigeria and Ghana: A Plurilingual Perspective

*Kelechi Julius Achike
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8686-2837
Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
Email: kelechijulius87@gmail.com

Ayomiku Samuel Olaniyan
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3117-3687
Department of Arts and Language Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
Email: ayomiku.olaniyan@eksu.edu.ng

Yemisi Tiwalade Atofarati
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3546-7500
Department of Arts Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
Email: yemisitiwalade05@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author: kelechijulius87@gmail.com

Abstract: The purpose of this paper was to reveal the linguistic situations in Nigeria and Ghana by examining language policies in both countries so as to establish how plurilingualism is accommodated and implemented. Plurilingualism has been identified as a leeway for attaining linguistic democracy which offers inclusive opportunities. In this dimension, language in education policy is very sacrosanct as it gives a blueprint for language use in mostly educational settings. A design adopted for this paper is qualitative study approach in a case study form. Data was retrieved from Google scholar database and time filter was applied to select articles between 2015 to 2022 in addition to other inclusion criteria. Articles were analyzed in line with the theme that guided the study. Findings show that both countries have not adequately integrated the concept of plurilingualism in their language policies. Lack of proper implementation of language policies has largely marred the multilingual reality in those countries, thereby allowing English language to exert an excessive influence. However, Ghana was found to fare better in terms of implementation. It is therefore recommended that both countries should review their language policies and accommodate plurilingualism by creating room for both majority and minority languages to thrive through translanguaging in educational settings.

Keywords: Language policy; Linguistic situation; Plurilingualism; Nigeria; Ghana.

Introduction
Language policies are crucial because language and education are somewhat inseparable. Teaching and learning cannot take place without communication which is embedded in language (Abreh & Wilmot, 2018). The reciprocity between education and language makes it a futile course to advance one and leave the other behind (Iwuchukwu, 2021). It thus implies that language policy has to be rightly positioned so as to attain the quest for human capital development as encapsulated in education. Language policy is a national guide of a country on the language in education. Language in education describes the choice of language used for instruction at schools and colleges (Adegbite, 2018). The policy guide on language use is very important

particularly in schools as it often defines the trajectory of education of the nation.

In order to revolutionise education, language should be considered as a critical factor not only as a medium of instruction or expression, but also as a fundamental factor in human existence and survival (Adegbite, 2018). It is for this reason that a situation whereby the language policy is skewed to favour an exogenous language at the expense of indigenous ones orchestrates danger to the learning outcomes (Abreh & Wilmot, 2018). Amongst others, such education may lack a voice in the global spectrum because of the hegemony of the external language. Unfortunately, in West African countries and Africa at large, this exogenous influence has continually exerted itself on language policies of the countries therein. The adoption of English as major dominant language has often been based on the multicultural nature of Nigeria and English tends to neutrally fit in to every context (Achike, 2020). But then, the adoption of English language as the official language in Nigeria and its dominance in the educational curriculum is a colonial illegality which is not only belittling but also has an implication of limiting the cognitive capacity of learners (Are, 2020).

According to Nyamekye and Baffour-Kaduah (2021) colonial influence is a major factor in the inconsistencies observed in the implementation of language policies in many African countries because languages of colonial masters continue to dominate the indigenous ones and successive governments could not reach a consensus on which to prioritise). The authors further argue that using multilingualism as an excuse for side-lining indigenous languages in Ghana is a cover up excuse for flagrantly violating language policies. As a matter of fact, prioritizing foreign language is a sign of colonial mentality. This has remained the trend in diverse eras ranging from slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism and currently globalization.

Nigeria and Ghana have commonness as West African countries. Furthermore, both countries were colonized by Europeans around the same time. Although, Ghana gained her independence in 1957, it was not long before Nigeria gained hers in 1960. Both countries have experienced military and civil rule. It is on the basis of these common indices that this paper intended to examine the language policies in both countries by finding out what recent researches are saying and weighing it on the scale of language pluralism. The essence of comparing the two countries is so as to identify the existing gaps in each country and to possibly see what the two countries can learn from each other in ensuring a more robust language policy. In order to achieve this purpose, the study intended to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the language situation in Nigeria and how does it reflect plurilingualism?
2. What is the language situation in Ghana and how does it reflect plurilingualism?

Plurilingualism in Language and Education

Plurilingualism is a theoretical perspective where diverse languages and their varieties are acknowledged as an asset rather than an obstacle in language and education (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020). Plurilingualiasm is a departure from the linear vision of language learning as a process of habit formation as inspired by behaviourism. Furthermore, it is a complex vision with series of situated practices where mediation in different languages serves as a veritable resource for learning (Piccardo, 2016). As early as 1990s, plurilingualism was integrated in the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFRL) by the Council of Europe as a way of promoting linguistic diversity (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020, Piccardo, 2019). However, the orientation of CEFRL towards plurungualism has been questioned by scholars as it has predilection for colonial European languages rather than unique individual linguistic competence (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020). This perspective focuses on language separation and assessment based on language purity; but in actual sense, plurilingualism transcends language boundaries and prioritises dynamic language use (Piccardo, 2019). This means that plurilingualism accommodates multicultural realities with a focus on the commonness between or among cultures, particularly in the area of language.

Many scholars have unduly modulated the concept of multilingualism which focuses on language boundaries. Such modulations have resulted in such concepts as dynamic multilingualism, creative multilingualism and the likes but the fact remains that such modulations are not necessary as they are all captured in the concept of plurilingualism (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020). But then, there is need to differentiate between multilingualism and plurilingualism. While multilingualism describes the human capacity and the reality of the existences of many languages, plurilingualism is concerned with

how those languages can be activated in human agency to achieve a particular goal by finding interlinks amongst them. In plurilingualism, the individual learner or user is the agency in several languages in different contexts; and so the focus is on the individual's repertoire or competence across languages and culture. This is basically because a person's languages and cultures interrelate and change over time depending on the social nexus and life path of such a person. The emphasis of plurilingualism is competence in the use of the language, gained through the use of existing languages as resources whether from the perspective of describing individuals' multi-language interactions or as a pedagogical dimension (Marshall & Moore, 2016). However, this competence does not just mean being proficient in separate languages but rather such competence with the vision of mixing, mingling and meshing languages so as to creatively mediate amongst the languages instead of being hindered by their existence. This rationale is premised on the fact that languages are not perceived to be individually compartmentalized in human brains with their use sectioned according to contexts and purposes (Piccardo, 2016) but a convergence of resources that can be deployed according to purpose and context.

The implication of plurilingualism in language policies is to raise such awareness that would open doors for as many languages as possible within the reach of the learner/user to be able to learn better. It implies that language in education should create room for a holistic learner who is reflective and autonomous, integrating both formal and informal learning using the languages of reach as integrated resources (Piccardo, 2016). This would enable the learner to amass an extensive repertoire of resources to be activated according to need or contexts (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020). This approach demands that language teachers be well informed on how to switch languages to enable learners effectively perform a language task. It is not just switching from one language to other but the ability to find a common interlink between or amongst languages through a dynamic process in teaching and learning.

Despite the enormous gains of plurilingual classroom, it is unfortunate that its implementation has been totally abysmal (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020). This is even for such language polices that have made attempts to acknowledge it. Many of the language policies in African countries still appear to be grappling with the ideals of multilingualism that is even poorly executed. With the idea of language plurilingulalism in education in Africa, the case of minority languages going into extinct would be largely reduced. Africa is rich in diverse cultures and languages. But most often, this multilingual inclination of almost all the African countries is perceived as a challenge and even as a threat to language policies. In order to overcome this challenge, assessment of the language policies is utmost importance. In particular, an exploratory review which would give access to mixed views by researchers is required to making recommendations that would be suitable to the pluricultural nature of Africa. In this respect, Nigeria and Ghana which share certain political and administrative affinities were investigated.

Methodology
Retrieval of studies
The methodological approach for the study is that of a scoping review, with a checklist protocol. The approach offers a vast lens to understand the state of the art on a phenomenon of interest. Works reviewed included published articles of empirical and theoretical dimensions on reputable journals using the Google Scholar database. Search terms included language policy, language in education, Nigeria, Ghana and plurilingualism. The robustness of Google Scholar gave access to rich materials used for scoping review. As a way of staying current on the linguistic situations of the countries of interest, only works published between 2015 and 2022 were selected.

Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria
For Nigerian context, before the time frame filter was applied, a total of 150 hits were recorded, while for Ghanaian context engaged 130 hits. The application of time frame filter reduced it to 14 and 10 for Nigeria and Ghana, respectively. Abstracts of these works were read and the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied.

For any work to be selected for this review, it must meet the following conditions.

1. The work was published between 2015 and 2022.
2. The study focused on language policy and/or language in education.
3. The study was focused on either Nigeria or Ghana.
4. The study was published in English language.

For any work to be excluded for this review, it must meet the following conditions.

1. The study was published earlier than 2015.
2. The study did not focus on language policy and/or language in education.
3. The study did not focus on Nigeria or Ghana.
4. The study was not published in English language.

For the Nigerian context, using the keywords Nigeria, 'language policy and plurilingualism, the total hits from the Google scholar database search were 150. After the time filter and other inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, a total of 14 articles were selected. Similarly, in the Ghanaian context, using the keywords Ghana, language policy and plurilingualism, a total of 130 hits were found. But after the time frame filter and other inclusion and exclusion criteria, only 10 articles were selected for analysis.

As a way of ensuring comprehensive analysis, articles were illustrated in a chart that contains research objectives and questions, theoretical framework and the methodology for each study. Consequently, results of the articles were identified. In order to answer the research questions, and then extrapolate the similarities and differences in Nigeria and Ghana, the identified studies were analysed based on the themes of the research questions.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the studies that met the inclusion criteria, which are considered as the results for the scoping review by giving answers to the research questions raised for the study. A critical look in the content of selected articles x-rayed the linguistic situation in Nigeria and Ghana

Studies from Nigeria

The following studies for Nigeria were selected:

1. Ibrahim, J. & Gwandu, S.A. (2016). Language policy on education in Nigeria: Challenges of multilingual education and future of English language.
2. Ogunmodimu, M. (2015). Language policy in Nigeria: Problems, prospects and perspectives
3. Owojecho, F.A.(2020). Implementation challenges of national language policy in Nigeria: The roles of the indigenous languages.

4. Acheoah, J.E.& Olaleye, J.I. (2019). Language Policy and Planning in Nigeria: The journey so far.
5. Omotade, K. & Oluwafemi, A. (2018). Language policy in Russia and Nigeria: A comparative study.
6. Araromi, M. O. (2018). Language policy implementation in multilingual Nigeria: French and mother-tongue experience.
7. Tom-Lawyer et al., (2021). Examining the status of English as a medium of instruction in Sub-Saharan Africa: A comparative study of Botswana and Nigeria.
8. Chukwube (2020). Towards the globalisation of language and culture in Nigeria: Stakeholders, the state and action steps.
9. Omotoyinbo (2015). Language policy in Nigeria: Prospect for national unity.
10. Adegbite (2018). Thoughts on language and educational development in Nigeria.
11. Chukwube (2020). Towards the globalisation of language and culture in Nigeria: Stakeholders, the state and action steps.
12. Are (2020). Revisiting the language factor in education in Nigeria: The peculiar case of simultaneous bilinguals and asymmetric bilinguals.\
13. Iwuchukwu (2021). Language education in Nigeria: Contemporary issues and way forward.
14. Ugwu (2020). Inclusive democracy in Nigeria: The roles of the indigenous languages.

Studies from Nigeria

The following studies for Nigeria were selected:

1. Nyamekye & Baffour-Koduah (2021). The language of instruction dilemma in Ghana: Making a case for the various Ghanaian languages.
2. Abreh & Wilmot (2018). Implementing national accelerated language programme (NALAP) in Northern Ghana: Lessons from the wing schools.
3. Appiah & Ardila, (2021). The dilemma of instructional language in education: the case of Ghana.
4. Anyidoho (2018). Shifting sands: language policies in education in Ghana and implementation challlenges.
5. Reilly et al (2022). Language policy in Ghana and Malawi: Differing approaches to multilingualism in education.

6. Ansah & Agyeman (2015). Ghana language in education policy: The survival of the two south Guan minority dialects.
7. Afrifa et al (2019). The choice of English as a home language in urban Ghana.
8. Owu-Ewie (2017). Language, education and linguistic human rights in Ghana.
9. Sadat & Kuwornu (2017). Views from the streets of Accra on language policy in Ghana.
10. Amfo & Anderson (2019). Multilingualism and language policies in the African context: lessons from Ghana.

The Linguistic Situation in Nigeria

Nigeria is notable as the most populous country in Africa with its diverse ethnic groups. There are over 500 indigenous languages in the country (Iwuchukwu, 2021, Ethnologue, 2020). However, English language, a colonial legacy continues to dominate (Are, 2020). Although there has been so much hype about the language policy in Nigeria, it is observed that there is no single book in the form of policy paper that has exclusively discussed the use of language in Nigeria (Chukwube, 2020).Instead, the language policy is an embedment of the National Policy on Education (NPE) and constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN). This is not actually the problem. The problem is rather hinged on inconsistency and poor implementation of the stated policies. Beginning from the time (1960) that Nigeria gained her independence from colonial rule, seven versions of the NPE have been produced in 1977, 1981, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2007 and recently 2014 (Iwuchukwu, 2021).

As highlighted in Chukwube (2020), the NPE recognises the mother tongue or language of the immediate community as the language of initial literacy, adult and non-formal education. The three national languages- Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are languages of cultural integration. English language is recognized as the official language and language of formal literacy in institutions and official places. French has been acknowledged as the second official language while Arabic is also recognized as language of international discourse. In terms of language of Instruction (LOI), according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), the mother tongue or language of immediate community should be used as LOI for the first three years of basic education. This is in addition to the child learning one Nigerian language while English is also taught as a subject. As it was in the previous version of the NPE, the 2014 version gives premium to English language as the language of instruction beginning from primary 4 up till higher learning institutions apart from making the study of English in all the classes compulsory.

A critical look into the current language policy in Nigeria would reveal that English language is in no least divested from its hegemonic status as a bequeathed legacy from colonialism. Consequently, indigenous languages continue to lack the supposed recognition and the minority ones tend to be going into extinction. The situation is worsened by the fact that some children, especially at cosmopolitan areas, are taught solely with English right from the basic classes (Are, 2020). Again, even in the rural areas, there is a sort of poor attitude of the concerned stakeholders towards the implementation of the language policy which states that the mother tongue or language of the immediate community should be used as language of instruction in the first three years of basic education. Furthermore, there is usually parental preference for English language which compels many schools especially the privately owned ones to use English language solely as a medium of instruction beginning from the basic level. The perception, although skewed, is usually that competence in English is a sign of literacy with many opportunities. Other problems associated with the poor implementation of the language policy include dearth of qualified teachers for the indigenous languages, lack of materials and lack of proper implementation guide on the policy (Tom-Lawyer et al, 2021; Adegbite, 2018).

While some scholars have advocated the need to priorities local languages especially due to its sociological and psychological benefits to the child (Are, 2020; Adegbite, 2018), other scholars such as Ogunmodimu (2015) and Omotoyinbo (2015) have maintained that what is important is a vigorous implementation of the current language policy which promotes multilingualism, given the multilingual state of the country. On the contrary, it appears that researchers have not addressed the concept of plurilingualism as it affects the language policy in Nigeria. This is more so as the language policy as contained in NPE is seemingly negligent of same.

Language policy in Nigeria is bedeviled with poor policy planning and implementation, poor teacher quality and stark lack of requisite materials. There

are no resources for teaching of most of indigenous languages since many of the indigenous languages do not have developed orthographies (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). This has brought about marginalisation of the minority languages which questions the seriousness of Nigeria in promoting multilingualism (Ogunmodimu, 2015). In same dimension, Owojecho (2020) decried that the survival of indigenous languages in Nigeria has remained precarious due to poor implementation of the national language policy. Consequently, English language has continued to thrive in hegemony over the indigenous languages. In the views of Acheoah and Olaleye (2019), language policy in Nigeria is not implemented with justice and the needed seriousness. The current language policy in Nigeria does not give any significant attention to the numerous minority languages.

Omotade and Oluwafemi (2018) also complained that language policy in Nigeria is not adhered to as it particularly buttressed that it is worse in private schools where pupils are completely restricted from learning with or being taught with their indigenous languages. In the same vein, Araromi (2018) lamented that Nigeria has failed to take leverage on its multilingualism to enhance peaceful coexistence amongst citizens. As laudable as the language policy in Nigeria which promotes multilingualism by recognising the teaching and learning of English, French, Arabic and indigenous languages, the lacklustre attitude in the implementation is one reason why harmonious co-existence amongst the citizens tends to elude the country (Araromi, 2018). Ugwu (2020) argued that the only way to make Nigeria a truly plurilingual nation is to acknowledge and implement the use of indigenous languages, especially in educational settings so as to promote language right which is globally recognised as human right.

Linguistic Situation in Ghana
Ghana is another multilingual country with over 80 indigenous languages (Appia & Ardila, 2021). Since its independence in 1957, the country has had a series of languages in education policies with successive administrations which are often conflicting (Reilly et al., 2022). It is conflicting in the sense that successive reviews in the policy have been in contention on whether to use indigenous languages or an all through English medium of instruction. For instance, in 2002, the NPP led government in Ghana revoked the previous language policy where indigenous languages were

to be used as languages of instruction for the first three years of schooling at primary level. It was argued that on the heels of parents' preference, English language should be used as language of instruction at all levels of schooling. In 2007, the obnoxious policy was reversed (Nyamekye & Baffour-Koduah, 2021). All these inconsistencies have grossly marred progress of language in education policy in Ghana (Appia & Ardila, 2021).

The current language in education policy in Ghana stipulates that the indigenous languages, especially the government-sponsored languages be used as language of instruction at the first three years of schooling while English is used as language of instruction beginning from primary four. Examples of the government sponsored languages are Asante, Nzema, Ewe and Gonja etc (Appia & Ardila 2022). At basic level, the teaching and learning of indigenous languages is greatly encouraged. One program that has remained significant in this course is the National Accelerated Language Program (NALAP) (Abreh & Wilmot (2018) which was formed in 2006 to greatly enhance the teaching and learning of indigenous languages. The NALAP demanded that the main mode of instruction for pupils at the early grade should be L1. It also allowed for introduction of English progressively, as the pupils advance in class. According to Ansah and Agyeman (2015), NALAP has recorded the implementation of 90% and 10% for Ghanaian language and English respectively at the kindergarten level. At primary 1, it is 80% and 20% Ghanaian language and English respectively while it is 50% and 50% at primary 2 to 4. Successful implementation of the NALAP has however been limited to monolingual communities (Anyidoho, 2018) as it is usually difficult in cosmopolitan areas.

In a recent study, Afrifa et al (2019) observed that there is a shift from the use of indigenous Ghanaian languages to the use of English language at homes, particularly in urban areas. This speaks volume of the dominance of English language. It is acknowledged that people's perception about English as the language of high status and poor language in education policy are some of reasons for the home use of English language. It is on this basis that Owu-Ewie (2017) argued that the current language policy in Ghana is a flagrant violation of linguistic right of the Ghanaian child. The researcher suggested that indigenous languages be it major or minor language should be used as medium of instruction for early child education and should be strictly monitored by involving relevant stakeholders

such as school management, teachers, parents and others so as to ensure compliance from the teachers. As for Amfo and Anderson (2019), what is needed in Ghana is a language in education that gives due recognition to the over eighty one (81) indigenous languages in Ghana, by not only allowing their use in classrooms, but also monitoring compliance especially at lower levels in specific areas where the languages serve as mother tongues to the pupils. According to Sadat and Kuwornu (2017), as the Ghanaian population wanted the government to adopt a national language, majority favored a foreign language (English), followed by Akan, an indigenous language; it appears the hegemony of English language over the indigenous ones is already settled in the psyche of Ghanaians. But then it is important to note that the value that people have is not unconnected with the value they give their culture. And language is an essential part of the culture.

How Nigeria and Ghana Fare in Plurilingualism in the Language in Education Policy

It has been noted that both Nigeria and Ghana are plurilingual societies where many indigenous languages associated with different ethnic groups exist. A typical metric for measuring how a country that is plurilingual adopts plurilingualism in its language in education policy is the number of indigenous languages empowered to be used in classrooms (Owu-Ewie, 2017). Plurilingualism entails a dynamic use of languages (Piccardo, 2016) by creatively connecting the languages as the context demands. Aside empowering many languages for use in the classroom, a language in education policy desirous about plurilingualism must ensure that a mix of languages is used as a way of attaining the educational goal.

A critical check on the linguistic situations of the two countries of interest shows that both countries advocate for multilingualism in their language policies of which the implementation is a far cry. For instance, the language policy in Nigeria promotes the use of English, French, Arabic, and three major indigenous languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (Chukwube, 2020). However, the policy does not make a provision for the mix of those languages in ensuring that learning objectives are achieved, which is a perspective of plurilingualism. But then, lack of an implementation framework for the proposed multilingualism has continually been a setback to the multilingual proposal in the language policy, thereby allowing English language to thrive in hegemony.

Just like Nigeria, the prominence of English in Ghana continues to deafen indigenous languages. In contrast, Ghana seems to have a more proactive strategy for policy implementation through the NALAP program which has effectively worked in the local areas. The idea of government sponsored languages in Ghana also demonstrates the effort of the government to promote multilingualism. In Ghana, about nine indigenous languages are sponsored by the government as languages of instruction at lower education levels by ensuring that teachers are trained for them and providing necessary materials that would aid the teaching of those languages (Ansah & Agyeman, 2015). This however skews out many minority languages. Ghana seems to promote plurilingualism more than Nigeria especially when considering the number of indigenous languages being empowered for use in the classrooms. However, both countries still have a long way to go in aligning their language policies to pluriligualism.

Another notable observation in both Nigeria and Ghana is that research works in both contexts have not significantly explored on the context of plurilingualism by discussing how plurilingualism can be implemented in classrooms. While scholars in both contexts have largely advanced the need to implement a multilingual language in education policy, it appears the concept of plurilingualism is not well captured in the works examined.

Conclusions and Recommendations
Conclusions
Language policies in Nigeria and Ghana are challenged by poor utilization of the numerous indigenous languages. A comprehensive language policy is not only a way of upholding language rights but also a way of achieving the overall educational goals. The two countries acknowledge their multilingual state in their language policies. However, lack of proper implementation of language policies has marred the multilingual reality in the countries, thereby allowing English language to exert an excessive influence.

In comparison, Ghana is found to fare better in the implementation reality through her NALAP program though the program has proven to be effective only in rural areas. The idea of government sponsored languages in Ghana has empowered more indigenous languages to the mainstream compared

to what is obtainable in Nigeria where only three indigenous language (Igbo, Hauasa & Yoruba) have gained national recognition. As to the reason for the poor implementation of the national language policies, factors adduced by scholars include policy inconsistency, lack of curriculum materials in the indigenous languages, inadequate number of teachers, poor teacher quality and lack of political will.

Recommendations

Implementing plurilingual language policy demands that teachers be well trained on how to use the languages as resources for achievement of learning outcomes. This would demand mixing, mingling and meshing local languages so as to creatively mediate amongst the languages instead of being hindered by their existence. It is therefore recommended that the two countries be more intentional about plurilingualism both in articulating and implementing the language policy as a way to uphold language rights and provide more learning opportunities.

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