



**SELINUS UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**AFRICAN LANGUAGE AS A TOOL-BOX FOR  
AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

**By Ikechukwu Anthony KANU**


**A DISSERTATION**

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in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in African Philosophy

## ATTESTATION

I do hereby attest that I am the sole author of this Dissertation and that its contents are only the result of the readings and research that I have done.

**IKECHUKWU ANTHONY KANU**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu', written over a light gray rectangular background.

**Signature** .....

## ABSTRACT

**Background and Aims:** Philosophers are agreed that language occupies a central place in the human cognitive landscape or science and is essential for the promotion of abstraction, categorization and inferences. An aspect of the essential nature of language that easily connects with philosophy is that its particular languages shape particular thoughts, reveal the way a people relate to their real world and also govern their relationship with this world; thus, to choose a language is to have chosen a pattern of thought which will have direct consequences on the outcome and relevance of such a thought. This understanding raises questions regarding the importance of the African language in teaching, writing and researching of African philosophy. The following have emerged: To what extent does language reflect the structure of the human reality? Is it possible to do African philosophy in a language other than the language of the people to whom the philosophical world belongs? Is there any connection between African language and authentic African philosophy? Given the present circumstances, globalization not exempted, is there a possible pragmatic approach to this issue of language in African philosophy? How does the understanding of a typical African local reality and a typical human reality strike a balance in the use of language in doing African philosophy?

**Methodology:** This research is primarily a qualitative research that would collect and analyse non-numerical data so as to gather in-depth insights in the relationship between African language and African philosophy. The poly-methodological approach was employed given the broad concerns of this work. The historical, analytic, expository and critical methods of inquiry are also employed. The historical approach was adopted for the historical presentation of the perspectives of philosophers on language. The analytical method was used for the examination of the perspectives of scholars. The expository approach was used for a detailed description of the challenges of the African language in relation to philosophy. The critical method was indispensable for the generation of a solution to the problem of language in African philosophy. This research was weaved around the Cognitive Semantic Theory, the Picture Theory of Language and the Afrizealotism Theory. The data collected in this research were sourced from secondary materials such as books, dictionaries, encyclopaedia, unpublished project works, articles, periodicals, internet materials, etc.

**Conclusion:** Having studied the positions of the conservative and progressive schools of thought on the relevance of African language in African philosophy, this research concludes that there is need for a complementary relationship between African languages and colonial languages if African philosophy must achieve its full potentials in this globalized world.

**Keywords:** Africa Philosophy, Language, Mother Tongue, Conservative, Progressive, Decolonization

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

In Igbo-African traditional dispute resolution, when a date is fixed for resolution of a powerful conflict, it is expected that the disputants who come for dispute resolution come with their kegs of wine which are used by the *Umunna* (Kinsmen) during the process of dispute resolution. It is used to call upon the ancestors as witnesses to the resolution and also as enforcers of the resolution reached by the *Umunna*. When the disputants arrive, it is expected that each makes a presentation of his or her own keg of wine. If any of the parties fails to come with his or hers', it is interpreted that the party or person is not committed to the peace process. At such a moment, the wine of the person that came with his will be taken by the *Umunna* and another date for the resolution of the conflict would be fixed. It is not expected that at such moments that the wine of someone else would be used to settle another person's or party's dispute. It is from this background that the African proverb which says: "You don't use another person's wine to settle another person's dispute" emerged.

At the 2019 international conference of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), an argument ensued between two African scholars who were disputing on the place of language in the study of African philosophy. While one argued that African philosophers do not need to write in any African language for the philosophy to be African, the other scholar argued that the African language is indispensable for the doing of African philosophy. During this argument, the later said to the former that, "You don't use another person's wine to settle another person's dispute", meaning that you cannot be doing African philosophy in another person's language, say English, French or German. This position implied that the corpus of literature on African philosophy that was not written in African languages cannot be considered

African philosophy. This led to a long argument that was not resolved at the conference. This experience at the 2019 APAS international conference has also raised multiple questions that require the attention of African and non-African philosophy scholars. This question is at the heart of this research.

In spite of this disagreement, an area of agreement is in the fact that language occupies a central place in the human cognitive landscape or science and also a uniquely human ability that is instrumental for distinguishing between human and non-human minds (Caruther 2002; Bermudez 2007; Penn et al 2008; Bikerton 2014). Lupyán (2015) refers to language as a “productive and combinational system of communication” (p.1) which allows for the transmission of ideas (Szathmáry & Smith 1995) through a secondary inheritance system. Thus, what has been acquired by one as knowledge can now be shared with others who also come to know and may expand on the knowledge of their forebears (Boyd, Richerson & Henrich 2011).

Murphy (2002), Posner & Keele (1968) and Prinz (2004) agree that language is not only essential for the creation of new knowledge but for the promotion of abstraction and for categorization and inferences. It is in this regard that language is understood as essential for the structuring of long-term memory (Luria 1976; Clark & Karmiloff-Smith 1993; Dennett 1992; Clark 1998). This central or fundamental place that language occupies in human cognition or in the rapid and flexible transmission of knowledge about the world makes it an even more important topic for discussion, especially as it concerns its relationship with the doing of African philosophy. This is very important as African philosophy touches on the *Uwa* (world) that is particular to the African people.

An aspect of the essential nature of language that easily connects it with philosophy is the fact that it plays a key role in the presentation of the structures of the world around us (Leavitt

2011). This is important as philosophy concerns herself with a systematic rationally critical thinking about the general nature of the world, the justification of belief and the conduct of life (Kanu 2015). This would not be possible without the use of language, and more importantly, the use of the particular language that mirrors the particular reality in question. This makes a distinction between a typical African reality and a typical human reality. When it comes to a typical African reality, the role of language is indispensable. For instance, language mirrors realities that are present to a particular people. Among the Nsukka of Eastern Nigeria, they use the name *Ugwu* (mountain) because of the reality of mountains around them which is not common site outside of Nsukka. Such names are found only among the Nsukka people, because it mirrors their particular environment or world. When such concepts are used, the particular people that it mirrors their reality understand very well, while those outside of that environment may not understand what the word or language symbolizes.

Thus, language does not only aid the transmission of knowledge but also shapes or changes the perception of reality. It is in this regard that Vevitt and Sterelny (cited in Lupyan 2015) write that “Language provides us with most of our concepts” (p. 1). Language also moulds the cognitive or conceptual structure of a person (Hays 2000; Reddy 1999). While it is the human person who created language to represent the realities in his or her own environment, the same language created by the human person shapes the cognitive structure of its creator.

The cognitive or conceptual impact of language on the human person is possible because of the connection between the brain and experience: experience chains the brain, and since language is an experience, it conditions the human brain. This is significant as words are associated with categories, which is in contrast to a perception. For instance, when I see a cow, it is a particular cow; when I see a house, it is a particular house; when I see a car, it is a particular car. However, the words cow, house and car are independent of the perception of a particular cow or house or car; it speaks of a category. In a particular language, the process of



categorization begins with particular stimulus being represented as a part of a large class. In this process, the particular inherits the properties of the class through a process that allows for the identification of similarities and overlooking of detectable differences. In this fundamental cognitive operation of categorization or recognition, one comes into contact with the dimensions of the particular category that is the focus (Margolis and Laurence 1999; Bloom and Keil 2001 & Prinz 2004). This points to the fact that the language of a particular people mirrors the needs and interests of the particular people and provides targets for learning.

This understanding of the key place of language was the philosophy behind assimilation during the colonial era. The colonial masters knew that “beliefs, ideas, ideologies, culture, knowledge, experience, value and of course, prejudice, are acquired and conveyed through language” (Okolo 2005, pp. 87-88). African natives of colonies were turned into the ideal human beings by changing their languages, believing that the colonial language was superior to the local African language. The colonial masters knew that a people are defined through language. Okolo (2005) avers that: “words can shape people’s ideas about themselves, their aspirations, their conduct, and their learning abilities as well as portray them in a favourable or unfavourable light before others” (p. 88). Assimilation was a major ideological component of French colonial policy through which the vision of Africa and Africans was conditioned through the colonial language. French colonies like Algeria, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Congo, Togo, Cameroun, etc., were educated in the French language and culture that they may be French.

Those in English colonies were taught the English language and culture with the hope of turning them into English men and women. The colonial masters provided the tools for learning which continued to remind the African of his debased state. For instance, The Oxford English Dictionary (1986), which is used in English colonies for the education of Africans, defines a black man as a man having a black or a very dark skin, an evil spirit; also, the evil one, the

devil; and also, a spirit or a bogey invoked in order to terrify children. However, it describes the white man as one belonging to a race having naturally light-coloured skin and a man of honourable character. In French colonies, by adapting the French culture and customs, Africans were promised French citizenship, and their settlements considered French settlements. And although they were granted full citizenship in France, they did not escape the piercing swords of racial discrimination.

There is a strong connection between language and identity: a people's language is the people's identity, and thus, to make them lose their language and take up the colonial language was a conscious effort at changing their identity. What assimilation does is that it takes a person away from who he or she is: culture, language, worldview, etc., and since language is the structure of reality, it takes a person away from his philosophy which is born from reflecting on the realities around him. It is, therefore, not surprising that some African scholars who were trained in the West argued, on their return, that there is no such thing as African philosophy.

These experiences and understanding raise questions regarding the importance of the African language in the doing of African philosophy. These emerging questions would shape the trajectory of this research in the pages ahead.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

As indicated in the proceedings of the 2019 APAS international conference, in contemporary African philosophy, an issue of major concern is the place of African languages in the process of philosophizing (Afolayan 2006; Fasiku 2008; Thiong'O 1993; Wirendu 1995; Bewaji 2002; Kishani 2001; Ezenabor 2000; Rettova 2002). Some African scholars have agreed that the use of foreign languages like English, French, German, etc., in doing African philosophy, is an obstacle to African philosophy itself (Robert, Enang & Nwaeke 2018). This is anchored on the understanding that particular languages shape particular thoughts, reveal the way a people

relate to their real world and also govern their relationship with this world; thus, to choose a language is to have chosen a pattern of thought which will have direct consequences on the outcome and relevance of such a thought.

The concern of this research takes a new dimension when viewed from the background of the colonial era that understood anything African as bad and anything European as good. The African language, therefore, was labelled inferior and negative, and was replaced by foreign languages which did not only limit but distorted the understanding of the African reality. That which is African, including the African language, was described variously: the abode of barbarism and cruelty, a continent without culture, a place that is savage, barbaric, dumb, bush, etc. Conrad (1899) describes Africa as “Heart of Darkness” (p. 105); Lugard (1968) refers to her as a “Dumb d riven cattle” (p. 309). In another text, Lugard (1922) refers to Africa as “the dark place of the earth” (p. 618); Hegel (1991) speaks of Africa as “the land of childhood, which lying beyond the days of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of the night” (p. 93); and Hume (1968) refers to the African as: “naturally inferior to the whites” (p.18). The denigration of the African language led to numerous misrepresentations and misunderstandings in African history, and distinguished the African race by their constitution and mental development as an inferior race in comparison to the white race. These misrepresentations have pinned down the African personality. This is an area of concern which African philosophy cannot gloss over.

Since philosophy goes deeper in thought than other disciplines, the need has arisen to ensure that the meanings of reality within the African world is not further distorted by analysing them or trying to understand them within alien languages that are products of particular Western conceptual frameworks. Thus, these questions emerge: To what extent does language reflect

the structure of the human reality? Is it possible to do African philosophy in a language other than the language of the people to whom the philosophical world belongs? Is there any connection between African language and authentic African philosophy? Given the present circumstances, globalization not exempted, is there a possible pragmatic approach to this issue of language in African philosophy? How does the understanding of a typical African local reality and a typical human reality strike a balance in the use of language in doing African philosophy?

The questions above, among others, constitute the burden of this research.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to emphasize the fundamental place of language in African philosophy. To achieve this, this piece understands language within the parameters of the high-level control system for the mind, and thus for African philosophy. And since there is a strong connection between the African personality and his language, this study would engage in an effort to asserting the identity of the African personality, and thus, the reconstruction of the African vision that has been shaped, mangled and distorted by the colonial languages. This is necessary because it is language that mediates between a people and their values, identifies a people and distinguishes their way of experiencing truth. It is on this basis that Kunene (1992) avers that “Colonial languages are totally inadequate to express the African philosophical reality” (p.pp. 27-44). Owomoyela (1992) asserts that “If we wish to assert and preserve distinctly African ways of being and living, we must cultivate distinctly African ways of speaking” (pp. 83-94). These literary observations with philosophical implications define the purpose of this study.

The African as a member of the world community lives in a reality where the colonial language, which is highly prejudiced and ideologically biased, connects him or her to a particular public identity in world affairs. This research would point out that at the heart of the possibilities of the African to advance in the areas of identity, cultural renaissance, science and technology, etc., is the ability of the African to understand the language that mirrors his reality.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study attends to fundamental questions that have bordered the minds of African thinkers over the years, regarding the extent to which language reflects the structure of the human reality. It would show to what extent language affects, structures, shapes and interprets all aspects of human life; how language conditions thoughts, perceptions and identity formation of a people. It also brings out the manner in which language has been manipulated against the African people in such a way that their identity is distorted (Okolo 2005). In the contention of Thiong'o (1986):

The choice of language and the use to which it is put are central to a people's definition of itself in relation to its natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. Hence, language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces (imperialism and the struggle for liberation from imperialism) in the Africa of the twentieth century (p. 109).

It is, therefore, not surprising that although African countries have gained independence, their new language, the colonial language, has not allowed a reflection of this change in the African social reality, given that the language that debases and distorts Africa is still with it. The process of decolonization, which is a fundamental aspect of African philosophy, cannot exclude an understanding of the African language.

This research further reflects on the possibility of doing African philosophy in a language other than the language of the people to whom the philosophical world belongs, and thus respond to the numerous questions in African philosophy regarding this issue. This would not ignore bringing to the fore the challenges associated with the employment of linguistic imports that are alien to the African people. Given the present circumstances, this research is significant as it investigates the possibility of a pragmatic approach to the issue of language in African philosophy.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This work is limited to the African world, as it concerns itself with the relationship between African philosophy and the African language. The concept ‘African’ is of Phoenician origin and was first used by the Romans to refer to the territory about the city of Carthage (Achen 1913). Kizerbo (1981) uses the concept within the context of ‘the land of sunshine’ (taken from its Latin etymology ‘aprica’, which means sunny), of black race and mostly the sub-Saharan regions of the Negroes. The concept of Africa in this research goes beyond the Sub-Sahara region of Africa and treats Africa as a single entity for the purpose of proceeding under a framework. Treating Africa as a single entity, is not in any way to undermine the diverse nature of the African continent.

The concept of Africa in this work, refers to the second largest of the earth’s seven continents, covering 30,244,000 sq km (11,677,000 sq mi), including its adjacent islands with 54 countries. Robert (2003) observes that it encompasses 23 percent of the world’s total land area. Knappert and Pearson (1976) state that its peoples are divided into more than 1,000 ethnic groups, with different languages, social customs, religions and ways of life. Izu (1997) articulates the geo-numerical identity of Africa thus:

Africa is the world second largest continent... and contains about four hundred million inhabitants. Africa is divided into twenty five major ethnic groups speaking about seven

hundred languages. It contains within it every known type of topography and climatic condition, except the Arctic cold. There are in the North the Sahara, and in the South the Kalahari Desert, with permanent snow in the Kilimanjaro. Also found in Africa are jungle areas, temperate zones, swamps and Savannah. Finally, some of the highest falls and longest rivers in the world- the Nile, Niger, Zaire (now Congo), and Zambesi rivers- are also found in Africa. (p. 16).

Taking from the above geo-numerical designation of Africa, one can point to a place, or even on a map, and say that this is Africa. With this, one can call someone from this area an African. However, Njoku (2002) argues that the question of who is an African goes beyond mere geographical location or designation. This is because there are so many people in the African continent who are not Africans, as there are many people from Africa in Diaspora who do not accept that they are Africans. As such, a single characteristic, such as colour, ancestry or geography, does not settle the question of who or what is an African? This notwithstanding, the above definition of an African provides an insight into what or who an African is and constitutes the scope of this research.

## **1.6 Methodology**

This research is primarily a qualitative research that involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data for a better understanding or to get in-depth insights into the relationship between African language and African philosophy, and more so, to generate new ideas for research. The poly-methodological approach is employed given the broad concerns of this work. Thus, the historical, analytic, expository and critical methods of inquiry are employed. The historical approach is used in a historical presentation of the perspectives of philosophers on language. The analytical method is used for the examination of the perspectives of scholars. The expository approach is used for a detailed description of the challenges of the African language in relation to philosophy. The critical method is indispensable for the generation of a

solution to the problem of language in African philosophy. Since language goes beyond the definitions of philosophy to include linguistics, as it pertains to the study of the structure of language and psychology, as it involves the cognitive dimension of language. This research, therefore, would be weaved around Cognitive Semantic Theory, the Picture Theory of Language and Afrizealotism Theory. The data collected in this research were sourced from secondary materials such as books, dictionaries, encyclopaedia, unpublished project works, articles, periodicals, internet materials, etc.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In his collection on philosophy, Copleston (1946) outlines the importance of the study of the history of philosophy. He avers that even if all the philosophies of the past are refuted and thus dead systems, errors can always be instructive:

To him especially who does not set out to learn a given system of philosophy but aspires to philosophize *ab ovo*, as it were, the study of the history of philosophy is indispensable, otherwise he will run the risk of proceeding down blind valleys and repeating the mistake of his predecessors, from which a serious study of past thought might perhaps have saved him. (p. 3).

It is within this context that Senghor (cited by Afolayan 2006) writes that: “He who does not know his history is condemned to relive it” (p. 33). Aristotle (1941), before the study of the four causes of things in his *Metaphysics*, began by calling to his aid those who have conducted this investigation in the past. He writes: “...to go over their views then, will be of profit to the present inquiry, for we shall either find another type of cause, or be more convinced of the correctness of those which we now maintain”. (p. 693, No. 3). Thus, Aristotle began his work with the analysis of the thoughts of Thales, Anaximenes, Diogenes, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Leucippus, Parmenides, Xenophanes, Pythagoras, through Socrates to Plato. He studied and criticized their perspectives on the nature of reality. At the end of his historical study, he writes:

From what has been said, then, and from the wise men who have now sat in council with us, we have got thus much- on the one hand from the earliest philosophers, who regard the first principle as corporeal... and of whom some suppose that there is one corporeal principle, others that there are more than one, but both put these under the head of matter (p. 700. No. 4-5).

Saint Augustine, in his study of the end of man in the *City of God*, like Aristotle, makes a historical survey of the different perspectives on this issue, through to Plato, who was his guide. Like Aristotle, by going historical, positioned himself for a better analysis of the subject matter. Oguejiofor (2008), therefore, avers that “To think historical in the philosophical enterprise is thus to place oneself in a position of relevance, which in turn involves understanding and self-understanding” (p. 22). It is with this in mind that the present chapter is developed. This would further an understanding of the etymological derivation and historical development of the argument on the relationship between African language and African philosophy.

## **2.2. Conceptual Framework**

Here, effort is made to articulate the conceptual understanding of language and African philosophy. This is done to help organize and distinguish the ideas employed in the analysis of the relationship between African language and African philosophy.

### **2.2.1. Language**

Language is a prerogative of the human person, and thus distinguishes the human person from other animals. Sapir (1921) defines language as: “a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols” (p. 365). This strengthens the perspective that only humans have language; it is species-specific and species-uniform. Chomsky (1965) adds that language was created with a structure: “a language is a set (finite and infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements” (p. 365). It is through language that the human person manifests his or her power of expression through learning and using of complex communication channels in signs, meanings and codes. Trask (2007) adds that language comes with the capacity to refer to abstract concepts, imagined and hypothetical events regarding the past, present and future. Evans and Levinson (2009) go beyond the communicative power of

language to speak of it as a means of solving a plethora of social tasks. Understanding language as a learned reality, Eze (2012) avers that it is dependent on the community of its speakers through which children learn from their elders and peers, capacitating them to transmit it to the next generation. In this process of transmission, language does not remain static; it undergoes changes and diversifications.

Iwara (2011) makes a connection between language and culture and between language and education. These are very fundamental to the understanding of the relationship between language and African philosophy. Language in relation to culture “acts as a vehicle whereby the culture of the society finds verbal expression” (p. 7). Ifemesia (1982), therefore, avers that “culture can hardly be fully developed and applied outside of language, and conversely language and culture are coeval, and are meaningful and comprehensible only in the context of each other” (p. 35). This connection is also very important in relation to education, as education cannot take place outside the realm of language, as it occupies a very important place in the process of teaching and learning. The process of teaching and learning has also got to do with the perception of reality, which Iwara (2011) argues is “not just about seeing and observing an object but thinking about it and interpreting it on the basis of past experience stored in the memory” (p. 13). In this process of thinking and interpreting during which education takes place, language plays a key role. According to Sapir (1967):

The fact of the matter is that the ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached (p. 209).

He writes further:

Language... not only refers to experience largely acquired without its help but actually defines experience for us by reason of its formal completeness and because of our unconscious projection of its implicit expectations into the field of experience... such categories as number, gender, case, tense... are not so much discovered in experience as imposed upon it because of the tyrannical hold that linguistic form has upon our orientation in the world. (p. 206).

Anderson and Stageberg (1962), Beals and Hoijier (1965) and Leah, Igwe and Ezeako (2018) point out the characteristics of language that distinguish it from the communication of lower animals like goat, ram, chicken, etc.

- a. The first is that language is arbitrary, meaning that there is no inherent relationship between the words and the realities that they symbolize or represent.
- b. Second, language is social. It is a set of conventional communicative signals used for communication by human beings living within a community.
- c. Third, language is symbolic, in the sense that it has sound symbols that are employed to denote some object, occurrence or meaning.
- d. Fourth, language is a vocal sound produced by a physiological articulatory mechanism in the human body.
- e. Fifth, language is non-instinctive; it is the outcome of evolution and convention, growing with time and convention.
- f. Sixth, language is productive and creative. This is based on the fact that it changes with the needs of society, and so something new can also be created to represent a new reality.
- g. Seventh, language is dual; this is because of the interaction between sound and meaning. It is not the sound that determines the meaning, or the meaning that determines the sound.

- h. Eight, language is a human reality. Animals do not have a language. They might have other means of communication, but not language.

Having understood the characteristics of language, what then are the functions of language? An understanding of the functions of language gives a deeper understanding of the concept of language. Halliday (1975), therefore, outlines the functions of language, in relation to the child, and with classroom implications.

**Table 2.1. The Functions of language**

NO.	FUNCTION	EXAMPLES	CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE
1	<p><b>INSTRUMENTAL FUNCTION</b></p> <p>Language is used to communicate preferences, choices, wants or needs.</p>	<p>“I want to.”</p>	<p>Problem-solving, gathering materials, role-playing, persuading</p>
2	<p><b>PERSONAL</b></p> <p>Language is used to express individuality.</p>	<p>“Here I am.”</p>	<p>Making feelings public and interacting with others</p>
3	<p><b>INTERACTIONAL</b></p> <p>Language is used to interact and plan, develop, or maintain a play or group activity or social relationship.</p>	<p>“You and me...” “I will be the cashier...”</p>	<p>Structured play, dialogues and discussions</p>



4	<b>REGULATORY</b> Language is used to control.	“Do as I tell you.” “You need...”	Making rules and giving instructions and teaching
5	<b>REPRESENTATIONAL</b> Language is used to explain.	“I tell you.” “I know.”	Conveying messages and telling about the real world, expressing a proposition
6	<b>HEURISTIC</b> Language is used to find things out, wonder or hypothesize.	“Tell me why.” “Why did you do that?” “What for.”	Questions and answers, routines and inquiry and research
7	<b>IMAGINATIVE</b> Language is used to create, explore and entertain.	“Let’s pretend.” “I went to my grandma’s last night.”	Stories and dramatizations, rhymes, poems, riddles and word play

The analysis of the perspectives on the characteristics and functions of language points to the importance of language as a tool for developing thought in all its forms. The human person thinks or reasons in the language that he or she knows and speaks. This implies that language is fundamental for cognitive or intellectual development. From this background, Okoye (1966) holds that language controls thinking, learning and other mental processes and behaviour. Britton (1970) observes that it does not only help in our thinking but in the presentation of “our assumptions about role, about subject matter and about people we talk with and are with” (p. 305).

### 2.2.2. African Philosophy

Determining the nature and scope of what should be considered African philosophy, since the 1940s, has been the concern of many philosophers of the African extraction (Tempels 1959; Jahn 1958; Mbiti 1969; Gyekye 1987; Edeh 1985; Oruka 1991; Iroegbu 1995; Masolo 1995; Hountondji 1995; Odhiambo 1995; Asouzu 2013). The reasons for the recurrence of this in the writings of African philosophers, according to Gyekye (1987) include:

- a. The lack of indigenous written philosophical tradition in a greater part of Africa: "... there was no existing tradition of written philosophy not only to guide their perceptions of the nature of African philosophy, but also to constitute a coherent and viable conceptual and normative framework that they could explore and develop" (p. x).

The problem of the absence of a written tradition explains why there is a frequency of discourses in African philosophy regarding orality, which might not emerge in Western, Chinese and Japanese philosophy. This is because of their long tradition of writing that is linked to their cultural and historical experiences. Some other African thinkers, like Busia (1963) argues on the contrary that, African philosophy is not necessarily a written philosophy, not implying that it cannot be written, but that it is basically embodied in proverbs, aphorisms and pithy sayings: "The African has not offered learned and divergent disputations to the world in writing, but in his expression in conduct of awe, and reverence for nature, no less than in his use of natural resources, he demonstrates his own epistemology" (p. 148). The Pre-Socratics did not write. The Upanishads and Vedas, which are Indian religious and philosophical classics, though not written down, are great philosophies. The absence of writing does not mean the absence of philosophical thinking or ideas.

- b. Gyekye (1987) also observes that the argument regarding the status of African philosophy is determined by the fact that many African philosophers received their

philosophical training in Western countries like Britain, USA, France, Germany, etc., and are finding it difficult to accept African thought as philosophy. For most of them, their understanding of philosophy has been conditioned by their experience of Western philosophy. Thus, they judge the validity of African philosophy from what they know as Western philosophy or from the categories forged by the West. In reaction to this perspective, the position of the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists held in Rome in 1959 is very instructive:

Considering the dominant part played by philosophical reflection in the elaboration of culture, considering that until now the West has claimed a monopoly of philosophic reflection, so that philosophic enterprise no longer seems conceivable outside the framework of the categories, mentalities, concepts and experiences forged by the West, considering that the philosophic effort of traditional Africa has always been reflected in vital attitudes and has never had purely conceptual aims, the commission declares:

- a. that for the African philosopher, philosophy can never consist of reducing the African reality to Western systems;
- b. that the African philosopher must base his enquiries upon the fundamental certainty that the Western philosophic approach is not the only possible one; and therefore, (a) urges that the African philosopher should learn from the traditions, tales, myths and proverbs of his people, so as to draw from them the laws of a true African wisdom complementary to the other forms of human wisdom and to bring out the specific category of African thoughts. (b) calls upon the African philosopher, faced by the totalitarian or egocentric philosophers of the West, to divest himself of a possible inferiority complex,

which might prevent him from starting from his African being to judge the foreign contribution (p. 441).

However, what is philosophy? Philosophy is from two Greek words: φιλο (*philo*), meaning *love* and σοφία (*sophia*) meaning *wisdom*. Brought together, it means ‘the love of wisdom’. The concept is a neologism attributed to Pythagoras (Kanu 2014 and 2015). Thus, he presents philosophy as a high and supreme achievement of the human person, and philosophers as aspirants to or proponents of wisdom. According to Maziarz (1987), in this relatively strict sense, philosophy implies both the process of questioning and the results of this interrogation as embodied in a personal or public enterprise of value to mankind. As an academic discipline, philosophy exercises the principles of reason and logic in an attempt to understand reality and answer fundamental questions about knowledge, life, morality and human nature. Thus, Teichmann and Katherine (1999) define philosophy as: “... a study of problems which are ultimate, abstract and very general. These problems are concerned with the nature of existence, knowledge, morality, reason and human purpose”. (p. 1).

Quinton (1995) corroborates Teichmann and Katherine’s position:

Philosophy is rationally critical thinking, of a more or less systematic kind about the general nature of the world (metaphysics or theory of existence), the justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge), and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value). Each of the three elements in this list has a non-philosophical counterpart, from which it is distinguished by its explicitly rational and critical way of proceeding and by its systematic nature. (p.666).

Human persons, all over the world have some general conception of the nature of the world in which they live and of their place in it. According to Quinton (1995):

Metaphysics replaces the un-argued assumptions embodied in such a conception with a rational and organized body of beliefs about the world as a whole. Everyone has occasion to doubt and question beliefs, their own or those of others, with more or less success and without any theory of what they are doing. Epistemology seeks by argument to make explicit the rules of correct belief formation. Everyone governs their conduct by directing it to desired or valued ends. Ethics, or moral philosophy, in its most inclusive sense, seeks to articulate, in rationally systematic form, the rules or principles involved. (p. 666).

These notwithstanding, for the Ionian School of Philosophy, philosophy would be nothing more than asking and offering rational explanations about the universe. For the Sophists, it would be questioning the foundations of traditional religion, morality and the gods from a subjective perspective. For Socrates, philosophy is acquiring knowledge through questions and answers; thus, it would involve a process of asking questions and questioning answers until answers are unquestionable and questions unanswerable. For the Cynics and Cyreniacs, who exaggerated Socrates' teachings, philosophy would be a path to self-knowledge and, thus, self-sufficiency. Patristic and Early Medieval philosophers would understand philosophy as the handmaid of theology: an instrument for clarifying theological concepts. Descartes would understand philosophy as a search for the certainty of knowledge (Kanu 2014).

Grayling (1998) believes that: "The aim of philosophical inquiry is to gain insight into questions about knowledge, truth, reason, reality, meaning, mind, and value" (p. 1). These questions, according to Kanu (2014), are related to concrete circumstances. Even though philosophy is general and abstract, it relates to concrete circumstances, as it enables people to understand the issues at stake on the political, economic, social, ethical, religious, etc., concrete circumstances of life, and thereby contribute to changing the world.

### **2.2.2.1. The Emergence of African Philosophy**

African philosophy emerged largely from the popular Western portrayal of Africa in books by anthropologists, ethnologists, historians, etc. They popularized the face of an Africa that was savage, who could do nothing, develop nothing or create nothing. The bastardized image of Africa raised the question as to whether the people so described were capable of thinking and if they could develop a philosophy of their own. Thus, for centuries, there was a systematic and ruthless attempt to deny Africa the fundamental human right of self-determination and self-identity (Benjamin 2010). The *Black Consciousness Movement* in Africa, the United States, the Caribbean, Europe, South America, and throughout the Pan-African world was a reaction and an attempt towards reaffirming the identity of Africa and its people. Three factors gave rise to the emergence of the debate on African philosophy: racism, slave trade and colonialism. African philosophy emerged to reaffirm Africa's heritage and personality collapsing before Western bias. Africans wanted to accept and define their responsibility to assess the riches and promise of their culture and also to open dialogue with the West (Kanu 2014 and 2015).

### **2.2.2.2. The Nature of African Philosophy**

A cursory glance at the historical development of the discourses on the nature of African philosophy reveals four perspectives. Gbadegesin (1991) outlines these four perspectives:

- a. The first group understands African philosophy as the philosophical thought of Africans, as could be sifted from their various world views, myths, proverbs, etc. In this sense, it is the philosophy indigenous to Africans and untainted by foreign ideas. It is based on this understanding that Tempels (1959) writes that "I confidently hope to be able to convince my readers that real philosophy can be found among indigenous peoples and that it should be sought among them" (p. 17).

- b. The second group understands African philosophy as the philosophical reflection on, and analysis of, African conceptual systems and social realities as undertaken by contemporary professional philosophers. This reduces African philosophy to reflections by professionally trained philosophers, in collaboration with traditional thinkers.
- c. The third group understands African philosophy as the combination of these two approaches, without suppressing or looking down on any.
- d. The fourth group argues that African philosophy is any collection of texts produced by Africans and specifically described by their authors as Philosophy (Hountondji 1976).

While these views reveal the different groupings of perspectives on African philosophy over the years, none adequately captures the meaning of African philosophy. In the first perspective, although African philosophy includes myths, proverbs, folklores, etc., of the African people. African philosophy goes beyond these to encompass contemporary events and problems. The second must be treated with reservation; this is because African philosophy goes beyond the thought of professional philosophers. There are also ‘unprofessional’ African philosophers. As regards the third, the comments for the first two definitions still apply. The fourth definition needs to be remodelled. What makes a piece philosophical is not the author of the piece. There should be principles that make a thought philosophical (Kanu 2014 and 2015).

### **2.2.2.3. African Philosophy and Universality**

Makumba (2007) argues that if one were to look closely at the generally acceptable definitions of philosophy, it is very clear that philosophy is an all-inclusive enterprise. It is not culture or time-bound. Philosophy targets and points to the human person as a rational entity. As a universal experience, it is not limited to whites or blacks. What may be called into question is the level of systematized thoughts, which certainly cannot be the same everywhere. Tempels

(1959) avers, “Anyone who claims that primitive people possess no system of thought, excludes them thereby from the category of men” (p. 21). Parrinder (1969), ten years after Tempels, resonates the same thought: “To say that African peoples have no system of thought is, explicit or assumed, would be to deny their humanity” (p. 25). Concurring with the above views, Makumba (2007) posits that, “a consistent and unitary philosophical anthropology cannot downplay the place of rationality in the definition of the human person” (p. 29). If Africans are agreed to be human beings of a rational nature, it follows that they do and are capable of philosophy. The perspective of Gyekye (1995) is worth quoting at this juncture:

The denial of the philosophical component of African thought cannot really be accepted. The reason is that philosophy, as an intellectual activity, is universal; it cannot be assumed to be confined to the peoples of the West and the East. Philosophy of some kind is involved in the thought and action of every people and constitutes the intellectual sheet anchor of their life in its totality... we cannot but philosophize, that is, pose fundamental questions, and reflect on fundamental aspects of human life, conduct and experience. (p. 9).

Furthermore, Gyekye maintains that:

In other words, although the people of the world live in different cultural environments, there is nevertheless a common ground of shared human experiences, and hence there certainly are some basic questions relating to their existence on this planet that might commonly be asked by them, questions that are bound to exercise their minds as humans. Such questions, I believe, may be universal, transcending, cultural and historical frontiers, even though the philosophical doctrines and propositions put forward in answer to them may in fact be very dissimilar and divergent. (p. 9)



The universality of philosophy is evident in the presence of philosophical thoughts diversely but universally named as Akan philosophy, Kikuyu philosophy, Igbo philosophy, Yoruba philosophy, Bantu philosophy, Mende philosophy, Chinese philosophy, Japanese philosophy, Indian philosophy, Oriental/Eastern philosophy, Western philosophy, etc (Kanu 2014).

#### **2.2.2.4. The Particularity of African Philosophy**

If philosophy is a universal enterprise, what makes it African is its ‘Africanness’. Kanu 2014 and 2015 avers that every culture makes a contribution from its house of experience to the universal themes of philosophy, and this makes philosophy relevant to the reality of life. Each culture traces the unity of these themes, synthesizes and organizes them into a totality, based on each culture’s concept of life; namely, the relationships between objects and persons and between persons and persons themselves. However, much this may sound repulsive, this cultural contribution to philosophizing is what particularizes philosophy as European, Indian, Chinese or African. The ‘Africanness’ of African philosophy speaks of the *sitz en leben* or *the Locale* within which the philosophy is done. This provides the ingredients that define it as African, while the ‘philosophiness’ of African philosophy speaks of the rational human person involved in the process or enterprise of philosophy. This ‘Africanness’ and ‘philosophiness’ speak of its particularity and universality which are basic ingredients in the philosophical process.

### **2.3. Theoretical Framework**

Theories are formulated to explain, predict and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge, within the limits of the critical boundary assumptions. This section on the theoretical framework focuses on theories that would be of great significance in the interpretation and understanding of this research. They include: Cognitive Semantic Theory and Afrizealotism Philosophical Theory. It would, in fact, through

the provision of a lens for analysis, help in explaining the nature of the relationship between African philosophy and African language.

### **2.3.1. Cognitive Semantic Theory**

The cognitive semantic theory is an influential approach in cognitive science, social science and applied linguistics and an interdisciplinary approach to the study of natural language, mind and socio-cultural experience that originated in the late seventies and early eighties in the writings of Lakoff (1987, 1996), Langacker (1990), and Talmy (1979) and which focussed on language as an instrument for organizing, processing and conveying information. The school of thought understood language as being embedded in the cognitive capacities of the human person. In the study of language, it emphasizes the connection between meaning and form, and understands language as reflecting general aspects of cognition. Geeraerts (1993, 2003, 2006) observes that these scholars studied the formal structures of language as reflections of general conceptual organization, categorization principles, processing mechanisms, and experiential and environmental influences.

The cognitive semantic theory emerged from scholars who studied language as a mental phenomenon. The founding fathers of this theory are Ronald W. Langacker who developed the theory of cognitive grammar; George Lakoff who worked on lexical semantics and grammar; and Leonard Talmy who studied the conceptual basis of grammar. Other foundational contributors to this theory include Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who developed the conceptual metaphor theory and Johnson (1987), who developed the theory of image schema. Others are Fillmore (1982) whose focus was on frame semantics and Fillmore, et al. (1988), who provided the basis for the theory of construction grammar, and Fauconnier (1994), who developed the theory of mental spaces, which later gave rise to conceptual integration theory. The works of Taylor (1989), Ungerer and Schmid (1996), Dirven and Verspoor (1998), Lee (2001), Croft

(2000, 2004), Croft and Cruse (2004), and Evans and Green (2006), among others, are premier contributions to the cognitive linguistic theory.

De Mey (1992) avers that cognitive linguistics is the study of language in its cognitive function, which believes that our interaction with the world is mediated through informational structures in the mind. It focuses on natural language as a means for organizing, processing and conveying information. Language, then, becomes a repository of world knowledge, a structured collection of meaningful categories that help us deal with new experiences and store information about old ones.

According to Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987) and Geeraerts (1993), the cognitive semantic theory holds that the basic function of language involves meaning. These meanings are drawn from categorizations effected by language which are perspectival. The implication is that the world is not objectively reflected in the language: the categorization function of the language imposes a structure on the world rather than just mirroring objective reality. Specifically, language is a way of organizing knowledge that reflects the needs, interests and experiences of individuals and cultures. What holds together the diverse forms of cognitive linguistic theories is the understanding that linguistic knowledge involves not just knowledge of the language, but knowledge of the world as mediated by the language.

Recent studies in cognatic semantic theory have delved into areas like experimental psychology and neuroscience, taking advantage of the openings that the empirical approach offers and new discoveries. This is evident in the works of the following scholars Berthele (2001), Gibbs (1994, 2006), Kemmer and Barlow (2000), Tomasello (2000, 2003), Bybee and Hopper (2001), Kemmer (2000), Bybee and Hopper (2001) and Verhagen and van de Weijer (2003).

### **2.3.2. Picture Theory of Language**

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein was a philosopher from Vienna, Austria, who developed the picture theory of language. He understands language as a picture that shows the structure of reality. He understands the picture as the model of the reality it pictures, and to the objects in the reality correspond the elements of the picture; thus, the picture itself is a fact. Thus, Wittgenstein (1992) writes that: “In the picture and the pictured, there must be something identical in order that the one can be a picture of the other at all. What the picture must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it after its manner, rightly or falsely is its form of representation” (p. 17). He restricts the business of philosophy to as the analysis of that in which there is something in common between the fact and the logical picture, meaning that in circumstances where there is no correspondence between facts and the logical picture, then it means that it falls outside the realm of philosophy.

Thus; philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in ‘philosophical propositions’, but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries (p. 112).

The picture that Wittgenstein speaks about is nothing but language; language for him is the true picture of reality. Just as a picture has all things in common with what it pictures, so does language in relation to reality. He says that what a picture, that is, language has in common with what it pictures is the logical form, which is the unspoken, unexpressed relationship that exists between the picture (language) and what it pictures (reality). Since a picture does not contain the picture of itself, the logical form of a reality stands outside of language to be able to picture it. He writes that “a picture cannot, however, depict its pictorial form: it displays it” (p. 172). In this case, a language must correspond to the fact to be able to picture it: “what a picture must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it correctly or incorrectly

in the way that it does, is its pictorial form... A picture can depict any reality whose form it has. A spatial picture can depict anything spatial, a coloured one anything coloured, etc” (p. 16).

### **2.3.3. Afrizealotism Theory**

Afrizealotism is a theory in African philosophy that was developed by Ekwuru (2011) which holds that in pre-colonial times, the identity of the African was constructed by persons who were not Africans- leading to a racialized and Westernized historical Africa. This led to various degrees and forms of misinterpretations, which has also led to the emergence of a quest by Africans in post-colonial times to search for their cultural roots and identity. It is a theory grounded on the philosophy of the need for the recovery of Africa’s lost heritage, and of rewriting the history of Africa in such a manner that it respects the peculiarity of the African people. He observes that:

Right from the Greco-Roman period of western history, the location of the continent has been associated with every kind of strange descriptions and interpretations. And, in fact, the continent and its inhabitants have been one of the mysteries of nature that most western nations have always eagerly desired to demystify. The western nations, therefore, in their eagerness to demystify the African reality, have often reconstructed it in ways that seem strange even to Africans themselves. (p. 1)

Writing further, Ekwuru (2011) observes that: “Indeed, western civilization has always posited the African image, in the descriptive picture of black and barbarian, as its alterity. The cultural moulding of the African racial otherness, is something that took root and developed in the long history of western civilization” (p. 10). The result of this is the emergence of a dialectical process of resurgence, a travail of self-discovery and self-definition. Diop (1996) avers that the

path towards the discovery of our true Africaness would begin from the day the African stops feeding herself with the racialized and Westernized images of herself created by the west:

... the day she stops feeding on these sordid beliefs that have been methodically dished out to her. In this respect, we have absolute confidence in the African continent. We strongly believe that despite the methods of moral enslavement imbibed to the minutest details, Africa will easily reject as nauseating all these unhealthy beliefs that have atrophied her soul and continue to impede her ability to attain her full potential. ... We are therefore going through a period of confused searching after which Africa will witness a renaissance in every sense of the word. (p. 12).

Afrizealotism, therefore, is a new era of Afrocentrism, a reconstructive redemption gained through an existentialist method of turning back to oneself for a reconstructive self-discovery and empowerment (Ekwuru 2001, 2000, 1999). It is a new philosophical vision, a movement and an empowerment and reengineering for the realization of the dreams of the African people, past and present. "It is a rethink on the African identity, steady development and progress, dignity and pride" (Ekwuru 2011, p. 13), and a progressive awakening of the African people to chart a new course of civilization characterised by the re-articulation of African values. It is a new age of creativity and originality, a return to authentic African life, black dignity, black nobility, black consciousness and power. It holds that the salvation of Africa must come from Africans through the spirit of Afrizealotism.

#### **2.4. Empirical Framework**

In this section of literature review, this research does a review of some literatures that have been written on the subject matter of the relationship between African philosophy and African language. The works written by three Western scholars and five African scholars have been

chosen for review in this section. These works will provide the solid materials for this research. The idea is to listen to the opinions of these authors to strengthen the background to this study.

#### **2.4.1. Martin Heidegger on Language and Philosophy**

In the perspective of friends and foes, Heidegger has been acknowledged for his unique method in the use of language in his philosophy. Although Grene (1958), Faber (1959) and Glicksman (1938) refer to his methodology as pretentious, stupendous and conflicting, Okonkwo (2009) believes that there is no doubt that within the same parameter he has shown a high sense of creativity and originality in his quest to grasp the grounds of being. He understands the importance of language in relation to the revelation of being. For him, a language question is a being question (Heidegger 1968, 1971). In this, he makes a very strong connection between philosophy and language, asserting that the manner of language is the manner of philosophy and that the game of philosophy would be impossible without language. Heidegger (1956) writes: “Without a sufficient consideration of language, we never truly know what philosophy is... nor what philosophy is as a distinctive manner of language” (p.9). In an earlier work, Heidegger (1949) posits that the human person uses language not only as a tool for communication but as the modal way for the being of man as *man qua man*:

Language serves to give information... but the essence of language does not consist entirely in being a means of giving information. This definition does not touch its essential essence, but merely indicates an effect of its essence. Language is not a mere tool, one of the many which man possesses; on the contrary, it is only language that affords the very possibility of standing in the openness of the existent. Only where there is language, is there world... Language is not a tool at his disposal rather, it is that event which disposes of the supreme possibility of human existence. (pp. 276-277).

Language, therefore, becomes an instrument for the disclosure of the mode of being-in-the-world and gives being its ontological and logical descriptiveness. It is an instrument for the intelligible and articulate disclosure of the being project and worldhood relations in their structural thingness, boundaries and obscurities within their structural matrix in such a manner that something indicates itself as something (Heidegger 1962, 1974). Language makes it possible to comprehend the ‘essent’ of the essences of being, and since being is intangible and without shape or colour, it is language that makes it comprehensible (Heidegger 1961).

#### **2.4.2. Hegel G. W. F. on Language and Philosophy**

Hegel’s philosophy has been studied purely from a dialectical dimension from the consequence of human consciousness, individuation, worldhood, social communicative community, etc., and hardly identified as a mainline philosopher of language. However, Okonkwo (2019) observes that Hegel is not inconsistent with the reality that language is a medium through which being becomes manifest, or that being is the original, fundamental duty-care and role of human language. Like Heidegger, Hegel was conscious of the fact that philosophy must be implicitly and explicitly expressed in human language. In fact, Vernon (2007) sees language as the solution to the problem of subjective idealism in Hegel:

Language arises as the solution to the problem of subjective idealism. Our intuitive experience presupposes the universality of our experience and when confronted by this implicit presupposition we seek to determine its presupposed objective validity by communicating our formal intentions regarding experience to others by uniting them with the language signs of our community, that is, by acquiring a communal language... Thus, we speak in language to test our form of experience, but our experience of language only reintroduces the problem of subjective idealism at the language level (p. 13).



Language in Hegel becomes the medium for making the world and its worldhood accessible. This language, he maintains operates on a universal ground that dismisses the possibility of subjectivity and promotes the possibility of understanding. This universal ground is what qualifies language to be language of a people. Interpreting Hegel, Vernom (2007) writes further on the relationship between philosophy and language:

Philosophy must be expressed in the contingent language of a community, since all lexicons are material and communal. While philosophy itself cannot enjoy a final or adequate expression, it does not provide us with the necessary tool to grasp the universal structures of speculative thought that both make possible and demand constructive dialogue between subjects about experience. In the final analysis, philosophy is the speculative presentation of the universal demand for, and infinite pursuit of, a completely objective discourse. (p. 17).

For Hegel, at the heart of language is grammar, and by grammar he means the concepts and relations of our thinking mind. Grammar becomes the predeterminate thought that finds expression in language. While language changes from one culture to another, grammar as concepts and relations of our thinking mind remains in every language as a universal ground that commands, defines, rules and controls the use of language.

#### **2.4.3. A. J. Ayer on Philosophy and Language**

Ayer was an analytic philosopher who belonged to the logical positivist school of thought. His particular concern was to save philosophy from the hands of traditional thinkers like Thales, Anaximander, Socrates, Plato Aristotle, etc., and to free philosophy from ambiguities and logical inconsistencies and, thus, clarify meanings. Ayer (1946) argues that the problem of philosophy was not with reality itself but with the poverty of human language.

Ayer, therefore, shifted the attention of philosophers to language as a territory for philosophical reflection. In the area of ethics, he understands the primary function of ethics as the analysis of moral language and the proper function of philosophy as the analysis of the language of science. Anything outside of this is not considered philosophy by Ayer. Herein, he presented language not only as an indispensable tool in the area of philosophy but also as an impediment to human understanding of reality. He drew attention to the importance of analysis, exploration and interpretation in view of enhancing a better understanding of reality through the understanding of language.

#### **2.4.4. African Philosophy and African Language**

African thinkers have been committed to the discourse on the importance of African language in the doing of African philosophy, given that thoughts in African philosophy have been written in colonial languages- French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, etc. Rettova (2002) observes that there is no African philosophical book that has been written in African language, except for those that employed African words or phrases that cannot be expressed in European languages and conditioned them into the Western conceptual scheme. The result of this is that African languages have become underdeveloped. He, therefore, concludes that “It is obvious that the philosophical potential of African languages is by far not exhausted. Due to the expansion of European thought system, the traditional wisdom of many African ethnic groups is hardly accessible or has already been forgotten” (p. 150).

Okolo (2005) makes a correlation between language and development because of his understanding of language as affecting the structures and defining all aspects of the human life. This development, materially and spiritually, cannot be possible if its agents have been defined using derogatory languages or words. Language conditions thoughts, perception and identity formation. He posits that, “The most virulent element working against the effort to assert the

African personality after colonialism is the vision of Africa and Africans in colonial languages” (p. 86). He strongly believes that the development of Africa would be possible with the review of the linguistic imbalances. He, therefore, calls for the utilization of modern civilization resources for the conscientization on how the African vision in colonial languages is hampering development and creating negative relationships.

Gbenga (2008) begins his piece by asserting that language is a tool for the understanding of human society, and it is on this ground that he emphasizes the importance of African philosophy in African languages. He believes that it is the prerogative of the African people, just as other people in the world, to describe, analyse and define issues in accordance with their intellectual heritage. He concludes that: “The point is that ordinary language philosophy enables looking inward in order to appreciate and explore the invaluable and inestimable philosophical data inherent and peculiar to the language, which, if subjected to description and analysis, can be developed into coherent, unique and novel philosophical ideas and ideals” (p. 90).

Egbunu (2014), while discussing the problem of language in African philosophy, focusses his discussion on the Igala people of Nigeria. He holds that African philosophy remains unauthenticated until the local language of the African people is used. He sees in the African language the tool for the authentication of African philosophy. This he based on the understanding that language is the principal feature that marks a people and makes them different from others. However, he concludes that the absence of African local languages in the expression of African thoughts does not in any way make it unphilosophical. What matters is that African philosophy is presented in a language that makes it intelligible.

Bassey, Enang and Nwaeke (2018) focus on the related issues and difficulties and implications of doing African philosophy through linguistic imports that are sufficiently alien to the African people. They argue that only the use of African languages can guarantee authentic philosophy, and thus call for the development of the African language in such a manner that they compete with foreign languages. They write: "... the herculean task remains for us to upgrade seriously on our indigenous languages; to make it more accessible and systematically structure, for others who have interest in Africa to fetch form the wellspring" (p. 1061). This notwithstanding, they do not believe that for African philosophy to be philosophy, that it must be in the African language: "Through this practical approach, we submit that foreign languages, need not be fundamentally opposed to African realities, and need not fundamental impede the substance of African philosophy. From this realistic canvas, foreign languages need not be at the disservice of African philosophical reflections" (p. 1061).

## **2.5. Summary of Literature Review**

The significance of the current review of literature is based on the eternal relevance of the preceding historical perspectives on the relevance of African language to the doing of African philosophy. The development of these thoughts would help in the location of the relevance of this research. In the conceptual framework, the major concepts relating to this research were clarified to advance specificity of meaning. The concepts studied include, language and African philosophy. In building the theoretical framework, two theories have been employed from the linguistic and philosophical backgrounds, given the multidimensional nature of the research topic. These theories are the Cognitive Linguistic Theory and the Afrizealotism Theory. The theory on cognitive linguistics will be of relevance in the study of the relationship between language and the human mind or thought. It would, therefore, provide a framework for the study of the importance of language in the development of philosophy. The theory on

Afrizealotism would be of great relevance in the study of the need for the African language in the development of African thought, and would also provide a framework for the study of the need for the revival of African languages.

In the empirical research, the works of scholars of western and African backgrounds will be studied as a basis for further studies in this area of research. The scholars from the Western hemisphere that will be studied include: Martin Heidegger, G. W. F. Hegel and A. J. Ayer. These scholars shifted the attention of philosophy to language and understood language as a medium for the manifestation of thought and reality. From the African background, Rettoya Alena, Okolo M. S. C, Fasiku Gbenga, Fidelis Eleojo Egbunu, Samuel Akpan Bassey, Nelson Robert Enang and Cristopher Ude Nwaeke will be studied. While the western scholars would provide a general background to the relationship between philosophy and language, the African scholars will provide specific African perspectives and backgrounds to the study of the relationship between African philosophy and African language. These contributions notwithstanding, these scholars have not been able to develop a theory that would provide for the relationship between African philosophy and African language in this era of globalization, and this is the gap that this research intends to fill.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### LANGUAGE, THOUGHT AND THE WORLD

This chapter focuses on the dynamics of language, thought and the world. However, it begins from the colonial politics of language in Africa which is at the base of the African philosophical reflection on the relationship between language and philosophy. Tracing the problem to the colonial policies, it discusses the necessity of the decolonization of the African mind as it establishes the connection between language and thought. This section also studies the perspectives of philosophers from the history of ancient philosophy to contemporary philosophy, to see the diversity and unity in the thoughts of philosophers regarding the relationship between thought and language.

#### **3.1. The Colonial Politics of Language and the Colonization of the African Mind**

While several scholars focused on the economic implications of the colonial era, scholars of different backgrounds have studied the effects of colonialism on language issues so as to point out the linguistic and social inequalities that emerged with the advent of colonialism. These perspectives, mainly within studies in linguistics, discourse studies and literature, gave birth to the publication of several works: Fanon (1952), Spencer (1971 & 1985), Calvet (1974, 1979 & 1987), Achebe (1975), Bamgbose (1976, 1991 & 2000), Dumont (1986), Thiong'o (1986 & 1993), Pennycook (1994, 1998, 2001 & 2002), Phillipson (1992) and Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995).

Migge and Isabelle (2007) focus on the cultural, linguistic and discursive practices that were associated with the colonial rule. These scholars observe that:

These practices played an instrumental role in assigning low prestige to non-European language and cultures, including cultural and linguistic forms that emerged due to Europe's colonial expansion, and in establishing the superiority of the colonizer's

language and culture. Although many of the colonized populations have today gained what is usually called political independence, the cultural and linguistic decolonization of both European and non-European cultures is hardly complete. (p. 1).

This, in the perspective of Migge and Isabelle (2007), created two hierarchically ordered social systems with different social standings in society in terms of rights and obligations. While the colonial masters were at the top of this hierarchy, the colonized were of subordinate position in the hierarchy, with low status and little or no power. To achieve this, the colonizers according to Calvet (1987), took the first step which was vertical, through which they spread the colonial language among the elite of the African societies, and then reached the lower class eventually. The second step was horizontal: they spread the colonial language geographical from capital cities to villages. This was largely achieved through the educational system which the elite and those in the cities had more access to. This was stronger in French colonies where the colonial policy of assimilation was the rule, unlike the English colonies that employed the Indirect Rule system of colonial administration. In the contention of Spencer (1985), the consequence of this was that the practice "...froze the opportunities for functional development of almost all the African languages. It also froze linguistic competition between languages for access to new domains, and to some extent the European language retarded the extension of existing African vehicular languages" (p. 394).

The African languages were frozen as the colonial languages were made the gateways to opportunities in the new colonial states. Those who could speak the white man's language walked and worked with the white man and dressed like the white man. They shared in the authority of the white man. They served as his representatives. Migge and Isabelle (2007) observe that:

The colonizer's language, by contrast, became a necessity for all those who wished to advance socially and to participate in the colony's public sphere. Especially, socially up-ward mobile people quickly came to eschew the local languages and to favour the colonial language. The educated increasingly opted to raise their children in the colonial language rather than in an African language. (p. 6).

While the positive characteristics were applied to the European culture, the negative ones were attached to the non-European cultures. Since language was a positive value, it was seen as the prerogative of the European nations. No wonder, the languages of the African people were referred to in derogatory terms as dialect, vernacular, patois, broken, bad language, etc. They were considered irrational, and sticking to them was perceived as a sign of ignorance and resistance to civilization, which the colonial languages brought. The colonial language was in a sense considered redemptive. At the time when the colonial masters encouraged the local language, it also had its own consequences. It was either they harmonized or unified a group of related languages into one in such a manner that the varieties were altered and neutralized or they created new varieties so as to fit their own needs (Yanga 1998). The following factors were very influential in the disparaging of African languages.

**3.1.1. Ideological Race Classification:** Berge (1973) believes that evolutionary thoughts like that of Charles Darwin were the alleged rationale for the many evils and harmful practices of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Pennyccok (1998) avers that “from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, Europeans developed a view of the world in which different people could be divided into so-called ‘races’ and that these races differed in terms of various mental and physical characteristics” (p. 51). It triggered in places like Germany one of the most heinous manifestations of racism in human history, culminating in the crematoria of death camps in the 1940s. Masolo (1994) avers that it also



influenced the writings of Western anthropologists, sociologists, historians, etc. Linnaeus (1758) and Gobineau (1915), writing in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively, developed a biased anthropology that relegated Africans to the bottom. At the heart of these perspectives is the concept of reason, which is believed to stand as the great divide between the civilized and the uncivilized, the logical and the mystical.

**3.1.2. The Slave Trade:** With the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in the Western hemisphere, the European expanding empires lacked manpower to work on new plantations that produced sugar cane and other products such as coffee, cocoa, rice, indigo, tobacco, and cotton for Europe. Contrary to the native Americans, Africans were excellent workers: they often had experience of agriculture and keeping cattle, they were used to a tropical climate, resistant to tropical diseases, and so the Atlantic Slave Trade became an integral part of an international trading system which was then guarded by international laws. Then began the slave trade which lasted for about 500 years, during which an estimate of 12 million viable Africans were enslaved from their home lands to locations around the Atlantic. In this trade, human nature was depraved and fellow creatures manipulated in infinite variables (Kanu 2008 and 2014).

**3.1.3. Colonialism:** Since Africans were regarded as sub-humans, Njoku (2002) states that colonialism became a gospel of redemption and elevation of the black person to some noble human status. Mountjoy and Embleton (1966), Hodder (1976) and Kanu (2012) observe that the explorers came from different European countries and divided Africa among themselves at the 1884-5 Conference and Treaty of Berlin (Hodder 1978) in such a manner that sensitive

matters regarding particular peoples were not put into consideration. According to Walter (1982), the decisive effect of colonialism is the fact that one's power of self-determination was taken away and given to the other.

These experiences, with the mentality that go with them, had their places in the colonial system of education which was targeted at a particular result, mainly political, economic and cultural.

Pennycook (1998) avers that these were constructed between four poles:

... first the position of colonies within a capitalist empire and the need to produce docile and compliant workers and consumers to fuel capitalist expansion; second, local contingencies of class, ethnicity, race and economic conditions that dictated the distinctive development of each colony; third, the discourses of Anglicism and liberalism with their insistence on the European need to bring civilization to the world; and the fourth, the discourses of orientalism with their insistence on exotic histories, traditions and nations in decline. (p. 68)

In English-speaking colonies, English was the language for education in formal systems of education, while in French colonies, students were not only subjected to speak and be taught in French language, they were subjected to the same curriculum. Learning French was the first step in all intellectual activity which the colonial masters thought was an invaluable gift to the colonized. The missionaries who ran most of the schools at the time could not oppose this view, even when they did not agree with it. The reason was simple: the funds for the running of the schools came as support from the colonial government. The use of the colonial language led to a good number of drop-outs who could not struggle through the clash of the worldviews. This was not an issue, given that the more the people were ignorant, the more they were easy to govern.

The missionary enterprise in Africa which was aimed at converting ‘pagans’ and establishing the church played its own role. First, they employed the methodology of imposition of the Christian message; the second was the translation of the Christian message which was mostly in English to the local languages of the African people, and third, the adaptation of the Christian message into the African religious culture in such a manner that did not respect the African culture (Kanu 2020a). Through imposition, doctrines, religious customs, morals and ways of acting and praying taken from foreign cultures were forced on the African people. While this might seem like a clear option left to the missionaries, they disregarded and belittled the culture of the African people in the process. The idea of imposition was based on a wrong conception of Christianity as a finished product rather than a faith that reaches its full potential through dialogue with the local cultures of host communities (Kanu 2020b). Thus, African names were rejected for baptism, songs in African languages were not accepted, clapping of hands was not accepted, among other things that showed that the African culture was inferior.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the colonial masters dealt a negative blow on the development of African languages. This was done, using an educational system created by them to suit their economic and political purposes. This colonial system of education, in terms of language policy, curricula, teaching methods, etc., has been maintained by the African elite who also have their personal interests to protect. This has continued, even after the withdrawal of the colonizers, to hamper the development of democratic societies and the achievement of sustainable national and local development among the African people that can make her an equal member of the community of nations. This, therefore, calls for the decolonization of the African mind.

### **3.2. Mental/conceptual decolonization of the African mind**

Decolonization is a technical term which points to world historical moments or many-faceted processes through which colonies achieve their dreams and aspirations for independence through revealing and dismantling the colonialist values, institutional and cultural chains, in all its dimensions, that have held down the colonies over the years and that have remained in effect even after the political independence has been achieved by African countries. It emerged from profound forces and burst into the international scene.

Decolonization, within philosophy, was a concept that featured greatly in the writings of Wiredu (1995, 1984 and 2000) in which he describes two senses of the decolonization. The first sense is the negative sense which involves “reversing through critical conceptual self-awareness the unexamined assimilation in our thought of the conceptual frameworks embedded in foreign philosophical traditions” (1995, p. 22). The positive sense is about “exploring the resources of our indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditations on even the most technical problems of contemporary philosophy” (1995, p. 22). In another text, Wiredu (1991) speaks of mental decolonization as “the promotion of adequate understanding of the intellectual foundations of African culture” (p. 98).

The process of decolonization began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the movements towards political changes leading to independence in many African colonial territories, the quest for theological independence became unavoidable. In the contention of Parratt (2001), “It seemed incongruous to African Christians that while African nations were becoming independent politically, the church in Africa should remain essentially controlled by European missionaries” (p. 2). The late Harold MacMillan, one-time British Prime Minister (cited in Mbefo 1989), remarks about the events of the time thus:

We have seen the awakening of national consciousness in people who have for centuries lived in dependence of some other power... In different places it takes different forms, but it is happening everywhere. A wind of change is blowing through this continent, whether we like it or not (p.11)

The eagerness for the quest for freedom in the political scene also echoed in the Christian churches in Africa. It was as though the struggle for political independence was also a demand for an independent African Church (Kanu 2020). This was, however, unavoidable, given that the church cannot be spoken of in isolation of the world, for the questions that the church grapples with are the questions raised by and in the world.

Interestingly, around the same period and within the same context of the search for independence, there was a positive appreciation of African traditional beliefs and customs among Africans, together with a marked sense of their cultural identity. There was a great impetus from the literary movement in French-speaking Africa popularly known as Negritude, which emerged through the study of human sciences like social or cultural anthropology and sociology, and through the monographs of trained anthropologists and the surveys of scholars such as Geoffrey Parrinder, among others (Kanu 2020).

In African philosophy, decolonization as a concept emerged in response to the linguistic alienation and the obvious risk Africans had found themselves in: the risk of being “uprooted from their mode of philosophical conceptualization, collection, conservation and transmission” (Bassey, Enang & Nwaeke 2018, p. 1057). Decolonization was about the de-loading of alien linguistic imports through sustained interrogation and critical reflection on the foreign categories of conceptualization that have been created by the colonizers; it was a sounding

gong that pointed to the dangers of doing African philosophy in a non-African language or in the language of the colonizer. Wiredu (1995) defines it thus:

By conceptual decolonization I mean two complementary things. On the negative side, I mean avoiding or reversing through a critical conceptual self-awareness the unexamined assimilation in our thought (that is, in the thought of contemporary African philosophers), of the conceptual frameworks embedded in the foreign philosophical traditions that have had an impact on African life and thought. And, on the positive side, I mean exploiting all much as is judicious, the resources of our own indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditations on even the most technical problems of contemporary philosophy. (pp. 22-23)

Wiredu (1996) places the responsibility of decolonization on the philosopher who must interrogate the colonial encrustations and domesticate them. He points out the concepts that are in dire need of decolonization:

Reality, being, existence, object, entity, substance, property, quality, truth, fact opinion, belief, knowledge, faith, doubt, certainty, statement, proposition, sentence, idea, mind, soul, spirit, thought, sensation, matter, ego, self, person, individuality, community, subjectivity, objectivity, cause, change, reason, explanation, meaning, freedom, responsibility, punishment, democracy, justice, God, world, universe, nature, supernature, space, time, nothingness, creation, life, death, afterlife, morality, religion.  
(p. 134)

Thus, decolonization is a response to the effort towards the annihilation of a people's culture, heritage, etc. Bassey, Enang & Nwaeke (2018) observe that the major danger of annihilating a people's names, language, culture, heritage, etc., is that they would begin to see their past as a waste-land of non-achievement to be distanced from and would want to identify with the

language, culture, names, etc., of the colonizers, believing that that is where the future lies. The consequence is that a people without an identity, self-confidence and a past is created.

### **3.3. Language and Philosophy**

The human person, not minding place and time, is enshrined in an inescapable world-hood web called language. As a symbolic construction and human agenda setting in semantic space, it ensures the application of social meaning, control, culture and social knowledge. As a result of the place that language occupies in the integration, interpretation and internalization of convention for the state of affairs of sociality, it is not surprising that it has always been an attractive area and a fascinating topic for philosophers. The history of philosophical thinking about language is almost impossible to separate from the history of logic and indeed the entire history of philosophy. Thus, all major philosophers and schools of philosophy have had some doctrine about the relationship between mind and language, and language and the world.

The earliest interaction between philosophy and language dates back to the ancient Greek philosophical era. Heraclitus, understanding *logos* within its semantic and symbolic function, had thought that the word was not merely an anthropological phenomenon but captures what he regarded as a universal cosmic truth. In him, ancient Early Greek thought moved from the study of nature to philosophy of language. And in this, he made a very strong connection between language and cosmology.

Plato's life-long battle against the Sophists is a typical example of the concerns of the ancients with the phenomenon of language. Plato attacked the Sophists because of their competent but dubious ability to twist language to their own advantage for the sake of making money. He was infuriated by what he saw as the danger and threat that sophistry posed to genuine communication and life in the society (Pierer, 1992). Plato, therefore, holds that there is a nexus

between thought and language, indicating that the manner in which language is employed would go a long way to determine the quality or veracity of thought.

The Sophists, before Plato, had dealt with linguistic and grammatical problems in a systematic way. Unlike Plato, they were not interested in the problem of language for theoretical purposes. They had a more urgent task to accomplish: to teach how to speak for the sake of political success and to win law suits. Language was the greatest instrument for political struggle in the Athens of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Language became an instrument for definite, concrete and practical purposes. The Sophists believed that one had to manipulate language to his or her own advantage if such a person were to attain their objectives. To enhance this purpose, the Sophists began a new branch of knowledge called rhetoric (Cassirer, 1976). As a result of their proficiency in rhetoric, they were able to make the weaker argument the stronger and to sweat-talk something bad into something good and turn black into white (Honderich, 1976).

In the Plato's dialogue, *Cratylus*, he considered another dimension of language: the question of whether the names of things were determined by convention or by nature. In this case, his analysis of language addresses the problem of nomenclature. He criticizes conventionalism because it led to the bizarre consequence that anything can be conventionally denominated by any name. Hence, it cannot account for the correct or incorrect application of a name. He claims that there was a natural correctness to names. To do this, he pointed out that compound words and phrases have a range of correctness. He also argues that primitive names had a natural correctness, because each phoneme represented basic ideas or sentiments. While Plato concerns himself with meaning, Aristotle, in his philosophy of language, steps up his concern to issues of logic and categories. He separates all things into categories of species and genus, and believes that the meaning of a predicate was established through an abstraction of the similarities between various individual things (Kanu, 2010 & 2012).



The Stoics, in their philosophy of language, made important contributions to the analysis of grammar, distinguishing five parts of speech: nouns, verbs, appellatives (names or epithets), conjunctions and articles. They also developed a sophisticated doctrine of the *lektón* associated with each sign of a language, but distinct from both the sign itself and the thing to which it refers. This *lektón* was the meaning (or sense) of every term. The *lektón* of a sentence is what we would now call its Propositions. Only propositions were considered "truth bearers" or "truth-vehicles" (i.e., they could be called true or false), while sentences were simply their vehicles of expression (Kanu 2014).

Medieval philosophers were greatly interested in the subtleties of language and its usage. This interest was provoked by the necessity of translating Greek texts into Latin. For Augustine (1961), language could be learnt by the act of pointing and naming, implying that there is a relationship between language and the world around us:

For when I tried to express my meaning by crying out and making various sounds and movements, so that my wishes should be obeyed, I found that I could not convey all that I meant or make myself understood by everyone whom I wished to understand me. So my memory prompted me. I noticed that people would name some object and then turn towards whatever it was that they had named. I watched them and understood that the sound they made when they wanted to indicate that particular thing was the name which they gave to it, and their actions clearly showed what they meant, for there is a kind of universal language, consisting of expressions of the face and eyes, gestures and tones of voice, which can show whether a person means to ask for something and get it, or refuse it and have nothing to do with it. So, by hearing words arranged in various phrases and constantly repeated, I gradually pieced together what they stood for, and

when my tongue had mastered the pronunciation, I began to express my wishes by means of them. (1.8)

Blair (1990) interprets the Augustinian model of language as having the following implications:

- a. Words name objects: the meaning of a word is the object for which it stands.
- b. Every word has a meaning: The meaning of a word is independent of context.
- c. Sentence meaning is composed of word meanings.

Beyond words corresponding to realities around us, Augustine asserts that language is an instrument for the communication of reality itself. He writes: “signs are given only in order to communicate”. Anselm, taking the path of Saint Augustine, avers that a sign signifies its significate, just as a ‘name’ corresponds with the ‘pointed’ object in Augustine (King 2004). Aquinas, on the other hand, relying on Aristotle, posits that all human language is derived from our experience with things in our sensed world. He maintains that nothing can be in the intellect that was not first in the senses: *nihil in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu*. The scholastics of the high Medieval Period, such as Occam and John Duns Scotus, considered logic as the science of language (*scientia sermocinalis*) (Stumpf 2003).

In line with the thoughts of the linguists of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, such as Johannes Goropius Becanus, Athanasius Kircher and John Wilkins, Locke (cited in Kanu 2012), in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, argues that only an adequate or correctly formed language could be a vehicle for communication. He believes that the desire to know reality is the foundation of communication. Even though there is the possibility of lying, Locke argues that lies do not constitute communication, since to lie is to deny reality. To lie is the perpetration of inequality in society since it denies the other his or her share and portion of reality. To deceive a person

is an implicit assumption that he or she is not worthy to know the truth. This explains why Locke, like Plato, condemns sophistry.

Nor has this mischief stopped in logical Niceties, or curious empty speculations; it hath invaded the great concernment of human life and society; obscured and perplexed the material truths of law and divinity; brought confusion, disorder and uncertainty into the affairs of mankind; and if not destroyed, yet in great measure rendered useless, those two great rules, religion and justice. (p. 486)

In the early 19th century, the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, insists that language ought to play a larger role in Western philosophy. He argues that philosophy has not sufficiently focused on the role language plays in cognition and that future philosophy ought to proceed with a conscious focus on language: Hence, language began to play a central role in Western philosophy in the late 19th century. The philosophy of language then became so pervasive that for a time, in analytic philosophy circles, philosophy as a whole was understood to be a matter of philosophy of language (Kanu 2014).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ayer (1942) avers that our being as human beings is about the inversion of language for the all-encompassing agenda-setting of our humanity. As such, humanity has no other choice than the total experimental engagement for the understanding of the workings of language. Wittgenstein (1961) thus argues that the function of philosophy is not to construct theories but to clarify thought. Therefore, philosophy is an activity of elucidating propositions in order to make them clear, and this can only be done within the boundaries of human knowledge and the use of language.

Keller (1979) and Rorty (1992) speak of modern trends within philosophical inquiry as a method that denotes philosophy as the passage from the philosophy of nature to philosophy of language. They argue in favour of this linguistic turn on the basis that there is no singular possibility of human sciences outside the data base of human language. Bell (1978) avers that “It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and language is an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection” (p. 130). Humbolt (1985) further underscores language as the totality of the human spirit which in itself is the central human activity that gives character and structure to human culture and individuality.

Reflections on the connection between language and thought is also evident in the writings of African philosophers. Mbiti (1970) speaks of language as a very important element in understanding African philosophy and religion and, therefore, calls on African philosophers not to neglect language in their study of the philosophy and religion of the African people. He makes this connection in his analysis of African time, an analysis that began with the study of the East African language. Edeh (1985) further writes that: “Our brief consideration of the Igbo language leads us into the culture of the people since it is obvious that a language cannot be divorced from the culture which it expresses” (p. 56). Gyekye (1987) and Adeshina (2006) observe that every language system embodies a particular ontology and a system of knowledge about reality. Language, from this perspective, becomes loaded with worldviews and metaphysics and, more importantly, a person’s language determines, at least in part, the way to perceive and conceive the world. Thus, when you lose the language of a people, you also lose a great chunk of their philosophy. It is not surprising that Tempels (1959), Edeh (1985), Gyekye (1987) and Iroegbu (1995) thought it significant to begin from the analysis of language in their philosophical searches.

The emphasis on language as an indispensable element for doing profound African philosophy is very evident in the philosophical position of Ethno-philosophers who view African philosophy as the philosophical thought of Africans as could be gotten from their various world views, myths, proverbs, etc. In this sense, it is the philosophy indigenous to Africans, untainted by foreign ideas. It places little or no emphasis on scientificity, logic, criticism and argumentation, and makes more emphasis on local relevance or context. In studying ethno-philosophy, we discover the deep relationship between language and philosophy.

In his work *African religions and philosophy*, Mbiti (1970) begins with an analysis of the African concept of time from the Kikamba and Gikuyu languages, in which he analyses three verbs that speaks of the future, covering only a period of six months and not beyond two years at most. Alexis Kagame, in his work *Philosophie Bantou-Rwandaise de L'Etre*, began from the language of the Rwandans who were called Kinyarwanda and developed their thought through a linguistic ethno-philosophy. He discovered that *Ntu* is the category of being or the generic meaning of something. This he classified into four: *Umntu* (human beings), *Ikintu* (non-human beings), *Ahantu* (place and time) and *Ukuntu* (Aristotelian category of quantity) (Njoku 2010). *Ntu* is the unifying notion among all these, even though God does not belong to it. Iroegbu (1995) develops an African concept of being as *Belongingness* from the Igbo principle of *Egbe bere Ugo bere* (let the kite perch, let the eagle perch), which he believes re-enacts the contents and significance of belongingness. These developments in African philosophy are a pointer to the relevance of African language in doing African philosophy.

### **3.4. Language as a Tool of Thought**

Philosophers of various backgrounds have expressed belief in the connection between thought and language (Huxley 1981; Makinde 1985; Segun 1988; Mazrui and Mazrui 1998; Oluwole

1997, 1999 and 2014; Segun 2000 and Serequeberhan 2016). They believe that within the structures of language, various themes of philosophy, including epistemology, logic, metaphysics, ethics, etc., can be discussed, and that the analysis of the meanings in these concepts can lead to the understanding of the philosophy of a people. Thus, Dewey (1910) avers that language occupies a very special place as a result of its connection with thought:

Speech has such a peculiarly intimate connection with thought as to require special discussion. Although the very word logic comes from logos, meaning in differently both word or speech, and thought or reason, yet " words, words, words " denote intellectual barrenness, a sham of thought. Although schooling has language as its chief instrument (and often as its chief matter) of study, educational reformers have for centuries brought their severest indictments against the current use of language in the schools. The conviction that language is necessary to thinking (is even identical with it) is met by the contention that language perverts and conceals thought. (p. 170).

Scholars, according to Dewey (1910), have been divided regarding the connection between language and thought, along three lines:

- a. The first are those who argue that language and thought are identical, meaning that they stand for the same reality or are two sides of the same coin. This would imply that to have language is to have thought and to have thought presupposes that one has the language.
- b. The second are those who believe that language is only the garb or clothing of thought, necessary not for thought but only for conveying it. This perspective separates language from thought, and makes language an instrument for the transmission of thought.
- c. The third is the understanding of language not as thought, but as being necessary for thinking as well as for its communication. He writes that: "When it is said, however,

that thinking is impossible without language, we must recall that language includes much more than oral and written speech” (p. 170).

John Dewey holds the third perspective. He does not regard language as thought, but understands language as a necessity for thinking. It is through language that a thought is made manifest. For instance, if a person is thinking about something, no one will know until they person expresses what is in his or her mind through language. In this understanding, language is not just a garb or clothing for thought that can be pulled off and dropped at some point. Thought needs language and language needs thought. Dewey (1910) writes:

To say that language is necessary for thinking is to say that signs are necessary. Thought deals not with bare things, but with their *-meanings*, their suggestions; and meanings, in order to be apprehended, must be embodied in sensible and particular existences. Without meaning, things are nothing but blind stimuli or chance sources of pleasure and pain; and since meanings are not themselves tangible things, they must be anchored by attachment to some physical existence. Existences that are especially set aside to fixate and convey meanings are signs or symbols. If a man moves toward another to throw him out of the room, his movement is not a sign. If, however, the man points to the door with his hand, or utters the sound go, his movement is reduced to a vehicle of meaning: it is a sign or symbol. (p. 171)

In the act of expressing thought, Dewey goes further to express the functions of language, which he considers as follows: the first is that language is necessary for the specification of meaning or to make a meaning distinct and specific. For instance, when a person has the idea of a cup, the attaching of a particular language to that thing “cup” makes the meaning specific such that once a person hears “cup” he or she knows what is implied. Once you have called it a cup, you cannot call another thing a cup, but have restricted that idea to the particular name

that you have given to it. This also helps us to understand why children always ask the question: “Daddy what is this?” They want to attach a name to a particular reality, so that everything does not become everything. Writing on this, Dewey (1910) makes a beautiful explanation:

Every one has experienced how learning an appropriate name for what was dim and vague cleared up and crystallized the whole matter. Some meaning seems almost within reach, but is elusive; it refuses to condense into definite form; the attaching of a word somehow (just how, it is almost impossible to say) puts limits around the meaning, draws it out from the void, makes it stand out as an entity on its own account. When Emerson said that he would almost rather know the true name, the poet's name, for a thing, than to know the thing itself, he presumably had this irradiating and illuminating function of language in mind. The delight that children take in demanding and learning the names of everything about them indicates that meanings are becoming concrete individuals to them, so that their commerce with things is passing from the physical to the intellectual plane. It is hardly surprising that savages attach a magic efficacy to words. To name anything is to give it a title; to dignify and honor it. (p. 173)

Beyond attaching a meaning or specifying the meaning of something, Dewey (1910) also believes that part of the relationship between language and thought is that language helps in the preservation of a particular meaning that has been assigned a particular reality. This is very important as we come into contact with particular names of objects on once in a while. We might see a house and move to the street in the next minute. The fact that we are no longer within the reach of the house does not mean that the house ceases to exist. Even while we are away from the house, the house continues to exist in our minds through the meaning that has been preserved in our thoughts through language. He writes:



Things come and go; or we come and go, and either way things escape our notice. Our direct sensible relation to things is very limited. The suggestion of meanings by natural signs is limited to occasions of direct contact or vision. But a meaning fixed by a linguistic sign is conserved for future use. Even if the thing is not there to represent the meaning, the word may be produced so as to evoke the meaning. Since intellectual life depends on possession of a store of meanings, the importance of language as a tool of preserving meanings cannot be overstated. To be sure, the method of storage is not wholly aseptic; words often corrupt and modify the meanings they are supposed to keep intact, but liability to infection is a price paid by every living thing for the privilege of living. (p. 174)

Another contribution of Dewey to the discourse on the relationship between language and thought is that language helps in transferring meaning. This is connected with the fact of specifying meaning. Having specified the meaning of a thought, a person is now able to transfer the meaning to another experience through which learning takes place. For instance, if a person sees dark clouds in the sky and understands that rain follows the appearance of the dark clouds, the next time he sees the same thing, he is able to transfer the experience and learn that most probably that rain would come again. It is within this context that science is possible. According to Dewey (1910):

When a meaning is detached and fixed by a sign, it is possible to use that meaning in a new context and situation. This transfer and reapplication is the key to all judgment and inference. It would little profit a man to recognize that a given particular cloud was the premonitor of a given particular rainstorm if his recognition ended there, for he would then have to learn over and over again, since the next cloud and the next rain are different events. No cumulative growth of intelligence would occur; experience might

form habits of physical adaptation but it would not teach anything, for we should not be able to use a prior experience consciously to anticipate and regulate a further experience. To be able to use the past to judge and infer the new and unknown implies that, although the past thing has gone, its *meaning* abides in such a way as to be applicable in determining the character of the new. Speech forms are our great carriers: the easy-running vehicles by which meanings are transported from experiences that no longer concern us to those that are as yet dark and dubious. (pp. 174-175)

The transferring of meanings is possible because language helps in the logical organization of meanings. It is only when these meanings are organized that meanings can be transferable, and this Dewey (1910) attributes to our mother tongue.

Words are not only names or titles of single meanings; they also form *sentences* in which meanings are organized in relation to one another. When we say " That book is a dictionary," or " That blur of light in the heavens is Halley's comet," we express a *logical* connection — an act of classifying and defining that goes beyond the physical thing into the logical region of genera and species, things and attributes. ... *The chief intellectual classifications that constitute the working capital Of thought have been built up* for us by our mother tongue. Our very lack of explicit consciousness in using language that we are employing the intellectual systematizations Of the race shows how thoroughly accustomed we have become to its logical distinctions and groupings. (p. 175)

John Dewey, therefore, makes a very strong case for the relationship between language and thought. He considers language not only necessary for thinking but for the communication of the thoughts that we have. Therefore, while it aids thinking, it also aids conveying the human thought. Language specifies meaning, organizes meanings and preserves meanings. These

connections between language and thought make language as a very fundamental tool in the philosophical enterprise.

### 3.5. Language and the World

Wittgenstein (1961), in his *Tractatus*, develops a picture theory of language. He writes: “*A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.*” (p. 2). The seven propositions of the *Tractatus* are:

- a. The world is all that is the case.
- b. What is the case? A fact is the existence of states of affairs.
- c. A logical picture of facts is a thought.
- d. A thought is a proposition with a sense.
- e. A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions. (An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself.)
- f. The general form of a truth-function is  $[p, E, N(E)]$ . This is the general form of a proposition.
- g. What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence (p. 1)

Wittgenstein (1961) argues that the structure of language is conditioned by the structure of reality, for language makes us see reality in a structure corresponding to the structure of language. He writes, “What every picture of whatever form must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all... is the logical form, that is, the form of reality” (p. 18). He strongly believes that the structure of the world is pictured by language, which can now be considered a model of reality.

Wittgenstein (1974) posits that language has an underlying logical structure, a structure that provides the limits of what can be said meaningfully, and, therefore, the limits of what can be

thought. The implication of this is that the limits of language are the limits of philosophy. This implies also that whatever does not fall within the picture of language does not belong to the area of philosophy. He writes that: “what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence” (p. 1). This is because, as he observes: “These facts (of which the world is made of) are pictured by language so that by means of language we make to ourselves pictures of facts” (p. 1). In this picture and the pictured, there must be something identical in order that one can be a picture of the other at all. Language is like a mirror of facts, and if it does not correspond to it, it is false. What Wittgenstein is saying is that just as you cannot use human language to talk about divine realities, you also cannot use European languages to talk about African realities, because there are so many things that the European language cannot picture in the African world, and even when it pictures it, it does that inadequately, for the simple reason that there are no such realities in the European world.

### **3.6. Western philosophical books in Western languages**

The two tables below contain the collection of fifty works each from the corpus of literature on different divisions of philosophy, first from the Western world and secondly from the African world. These are, therefore, literatures on Western philosophy and African philosophy. They are collected not in accordance with the dates of publication or the alphabetical arrangement of authors. They are arranged as they are discovered in the library. Those on Western philosophy are collections of the works of Western philosophers who might not have worked or being to Africa. The second collection is of African philosophers, who might be of the Western hemisphere, as in the case of Placid Tempels, but who were necessarily doing African philosophy.

#### **Table 3. 1. *Western philosophical books in Western Languages***

<b>NO.</b>	<b>Name of Philosopher</b>	<b>Title of Book</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>1</b>	Wittgenstein, L.	<i>Tractatus logico-philosophicus</i>	German/local Language
<b>2</b>	Wittgenstein, L.	<i>Philosophical investigations</i>	German/local Language
<b>3</b>	Aristotle	Metaphysics	Greek/local Language
<b>4</b>	Aristotle	<i>The Physics</i>	Greek/local Language
<b>5</b>	Thiroux, J.	<i>Ethics, theory and practice</i>	English/local Language
<b>6</b>	Stumpf, S. E..	<i>Philosophy, history and problems</i>	English/local Language
<b>7</b>	Teichmann, J. and Katherine C. E.	<i>Philosophy: A beginner's guide</i>	English/local Language
<b>8</b>	Plato	<i>The Timaeus.</i>	Greek/local Language
<b>9</b>	Plotinus	<i>The enneads</i>	Greek/local Language
<b>10</b>	Popkin, R. H. and Stroll, A.	<i>Philosophy</i>	English/local Language
<b>11</b>	Russell, B.	<i>History of Western philosophy</i>	English/local Language
<b>12</b>	Quinton, A.	<i>The Oxford companion to philosophy</i>	English/local Language

<b>13</b>	Russell, B.	<i>The problems of philosophy</i>	English/local Language
<b>14</b>	Hume, D.	<i>An enquiry concerning human understanding</i>	English/local Language
<b>15</b>	Ayer, A. J.	<i>Language, truth and logic</i>	English/local Language
<b>16</b>	Buber, M.	<i>I and thou</i>	German/local Language
<b>17</b>	Copleston, F.	<i>A history of philosophy: Greece and Rome</i>	English/local Language
<b>18</b>	Copleston, F.	<i>A history of philosophy</i>	English/local Language
<b>19</b>	Grayling, A. C.	<i>Philosophy 1: A Guide through the Subject</i>	English/local Language
<b>20</b>	<i>Hegel, G. W. F.</i>	<i>The philosophy of history</i>	German/local Language
<b>21</b>	Heidegger, M.	<i>Being and Time</i>	German/local Language
<b>22</b>	Kant, I.	<i>Prolegomena to any future metaphysics that will be able to come forward as science</i>	German/local Language

<b>23</b>	Kant, I.	<i>Fundamental principles of the metaphysics of morals</i>	German/local Language
<b>24</b>	Kant, I.	<i>Critique of pure reason</i>	German/local Language
<b>25</b>	Kant, I.	<i>Critical examination of practical reason</i>	German/local Language
<b>26</b>	Kant, I.	<i>Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone</i>	German/local Language
<b>27</b>	Husserl, E.	<i>Ideas. General introduction to phenomenology</i>	German/local Language
<b>28</b>	Husserl, E.	<i>Psychological studies in the elements of logic</i>	German/local Language
<b>29</b>	Husserl, E.	<i>The Paris Lectures</i>	German/local Language
<b>30</b>	Husserl, E.	<i>Cartesian Meditations</i>	German/local Language
<b>31</b>	Husserl, E.	<i>The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy</i>	German/local Language

<b>32</b>	Descartes, R.	<i>Meditations I and II. J. E. White. Introduction to Philosophy</i>	French/local Language
<b>33</b>	Descartes, R.	<i>The philosophical works of Descartes. Vol. I and II</i>	French/local Language
<b>34</b>	Descartes, R.	<i>Discourse on method and the meditations</i>	French/local Language
<b>35</b>	Heidegger, M.	<i>The word of Nietzsche 'God is dead'</i>	German/local Language
<b>36</b>	Hegel, G.W.F.	<i>Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: Together with a Work on the Proofs of the Existence of God</i>	German/local Language
<b>37</b>	Plato	<i>The dialogue</i>	Greek/local Language
<b>38</b>	Plato	<i>The Republic</i>	Greek/local Language
<b>39</b>	Hick, J.	<i>Evil and the God of love</i>	English/local Language
<b>40</b>	Hick, J.	<i>Philosophy of religion</i>	English/local Language
<b>41</b>	Luca Fonnesu	<i>Storia dell'etica contemporanea. Da</i>	Italian/local Language



		<i>Kant alla filosofia analitica</i>	
<b>42</b>	Battista Mondin	<i>Storia dell'antropologia filosofica. Dalle origini fino a vico Vol. 1</i>	Italian/local Language
<b>43</b>	Gonsalves, M. A.	<i>Right and reason: Ethics in theory and practice</i>	English/local Language
<b>44</b>	Wilkinson, M. B. and H. N. Campbell	<i>Philosophy of religion: An introduction</i>	English/local Language
<b>45</b>	Allan, D. T.	<i>The Philosophy of Aristotle</i>	English/local Language
<b>46</b>	Emmanuele Severino	<i>Antologia filosofica. Dai Greci al nostro tempo</i>	Italian/local Language
<b>47</b>	Guiseppe Cambiano	<i>I modernila politica degli antichi. Tra Machiavelli et Nietzsche</i>	Italian/local Language
<b>48</b>	Gilson, E.	<i>The unity of philosophical experience</i>	English/local Language
<b>49</b>	Jose Luis Fuertes, et al	<i>Pasiones y virtudes en la epoca del Greco. Guilia Belgioioso, Storia della filosofia moderna</i>	Spanish/local Language
<b>50</b>	Aquinas, Thomas	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>	Latin/local Language

### 3.7. African philosophical books in colonial languages

**Table 3.2. African philosophical books in colonial languages**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>Name of Philosopher</b>	<b>Title of Book</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>1</b>	Placid Tempels	<i>Bantu philosophy</i>	French/colonial Language
<b>2</b>	Abanuka, B	<i>Philosophy and the Igbo world.</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>3</b>	Appiah, K. A.	<i>In my father's house: Africa in the philosophy of culture.</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>4</b>	Asouzu, I. I.	<i>The methods and principles of complementary reflection in and beyond African philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>5</b>	Asouzu, I. I.	<i>Ibanyidanda: New complementary ontology. Beyond world immanentism, ethnocentric reduction and impositions</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>6</b>	Azikiwe, Nnamdi	<i>Renascent Africa</i>	English/colonial Language

7	Azikiwe, Nnamdi	<i>Political blueprint of Nigeria</i>	English/colonial Language
8	Busia, K. A.	<i>Africa in search of democracy</i>	English/colonial Language
9	Edeh, E. M. P.	<i>Towards Igbo metaphysics</i>	English/colonial Language
10	Gyekye, K.	<i>An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme</i>	English/colonial Language
11	Hountondji, P.	<i>African philosophy: Myth and reality</i>	French/colonial Language
12	Ijiomah, C.	<i>African philosophy's contribution to the dialogue on reality issues</i>	English/colonial Language
13	Iroegbu, P.	<i>Metaphysics: The kpim of philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
14	Jahn, J.	<i>Muntu: An outline of the new African culture</i>	English/colonial Language
15	Kwame, N.	<i>The struggle continues</i>	English/colonial Language
16	Makumba, M.	<i>Introduction to African philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
17	Masolo, D. A.	<i>African philosophy in Search of Identity</i>	English/colonial Language

<b>18</b>	Mbaegbu, C. C. A.	<i>Hermeneutics of God in Igbo ontology</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>19</b>	Njoku, F. O. C.	<i>Essays in African philosophy, thought and theology</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>20</b>	Nkrumah, K.	Consciencism: Philosophy and ideology for de-colonisation	English/colonial Language
<b>21</b>	Nwala, T. U.	<i>Igbo philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>22</b>	Odhiambo, F. O.	<i>African philosophy: An introduction</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>23</b>	Okafor, F. U.	<i>Igbo philosophy of law</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>24</b>	Okere, T.	<i>African philosophy: A historico-hermeneutical investigation of the conditions of its possibility</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>25</b>	Okolo, C. B.	<i>African social and political philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>26</b>	Oladipo, O.	<i>Philosophy and the African experience</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>27</b>	Onyewuenyi, I. O.	<i>The African origin of Greek philosophy: An</i>	English/colonial Language

		<i>exercise in Afrocentrism</i>	
28	Oraegbunam, I. K. E.	Relevance of African philosophy to African integral development	English/colonial Language
29	Oruka, O.	<i>Sage philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
30	Oruka, O. H.	<i>Sage philosophy: Indigenous thinkers and modern debate on African philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
31	Osuagwu, I.	<i>A contemporary history of African philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
32	Ozumba, G. O.	African metaphysics	English/colonial Language
33	Kanu, I. A.	<i>African philosophy: An ontologico-existential hermeneutic approach to classical and contemporary issues</i>	English/colonial Language
34	Kanu, A. I.	<i>Igwebuiké as a trend in African philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
35	Okonkwo, J. O.	<i>Okwu aanahu onu: The basic principle of Igbo philosophy of language</i>	English/colonial Language
36	Wiredu, K.	<i>Philosophy and an African culture</i>	English/colonial Language

<b>37</b>	Wirendu, K.	<i>Conceptual decolonization in African philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>38</b>	Unah, J.	<i>Ontologico – epistemological background to authentic African socio- economic and political institutions</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>39</b>	Segun, G.	<i>African philosophy: Traditional Yoruba philosophy and contemporary African realities</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>40</b>	Senghor, L.	<i>On African socialism</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>41</b>	Uduigwomen, A. F.	Philosophy and the place of African philosophy	English/colonial Language
<b>42</b>	Okonkwo J. I.	<i>Uwa m: The Igbo phenomenology of existential perception</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>43</b>	Oguejiofor, J. O.	<i>In praise of African philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
<b>44</b>	Nyerere, J.	<i>Freedom and socialism</i>	English/colonial Language

45	Nyerere, J.	<i>Ujamaa: Essays on socialism</i>	English/colonial Language
46	Mbiti, J. S.	<i>African religions and philosophy</i>	English/colonial Language
47	Ikemnkia, M. N.	<i>African vitality: A step forward in African thinking</i>	English/colonial Language
48	Gbadegesin, S.	<i>African philosophy: Traditional Yoruba philosophy and contemporary African realities</i>	English/colonial Language
49	Awolowo, O.	<i>The people's republic</i>	English/colonial Language
50	Awolowo, O.	<i>The problems of Africa: The need for ideological appraisal</i>	English/colonial Language

A study of the first table, on the one hand, shows that philosophers who are not of African origin always wrote their works in their own local languages, knowing fully well that they were writing to an audience whose thinking had been structured by that particular language; they also knew that they were talking about a world that was structured by the local language. On the other hand, the second table shows that African philosophers were philosophizing in the language of their colonial masters. Those who wrote in English were colonized by Britain and those who wrote in French were colonized by France. There are cases where the authors brought in phrases or words from his or her local language in varying degrees as in the cases

of Mbiti, Kanu, Iroegbu, Njoku, Ekwuru, Edeh, Nyerere, Wiredu, Gyekye, Senghor, etc.; but in some other cases, such phrases or words did not appear, as in the works of Hountondji and Masolo. These tables will help the reader to see and understand the role that language played in the philosophical writings of Western philosophers and how the African local language has no place in the works that continue today as the canon of African philosophy. It also tells the story of how the expansion of the European empires has made the language and culture of African societies inaccessible, if not forgotten.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

This chapter focuses on the relationship between African philosophy and African language. In the discussion on this relationship, the perspectives of various African philosophers are highlighted. These perspectives are discussed under two headings: the conservative and the progressive perspectives or positions on this issue. This is followed by a reflection on the challenges of African languages, both from the Western and African hemispheres. A discussion on the challenges would go a long way in helping the researcher in deciding the best position to take on the relationship between African languages and African philosophy.

#### **4.1. African Philosophy and Language**

The relationship between language and philosophy or thought, or language and the rest of cognition has been an area of concern for scholars of various backgrounds: philosophers, psychologists, linguistic anthropologists, etc., (Vygotsky 1962; Luria 1976; Clark 1996; Gumperz and Levinson 1996; Elman et al 1997; Eckert 2000; Deak 2003; Boroditsky 2010; Leavitt 2011; Sera, Johnson and Kuo 2013). As scholars with competencies in their areas of interest, the emphasis has always differed regarding the connection between language and thought. In the area of African philosophy, the perspectives have also differed considerably. While some can be categorized as conservative, others are considered progressive. This categorization would guide the discussion on the perspectives of African philosophers on the relationship between language and African philosophy.

##### **4.1.1. Conservative Perspectives**

The conservative perspective refers to the perspectives of African thinkers who have argued that African local languages or mother tongue should be employed for the doing of African

philosophy. They believe, as Lupan (2015) did, that “much of what we take to be ‘just’ attention, ‘just’ learning, ‘just’ memory, ‘just’ categorization, ‘just’ perception may be importantly transformed by language such that the human form of these processes may rely on experience with and use of language” (p. 2).

A cursory glance at the history of African philosophy reveals that while Kagame (1956) understands the concept of being within the context of the Bantu language grammatical categories, thus, emphasizing the importance of language in philosophizing in Africa, Mbiti (1970) extends this importance not only to the study of philosophy but also religion, especially within the context of his study of African time. He writes:

There is great potential in African scholars studying African Traditional Religion and philosophy, with the aid of scientific tools and methodology and with the advantages of being part of the peoples of Africa, having almost unlimited access to information and speaking the languages which are the key to serious research and understanding of traditional religions and philosophy (p. 14)

Ki-Zerbo (1981) argues that language is the treasury house of a people’s philosophy, and, therefore, an indispensable toolbox for the philosophical enterprise:

Language is like a bank or museum in which, over the centuries, each ethnic group has deposited all it has built up and accumulated in the way of mental and material tools, memories and resources of the imagination. By means of an in-depth and wide-ranging study of the language (both infra and supra linguistic). (p. 94)

Corroborating Ki-Zerbo, Whorf (1993) within the context of the role of language in the establishment of a people’s identity adds that:



Particular languages embody distinctive ways of experiencing the world, of defining what we are. That is, we not only speak in particular languages, but more fundamentally become the person we become because of the particular community in which we grew up. Language, above all else, shapes our distinctive ways of being in the world, language then, is the carrier of a people's identity, the vehicle of a certain way of seeing things, experiencing and feeling, determinant of a particular outlook on life. (p. 158-159).

It is in this regard that Heidegger (2000) maintains that words and language are not just shells in which things are packed for spoken and written purposes. They go deeper to reveal a people's identity. He believes that it is in language that things first come to be and are. Still on this, Iroegbu (1994) asserts:

The linguistic expression of a people is definitional of their essential being and acting. Language is the soul of culture, the heart of the environment and the spirit that motivates and directs a people's life. The dynamism of the German language and the emotivism of the Italian, portray the being and the character of the two peoples. African thought in a foreign language is not fully African thought. African philosophy, done in a foreign language is not yet authentically African philosophy. (p. 134)

While talking about destiny, Gyekye (1987) brings out the link between language and philosophy as expressed by thinkers. Focusing on the Akan language and linguistic repertoire, he insists that language "does not only merely suggest, but may also embody philosophical perspectives" (p. 31) and that philosophical theses are strongly influenced by the characteristics of the language in which they are formulated: "whether a particular philosophical thesis or problem is language oriented or language neutral, it

must be determined within the structure of a given natural language” (p. 169). He writes further:

The first relates to the link that a number of thinkers find between language and thought, or more precisely in the present context, between language and metaphysics. They claim that there is some kind of reality antecedent to language that language is developed to express or depict. Language or linguistic structure, they hold, reflects a deep lying structure of reality or being. (p. 105)

A good number of the philosophers or thinkers who hold on to the conservative position understand it within the context of decolonization. And a principal thinker on this line is Kwasi Wiredu, who discussed it within the context of linguistic decolonization for cultural decolonization in the face of cultural alienation. The idea of cultural alienation is the product of the situation the African has found himself in, given the policies of colonization, his cultural heritage and the foreign cultural legacy bequeathed to him by his colonizers. Wiredu (1998) observes that:

The starting point of the problem is that the African who has learned philosophy in English, for example, has most likely become conceptually westernized to a large extent not by choice but by the force of historical circumstances. To that same extent he may have become de-Africanized. It does not matter if the philosophy learned is African philosophy. If that philosophy was academically formulated in English and articulated therein, the message was already substantially westernized, unless there was a conscious effort toward cross-cultural filtration. (p. 3)

Wiredu (1995) avers that the consequence of this is the superimposition of the Western categories of thought on the African thought system. Focusing on the Yoruba, Sodipo and

Hallen (1986) insist that there is a very strong and remarkable distinction between the Western and African conceptual schemes. Any attempt to understand one in relation to the other would lead not only to underdevelopment but many instabilities in the contemporary African society. Wiredu (1984), therefore, calls for the employment of African languages in every area of human endeavour, precisely in the area of philosophy. His emphasis on the need to use African languages in the doing of African philosophy is because of his linking of language with thought, and since philosophy has got to do with reasoning/thinking, Wiredu (2000) believes that African philosophy is not possible without African language. Wiredu (1998) asserts that: "...a language is not conceptually neutral; syntax and vocabulary are apt to suggest definite modes of conceptualization" (p. 3).

Ogunmodede (1993) maintains that as Africans, we have a personal responsibility towards expressing ourselves in our own language for the evolvement of a unique African philosophy. He observes that the present crop of African philosophers have continued to think in a vicious circle because they use borrowed Western linguistic categories to analyze African realities. He writes:

A person or group who uses who uses the mother tongue or indigenous language as medium of communicating his thoughts and experience will feel at home and do much better than if he were to do so with a foreign language which is not structured to his thought-patter and experience... If an alien language becomes imposed on a person as the official language of communication and learning, his thinking process would be affected and his achievement will definitely be lower than what it should normally be, since he is using a rather different and artificial means of self-expression. (p. 9)

Wa Thiong'o (1993) corroborates the position of Ogunmodede within the context of his decolonization of Africa. He holds that the colonization of the language of the African people is an attempt by the West to control the way the African people think and manage their daily lives, or even their perception of themselves and their universe. The implication is that the Western language that we use does not adequately represent our world and it places a limit on our thinking. Focusing on how it matters to philosophy, Ozumba (2004) posits that: "Language, therefore, matters to philosophy because everything concerning the activity of man originates in thought (thinking about ideas)" (p. 119). Thus, Uroh (1994), Keita (1999), Bewaji (2002) and Afolayan (2006) aver that the most suitable language for critical, scientific, technological, mathematical, educational discourses in Africa is the African language which he thinks is dynamic enough to encompass new phenomena.

#### **4.1.2. Progressive Perspectives**

The progressive position on the relationship between African philosophy and African language refers to those thinkers who may have agreed that there is need to do African philosophy in African languages but might not be firm in holding on to this position, since their positions are suggestive of alternative approach(es). Notable among these scholars is Bello (1987). He strongly believes that while language can be a pointer to a people's philosophy, language is not all that is required. The implication is that an emphasis on language is not enough and not a necessity: "The language of a people can be a good index or pointer to a people's philosophy, linguistic considerations alone cannot in themselves be decisive in philosophical disputes" (p. 5). He writes further that: "The African philosopher should be wary of over-emphasizing the importance of his vernacular if only for the sake of being able to communicate with fellow African philosophers" (p. 5). He, therefore, thinks that the use of only linguistic arguments as a knock-down argument for philosophical beliefs and doctrines might not yield the desired result. Thus, while African language would

be of help for the elucidation of African concepts, Bello (1987) strongly believes that the use of vernaculars for all philosophical activities would mar communication.

While Makinde (1988) agrees with the conservative school of thought on African philosophy and language, specifically that the limit of a people's language is the limit of their world, he also thinks that African languages are not developed enough for doing African philosophy. He posits that: "None of the African languages is satisfactory enough to be adopted as a continental language, rich enough for analytic philosophy and science" (p. 16). This explains why African thinkers are in a continuous struggle of trying to locate words in their mother tongue that capture others in foreign colonial languages. This, he thinks depreciates reasoning rather than helps it. With this understanding, he does not show any enthusiasm regarding doing African philosophy in African languages. Although Bewaji (2002) had rejected the position of Makinde (1988) who traced Africa's problem of under-development to poor language, tracing the development issues in Africa to the realm of the political, Tangwa (1992) calls for the domestication of English and French languages in Africa on the basis that they express great ideas, philosophies and paradigms.

Egbunu (2014), in his discussion on the problem of language in African philosophy, focusses on the Igala people of Nigeria. He holds that African language remains a very important factor in doing African philosophy, because understanding the African language is the principal feature that marks the African people and makes them different from others. However, he concludes that the absence of African local languages in the expression of African thoughts does not in any way make it unphilosophical. What he thinks that matters is that African philosophy is presented in a language that makes it intelligible. It is in this regard that Ezenabor (2004) writes that "...we need not write in African languages in order to write authentic African philosophy. What we need is to express our thoughts in a

language that is universally understandable and intelligible and avoid foreign categories and models” (p. 46).

Bassey, Enang and Nwaeke (2018) focusses on the related issues and the implications of doing African philosophy through linguistic imports that are sufficiently alien to the African people. They argue that only the use of African languages can guarantee authentic African philosophy, and thus call for the development of the African languages in such a manner that they compete with foreign languages. According to them: “... the herculean task remains for us to upgrade seriously on our indigenous languages; to make it more accessible and systematically structure, for others who have interest in Africa to fetch from the wellspring” (p. 1061). This notwithstanding, they do not believe that for African philosophy to be philosophy that it must be written, taught or researched in the African language:

Through this practical approach, we submit that foreign languages, need not be fundamentally opposed to African realities, and need not fundamentally impede the substance of African philosophy. From this realistic canvas, foreign languages need not be at the disservice of African philosophical reflections. (p. 1061)

At the heart of the perspective of the progressive school is that African philosophy does not cease to be African philosophy because it is written in a colonial language. This is not in any way to undermine the importance of African language in the African philosophical enterprise.

#### **4.2. The Dilemma of the African Language**

The dilemma of the African language focusses on those factors that affect the quality of African languages in the doing of African philosophy. Factors such as: globalization, which

is gradually turning the world into a global village; there is the problem of multilingualism or the diversity of African languages; the lack of appreciation of African languages by Africans, especially in schools; the undeveloped nature of the African language is itself a challenge as it is not able to conceptually encompass certain realities which western languages are able to. There is the problem of the education system run in Africa that is still deeply colonial or western in character, as it is still running on the educational structures set by the colonial masters. There is the problem of documentation, national integration and poor language policies and implementation. These challenges would be discussed thematically.

#### **4.2.1. Globalization**

Globalisation is from the words *globe*, *global*, *globally*. From the root words, globalisation can be defined literally as an attempt to make global. Tandon (1998) observes that globalisation is a new feature of the world economy and one of the most challenging developments in the movement of world history. Ohiorhenuan (1998) argues that it is currently affecting the physiology of the African society through its imposition of constraints on policy-making autonomy or independence of Africa vis-a-vis our capacity for authoritative allocation of scarce and critical societal values or resources, among other functions.

According to Fafowora (1998), globalisation refers to the process of the increasing economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries. It deals with increasing the breakdown of trade barriers and the increasing integration of world market. Oluabunwa (1999) gives further insight when he defines globalisation as an evolution which is systematically reconstructing integrative phases among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and other

fields of endeavour. Omoregbe (2007) avers that “globalisation was not something that was planned or decided at a conference table by certain states or individuals. Rather, it is a natural process of socialization, a process of world history, a phase in the world historical process” (p. 152).

The world is currently globalizing, and as the world moves on, every part of it, including Africa, cannot avoid moving with it. Part of the movement is that some languages are taking the center stage as their countries are at the heart of world economy and politics. These countries determine movements, trade, currency, etc. The consequence is that the languages of these nations automatically become more relevant for the relevance of individuals at the international level. Thus, there would be more emphasis on these languages than on the local languages in Africa. According Bamgbose (2011):

As far as language choice is concerned, the assumption seems to be that the language of globalization has to be a language of wider communication such as English, since it is only such a language that can facilitate maximum access and participation in the global village. (p. 5)

This is the reality that has continued to hunt African indigenous languages. When you have learnt some African languages, only to move to the next state to discover that no one else understands what you are saying, neither are you able to understand what others are saying.

#### **4.2.2. Diversity in African languages**

One of the cases that have been raised against the use of local languages for philosophy in Africa, or against the return local languages in Africa in post-colonial Africa is the complex and multiple language situation in the continent. Pwalikova-Vilhanova (2018),



Roy-Campbell (2006) and UNESCO (2003) observe that there are more than two thousand spoken languages in Africa, and that over 30% of the world's languages are spoken in Africa.

This linguistic diversity, based on the Single Origin Theory of Migration, is traced to the understanding that life began from Africa and, thus, Africans, unlike other peoples of the globe, had more time to develop their languages. While building their empires, European kingdoms focused on assimilation, as in the cases of the Greek and Roman empires that forced their colonies to speak Greek or Latin. This was different in Africa, as languages were allowed to flourish and develop alongside the other(s). Instead of assimilation, African colonies were related to through interpreters. Therefore, while European empires assimilated languages that were not widely spoken, the African empires promoted diversity in the use of language.

The questions that arise at the call for a return to African languages for African philosophy is: to which language would African philosophers return to? If everyone were to write his own philosophy in his own language, who would be able to have access to the content of the philosophy? In countries like Nigeria where you have more than 250 spoken languages, the colonial language which is English turns out to be an easier option in terms of communication and, in fact, a unifying factor among the diverse peoples who must stay together as a nation. This constitutes a very serious challenge regarding the question of the use of African language for African philosophy.

#### **4.2.3. Local languages not appreciated**

The educational system instituted by the colonial government was done in such a manner that local languages had no place in that system. This is still obtainable, even after the attainment of independence. In schools in Africa, students as young as 5 to 20 years are punished for speaking their mother tongue. Nwesi (2014) observes that the punishments for the crime of speaking a person's mother tongue differ:

The most common one in Uganda is wearing a dirty sack until you meet someone else speaking their mother tongue and then you pass the sack unto them. In some schools, there are specific pupils and students tasked with compiling lists of fellow pupils and students speaking mother tongues. This list is then handed over to a teacher who is responsible for punishing these language rule-breakers. (p. 1)

There were times that students were caned at school for speaking their mother tongue. This created much fear to the point that even at home, pupils were not sure of the language to use for communication, as they feared being reported at school for speaking their mother tongue. This attitude towards our mother tongue shows the level of our inferiority complex and our lack of confidence in our local African languages. Bamgbose, (2011), therefore, observes that:

One would have expected speakers of an African language to be proud of their language, but quite often, one encounters negative attitudes. The common attitude is that of elites who prefer education in the imported language for their children. Taking their cue from the elites, it is not surprising that parents belonging to lower social groups also want similar education for their children. (p. 5)

These punishments meted out to pupils or students at the ages between 5 and 20 leaves them with the lesson that our local languages are useless. Wearing of a sack-cloth sends the message that those who speak their mother tongue are uncivil, savage and primitive. Thus, the colonial languages become a way forward towards the promised land of civility and life, even 60 years after independence. The arguments presented in schools for the criminalization of mother tongue are that there is need to improve the English language of the students and second, there is need to foster national unity. And yet, there is no place where speaking the same language has guaranteed unity, neither is there a time when the using of mother tongue has stopped the learning of English language. The problem has always been about defective pedagogy and the absence of role models.

#### **4.2.4. Undeveloped nature of African languages**

Connected to the problem of documentation is the challenge of the underdeveloped nature of African languages that places them in a position of disadvantage when it comes to philosophical reflection. The advantage of documentation is that it provides the ground for development over a period of time in history. This poverty of African languages, in the contention of Makinde (1993), is the basis for the inability of Africa to contribute to scientific knowledge. Some African languages are yet to be put into writing so as to be used in schools, and those that have been put into writing also need to be developed so as to cope with domains and realities that are outside of the domain where the local language is spoken.

Only a scientific language can bring about development in the area of science. Makinde (1993) writes that:

The reason for underdevelopment in language is hinged on the fact that unlike the continental languages of Europe which shows similarity in logical grammar, African languages possess no such similarity in logical grammar. Not only does this poverty affect the development of an African science, it has become a stumbling block to philosophic activity. (p. 11)

Writing further on this, Makinde (1993) avers that: “It has not been possible to do African (Yoruba) philosophy in the native language. This is so because our language is not yet developed to the extent that its vocabularies and logical syntax can handle abstract philosophical discourse” (p. 12). However, Makinde believes that one of the problems of using African languages for Africa philosophy is that it is under-developed, Horton (1967), Ruch (1974), Oruka (1975) and Wiredu (1991) rather think that the problem with African languages is not under-development but that they are not subjected to formal analysis, interpretation and clarification.

#### **4.2.5. Educational system still Western**

The educational system is a battleground for the development of African languages. It was a system of education that was founded by the colonizers during the colonial period, as European colonial model which continues to implement the colonial linguistic and cultural policies (Migge and Isabelle 2007). Even in their absence, it has continued to serve the political, economic and cultural purposes of the colonial government (Spencer 1971 & 1985 and Pennycook 1998, 2001 & 2002), which instilled European morality in their subjects and formed easily available and cheap resources for their economic interests. This reshaped the linguistic make-up of many regions in Africa which had far-reaching negative consequences on language and education. Countries in Africa, even after independence, have continued to teach their citizens in

colonial languages, while the local languages are taught in a manner that does not show any commitment on both the students and staff.

This was, however, not true of all the colonial schools. The schools that were managed by the missionaries ensured that education was carried out in native languages. They favoured the indigenous medium of instruction over English or French, out of a pragmatic purpose. They discovered that the faith was better transmitted through the local language of the people. According to Awoniyi (1976), the school thus became the institutional agent of the church, with the people's mother tongue as the media. However, education generally focused on colonial values and the understanding of the people's values through the colonial eye.

#### **4.2.6. Problem of documentation**

Although Africa had recorded feats of civilization before her encounter with Europe, Jahn (1958) maintains that two cultural achievements were absent: architecture and writing. This has further crippled the applause expected of African civilization, since modern science rates writing as a basic tenet of civilization. For those who have writing are, according to Jahn, "thought to be capable of retaining past experience and so of hastening from progress to further progress, while those without writing are said to be at the mercy of historical accident" (p. 185). Rettova (2002) observes that the "lack of writing in African languages is the main obstacle to writing African philosophy in African languages and to a more effective elaboration of the philosophical thoughts contained in folk wisdom" (p. 150).

The consequence of the absence of record is that while Western philosophy is the record of the philosophies of individual persons, for instance, we have Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Hegel, Russell, Whitehead, Rawls, Rorty etc., in African philosophy, it is different. Afolayan (2006) writes that, “Instead of the gallery of individual philosophers who symbolize the cultures confrontation with its experiences, ... there is an attempt to summarize the philosophical enterprise in Africa into a collective, communal framework” (p. 22). Criticizing oral tradition as the cause of group philosophy, Appiah (1992) thinks that, “Oral tradition has a habit of only transmitting consensus” (p.92). Based on the collective character of African philosophy, Hountondji (1976) describes African philosophy as simply a myth, the myth of unanimity and consensus. It is not surprising that he rejects concepts such as Igbo philosophy, Akan philosophy, Bantu philosophy or Dogon philosophy.

In relation to doing African philosophy in African languages, the lack of documentation poses a very serious challenge. There is the concern of the laws of explanation to be employed by contemporary African philosophers, since there is no record. The absence of a record makes it difficult, given the complexities in African languages.

#### **4.2.7. The problem of national integration**

Some scholars have argued that the use of the colonial language is the major impediment to national unity and development (Lodhi 1993, Mhina 1972, Indakwa 1978). There are also those who argue that multilingualism in African to the cause of national disunity and under-development (Simpson (2008). Lodhi (1993) also argues that:

The abundance of languages in Africa has meant enormous problems of communication, in education and as far as political stability is concerned. It is demanding too much of the human and material resources to produce newspapers, radio programs and teaching materials in several languages in each country, for example. Multi-linguism is, therefore, an important factor of under-development which in turn perpetuates multi-linguism and slows down development activities. (p. 80).

For instance, in Nigeria, there is no local language as a national language that holds the Nigerian people together or that unites the people in terms of governance, and there is no agreement on a national local language that would hold the Nigerian people together. Instead, every language, about 250 in number, is always in relation to the particular ethnic group that speaks it. This has also affected the doing of philosophy in local languages. There is no way every Nigerian will understand the 250 languages, and if every Nigerian philosopher is to do philosophy in his own language, there will be the problem of communication. It might not be enough to do philosophy in local languages, just for its sake, when no one is able to understand the language.

In the table below, the researcher makes a presentation of the different countries in Africa with all the languages spoken therein. The interest is to know the national languages that have been endorsed by the different countries for their nations and the other languages that are obtainable among the people.

**Table 4.1. African countries and spoken languages**

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE	OTHER LANGAUGES

1.	Algeria	Arabic, Berber, Four dialects	French
2	Angola	Portuguese	Bantu
3	Benin	French	Fon, Yoruba and other tribal languages
4	Botswana	Setswana and English (A business language that is widely spoken)	
5	Burkina Faso	French	Native languages spoken by 90% of the population
6	Burundi	Kirundi and French	Swahili
7	Cameroon	French and English	24 major languages
8	Cape Verde	Portuguese	Kabuverdianu (It is a blend of Portuguese and local words)
9	Central African Republic	French, Sangho (Lingua Franca and National Language)	Banda, Gbaya and other tribal languages
10	Chad	French and Arabic	Sara and more than 120 local languages and dialects
11	Comoros	Arabic and French	Shikomoro (It is a blend of Kiswahili and Arabic)
12	Democratic Republic of Congo	French	Lingala, Kingwana, Kikongo, Tshiluba



13	Cote d'Ivoire	French	60 local languages
14	Djibouti	French and Arabic	Somali, Afar
15	Egypt	Arabic	English and French
16	Equatorial Guinea	Spanish and French	Ibo, Bubi, Fang, Pidgin English
17	Eritrea	Tigrinya, Arabic and English	Tigre, Afar, Bedawi, Kunama and other Cushitic languages
18	Ethiopia	Amharic	Tigrinya, Oromo, Gurage, Somali and 80 other local languages
19	Gabon	French	More than 6 Bantu languages spoken
20	Gambia	English	Madinka, Wolof, Fula and other local languages
21	Ghana	English	Akan, Ewe, Ga, Adangme, Moshi- Dagomba and other local languages
22	Guinea	French (spoken by 15-20%)	8 other local languages
23	Guinea Bissau	Portuguese	Crioulo and other languages
24	Kenya	English, Kiswahili	Many other indigenous languages
25	Lesotho	Sesotho and English	Zulu and Xhosa

26	Liberia	English (spoken by 20%)	20 other local languages
27	Libya	Arabic	Italian and English
28	Madagascar	French and Malagasy	None
29	Malawi	English and Nyanja	Lomwe, Tumbuka, Yao and other languages
30	Mali	French	Bambara, Arabic and other dialects
31	Mauritania	Arabic	Pulaar, Soninke, Wolof, French and Hassaniya Arabic
32	Mauritius	English and French	Creole, Hindi, Urdu, Hakka and Bhojpuri
33	Morocco	Arabic	Berber dialects and French
34	Mozambique	Portuguese (spoken by 27%)	Makhuwa, Tsonga, Lomwe, Sena and other indigenous languages
35	Namibia	English (spoken by 7%)	Afrikaans 60%; German 32% and other indigenous languages
36	Niger	French	Hausa and Djerma
37	Nigeria	English	Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and other indigenous languages
38	Reunion	French	Creole

39	Rwanda	Rwanda, French and English	Kiswahili
40	Saint Helena	English	None
41	Sao Tome and Principe	Portuguese	None
42	Senegal	French	Wolof, Pulaar, Jola and Mandinka
43	Seychelles	English and French	Creole
44	Sierra Leone	English	Mende, Temne, Krio
45	Somali	Somali	Arabic, Italian, English
46	South Africa	Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Pedi, Sesotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Tswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, isiZulu	None
47	Sudan	Arabic	Nubian and other dialects
48	South Sudan	Arabic	Nubian and other dialects
49	Swaziland	English and siSwati	
50	Tanzania	Kiswahili, Kiunguju and English (language for business and higher education)	Arabic and some other local languages
51	Togo	French	Ewe and Mina in the South and Kabye and Dogomba in the North

52	Tunisia	Arabic	French
53	Uganda	English	Ganda and other local languages
54	Zambia	English	More than 80 indigenous languages
55	Zimbabwe	English	Chishona, Sindebele and other local languages

**Table 4.2. African countries with colonial languages as national languages**

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE
1	Angola	Portuguese
2	Benin	French
3	Burkina Faso	French
4	Cameroon	French and English
5	Cape Verde	Portuguese
6	Democratic Republic of Congo	French
7	Cote d'Ivoire	French
8	Djibouti	French and Arabic
9	Egypt	Arabic
10	Equatorial Guinea	Spanish and French
11	Gabon	French
12	Gambia	English
13	Ghana	English
14	Guinea	French (spoken by 15-20%)

15	Guinea Bissau	Portuguese
16	Liberia	English (spoken by 20%)
17	Libya	Arabic
18	Mali	French
19	Mauritania	Arabic
20	Mauritius	English and French
21	Morocco	Arabic
22	Mozambique	Portuguese (spoken by 27%)
23	Namibia	English (spoken by 7%)
24	Niger	French
25	Nigeria	English
26	Reunion	French
27	Saint Helena	English
28	Sao Tome and Principe	Portuguese
29	Senegal	French
30	Seychelles	English and French
31	Sierra Leone	English
32	Sudan	Arabic
33	South Sudan	Arabic
34	Togo	French
35	Tunisia	Arabic
36	Uganda	English
37	Zambia	English
38	Zimbabwe	English

The table above shows that there are 38 countries in Africa, out of the 55 African countries, that are still using colonial languages as their national languages. Countries that use Arabic have also been added to this number given that Arabic is not an indigenous language but it came through the contact of Africa with non-African countries. 38 countries stand for 69% of the countries in Africa that are still using foreign languages as national languages. This points to the difficulty of using local languages for African philosophy.

**Table 4.3. African countries with a local languages as national language**

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE
1	Ethiopia	Amharic
2	Somali	Somali

The table above shows that only two countries, out of the 55 countries in Africa, that have their indigenous language as national language. The two countries constitute only 4% of the countries in Africa. This percentage throws light on the difficulties of doing African philosophy in African languages, as there is yet to be a profound subscription to our indigenous languages.

**Table 4.4. African countries with both colonial and local languages as national languages**

No.	COUNTRY	NATIONAL LANGUAGE
1.	Algeria	Arabic, Berber, Four dialects
2	Botswana	Setswana and English (A business language that is widely spoken)
3	Burundi	Kirundi and French
4	Central African Republic	French, Sangho (lingua franca and national language)

5	Eritrea	Tigrinya, Arabic and English
6	Kenya	English, Kiswahili
7	Lesotho	Sesotho and English
10	Madagascar	French and Malagasy
11	Malawi	English and Nyanja
12	South Africa	Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, Pedi, Sesotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Tswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa, isiZulu
13	Swaziland	English and siSwati
14	Tanzania	Kiswahili, Kiunguju and English (language for business and higher education)

The table above shows that there are 14 countries in Africa, out of the 55 African countries, that have both colonial and local or indigenous languages as national languages. This shows that only 25% of African countries use both languages as national languages. If this is to be added to the countries that use only indigenous languages as national languages, it would amount to 29% of the countries in Africa that have indigenous languages as national languages. The implication is that the use of indigenous languages for African philosophy would be more effective in 29% of the countries in Africa. The quality of this 29% is dependent on the depth of the indigenous languages in relation to the colonial languages that serve as national languages alongside the indigenous languages.

#### **4.2.8. Poor language policies and implementation**

Part of the problems that have affected the local languages in Africa is the issue of poor language policies by the government, policies which should protect local languages and give them their place in the community of languages. Lodhi (1993) states that:

As far as language policies are concerned, it is difficult to find a comprehensive document in African countries. Language policies are usually taken for granted, and very often they are defined in decrees or directives from the ministries of education stating the language or languages of instruction at different levels of the educational system. In a few cases, it is mentioned in the national constitution i.e. in Egypt and Nigeria. Normally, the language in which a country's constitution is written is generally accepted as the official language of the country. (p. 81)

In places where such laws or policies might exist, there is always a poor political will to ensure implementation. For instance, the African Union as a body have developed several policies on the protection and promotion of indigenous languages for member countries, however, the problem is that of implementation. For instance:

- a. on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1963 when the Organization of African Unity, now African Union, was founded in Addis Ababa it was agreed in article xxix, that the working languages of the organization and all its institutions should be African languages;
- b. on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1966, the assembly of heads of state and government passed a decision and founded the OAU Inter-African Bureau of Languages (BIL) which had the principal task of supporting and empowering African languages by encouraging their greater use in the domains of life;
- c. in 1976, the OAU Charter for Africa was adopted in Port Louis, Mauritius by the African Heads of State and Government. This document, in article 6, section 2 called on member states to introduce the teaching of national languages for the purpose of development;



- d. in 1986, the OAU Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa adopted the Language Plan of Action for Africa, which affirmed the fundamental place of the African language as instruments of national development and communication. This document all called on governments to develop language policies for their countries that places indigenous languages in active use;
- e. between 26-30 August 1966, charter held in Accra, which emerged from a Pan-African Seminar on *The Problems and Prospects of the Use of African Languages in Education*, stressed the need of educating the African people in their indigenous languages;
- f. in 2006, ten years after the Pan-African Seminar held in Accra, the AU formed a specialized continental language agency: Academy of African Languages (ACALAN) with the mandate of developing and promoting African languages in partnership with ex-colonial languages; it was hoped that this would bring about the rehabilitation of African culture, education and language;

Unfortunately, since the emergence of policies in OAU assemblies in different parts of Africa since 1960, these policies hardly reflect in the language policies of member countries. Pwalikova-Vilhanova (2018) observes that:

A wish to impose a single indigenous language in the interest of national unity and development, the need to develop African languages for an emergent African has repeatedly been expressed, but rarely implemented. Most leaders made affirmations that local African languages should be empowered and considered as national languages, but these proclamations were often only rhetorical. (p. 250).

Focusing on the rhetoric on policies by governments in Africa, which only ended as rhetoric, he added that:

Most African countries have lacked a coherent government policy on language development and the position of African languages have always been very ambiguous. Many African countries have made a declaration of intent to adopt a multilingual approach with the objective of promoting and developing African languages and empowering people through African languages. (p. 251).

The problem has always been either the lack of policies or the lack of the political will to implement those that are available. Since there may be no language policies in this regard or the political will for the implementation of existing policies, the consequence is that the colonial *status quo* continues to take hold, and most African countries continue to use the former colonial language as the primary language of formal and higher education. Bamgbose, (2011) avers that:

Even when there is a genuine policy in favor of an indigenous language, failure to indicate implementation steps and procedures as well as adequate provision of funds may stultify the policy. In fact, it may rightly be stated that non-implementation is the bane of language planning in Africa. The effect of defective language planning is to vitiate all attempts to enhance the status and roles of African languages. (p. 6)

The thought about doing African philosophy in African languages cannot omit a discourse on the need for language policies and the political will of appropriate authorities to implement them.

From the foregoing, Abdulaziz (1977) develops a typology of the language situation in Africa, which is as follows:

1. Countries having one indigenous language that is spoken by a vast majority of the people.
  - a. As a mother tongue:
    - i. Botswana: Setswana
    - ii. Burundi: Kirundi
    - iii. Lesotho: Sesotho
    - iv. Rwanda: Kinyarwanda
    - v. Somalia: Somali
    - vi. Swaziland: Seswati
  - b. As a lingua franca
    - i. Central African Republic: Sango
    - ii. Ethiopia: Amharic
    - iii. Kenya: Swahili
    - iv. Tanzania: Swahili
    - v. Mali: Bambara
    - vi. Senegal: Wolof
    - vii. Sudan: Arabic
2. Countries with a favorable basis for developing an African language with a national status
  - a. Countries having one predominant African language
    - i. Dahomi: Ge

- ii. Ghana: Akan/Twi
- iii. Malawi: Chichewa/Conyanja
- iv. Niger: Hausa
- v. Togo: Ewe
- vi. Burkina Faso: Mosi/More
- vii. Zimbabwe: Shona

3. Countries that have several indigenous languages that compete with each other

- i. Nigeria: Hausa/Igbo/Yoruba
- ii. Sierra Leone: Mende/Temme
- iii. Zaire (Congo): Chiluba/Kikingo/Kituba/Kingwana

4. Countries having no predominant indigenous languages

- i. Cameroon
- ii. Ivory Coast
- iii. Mozambique

Lodhi (1993) strongly believes that the African countries in the first two groups, i.e. “1” and “2” have a far better foundation, given the linguistic circumstances of the countries, of developing a national language. This is because these countries either have an indigenous language spoken by a vast majority of her people or because they have a predominant indigenous language spoken by the people in spite of the presence of other languages.

These problems, among others, are at the heart of the difficulty of doing African philosophy in African languages. However, the problems are situations that can be corrected through right measures, policies and political will, and the African language given its rightful place in the world community of languages.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The present chapter provides a summary of the previous chapters of this research so as to have a comprehensive grasp of the positions expressed by scholars during the course of this research. This is followed by a brief evaluation of the positions expressed, which would lead to the conclusion of this dissertation.

#### 5.1. Summary

The first chapter discussed the background to the issue of concern, that is, the place of African languages in the process of philosophizing. The background covers the discussions among African scholars on the relationship between African languages and philosophy, the colonial impact on the local languages in Africa, the limitations of African languages, etc. Scholars of particular thought pattern are agreed that the use of foreign languages, like English, French, German, etc., in doing African philosophy, is an obstacle to African philosophy itself (Afolayan 2006; Bewaji 2002; Wiredu 1995, 1998, 2000; Gyekye 1995; Ogunmodede 1993; Wa Thiongo' 1993; Sodipo and Hellen 1986; Kagame 1956). This is anchored on the understanding that particular languages shape particular thoughts, reveal the way a people relate to their real world and also govern their relationship with this world; thus, to choose a language is to have chosen a pattern of thought which will have direct consequences on the outcome and relevance of such a thought. It positioned this study to emphasize the fundamental place of language in African philosophy and to attend to fundamental questions that bother the minds of African thinkers. The first chapter limited this work to the African world, as it concerned itself with the relationship between African philosophy and African language.

In the second chapter, the researcher attempted to articulate the conceptual understanding of language and African philosophy. This is done to help organize and distinguish the ideas

employed in the analysis of the relationship between African language and African philosophy. The two major concepts that were studied in-debt were language and African philosophy, with particular attention to the characteristics and functions of language and the development of African philosophy. This was followed by the formulation of theories to explain, predict and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge, within the limits of the critical boundary assumptions. The section on the theoretical framework focussed on theories that would be of great significance in the interpretation and understanding of the present research: Cognitive Semantic Theory, the Picture Theory of Language and Afrizealotism Philosophical Theory. The theoretical framework, provided the lens for analysis, explaining the nature of the relationship between African philosophy and African language. In the section of the empirical framework, the research reviewed major literatures that have been written on the subject matter of the relationship between language and philosophy and African philosophy and African language. The works written by three Western scholars and five African scholars were reviewed. The idea was to listen to the opinions of these authors to strengthen the background to this study.

The third chapter focused on the dynamics of language, thought and the world. However, it began from the colonial politics of language in Africa which is at the base of the African philosophical reflection on the relationship between language and philosophy. It further studied how the factors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, racism and colonialism formed the basis for the emergence of African philosophy for the restoration of the identity of the African people. Tracing the problem to the colonial policies, it discussed the necessity of the decolonization of the African mind which has already been formed after a particular pattern by the colonial era. This section also studied the perspectives of philosophers from the history of ancient philosophy to contemporary philosophy to see the diversity and unity in the thoughts of these philosophers regarding the relationship between thought and language. There was also a study

of fifty works of Western philosophers and fifty works of African philosophers in order to understand the languages in which they penned down their philosophies, so as to further determine the effect of colonization on the African mind.

The fourth chapter focused on the relationship between African philosophy and African language. In the discussion on this relationship, the perspectives of various African philosophers were highlighted. These perspectives were discussed under two headings: the conservative (Afolayan 2006; Bewaji 2002; Keita 199; Wiredu 1995, 1998, 2000; Gyekye 1995; Uroh 1994; Ogunmodede 1993; Wa Thiong'o 1993; Sodipo and Hellen 1986; Kagame 1956) and the progressive (Bello 1987; Makinde 1988; Tangwa 1992; Ezenabor 2004; Ojimba, A. C., Haaga, P. T. and Ikuji, B. Y. 2015; Bassey, Enang and Nwaeke 2018) perspectives or positions on this issue. This was followed by a reflection on the challenges of African languages both from the Western and African hemispheres. The issues discussed include: globalization, multilingualism of African languages, the unappreciation of local languages, the under-developed nature of African languages, the educational system that is still Western in character, the problems of documentation, national integration and poor language policies and implementation.

This study discovered that the use of African language for African philosophy in contemporary Africa would be affected by a couple of factors, which include the following:

- a. The absence of literatures on African philosophy that are written in African languages which would be used by teachers for teaching in the classrooms. So far, the discourse on the need for African languages in African philosophy has remained at the theoretical level.
- b. Even if there are available literature for African philosophy, African philosophy teachers have not been sufficiently trained in their respective or general languages to

undertake such tasks. There are still a huge number of African philosophers who do not know how to read or write in their mother tongue, let alone write down their philosophy in their native language.

- c. There is an obvious lack of educational materials on the development of African languages specifically.
- d. There is no significant commitment on the part of the government to ensure the implementation of such an idea; moreover, the implementation would presuppose that there is a law, but there seems to be no such law.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

The major concern that has led to the emergence of schools of thought on the relationship between African philosophy and the African language has been articulated thus by Rettova (2002):

Since the beginning of the development of the corpus of African philosophical writings, African philosophy has been written exclusively in European languages. African philosophers write in English, in French, in Portuguese, in German, in Latin, and if we may include the non-African authors who made substantial contributions to African philosophy and the languages into which the major works of African philosophy were translated, we would arrive at a large number of European (and possibly even Asian) languages, but very few, if any, African ones. (pp. 129-150)

As one begins to philosophize on the need for teaching, writing and researching philosophy in African languages, one cannot but realize the inherent difficulties in achieving this project. The challenges or the existential realities of the African language listed above raises questions as regards the practicality of the thought of doing African philosophy in African language. It is easier to theorize about the need to do African philosophy in African languages, in terms of an

immediate project, when one does not know the limitations of the African language. This is not to say that an understanding of the limitations of the African language makes one to disregard the importance of doing African philosophy in African languages; the help that such a knowledge offers is that it aids the African philosopher to decipher the most practicable path to follow while working towards the overcoming of the limitations of language. This is a knowledge that is lacking in the works of the conservative school on this matter.

Obviously, doing African philosophy in African languages, when not up to eight out of the fifty-five countries in the continent use indigenous language as their national language, would be practically impossible. In this case, more than seventy percent of African countries still have colonial languages as their national languages, and even those who have their local languages as national languages are still struggling with the bites of globalisation. More so, the multiplicity of languages also poses another threat: in the northern part of African, you have more than 200 spoken local languages; in the central and eastern parts of Africa, you have more than 150 spoken local languages; around the Niger-Congo area, you have more than 1000 spoken local languages; in the western part of southern Africa, you have more than 30 spoken local languages, etc.

In the midst of this multi-lingualism, the question that arises is: in what language would African philosophy be presented? If every African philosopher presents his philosophy in his own language, it would mean that for other philosophers to access it, they must be able to understand several languages other than theirs. However, this is not a strong reason not to do African philosophy in African languages, because if need be, a translation can be done from the local language to a language that every other person can understand. After all, the works of the German philosophers that we read today were all translated, and in fact many philosophers have had to learn German, Greek, English, French, etc., so as to read the original works of particular philosophers. Thus, writing in African local languages would encourage an

intellectual cross-linguistic scholarship. However, the question of the multiplicity of languages in Africa is one that the African philosopher must respond to in his consideration of the employment of African languages for African philosophy.

In the face these challenges, where do we go from here? Achebe (1975) and Ojimba et al (2015) had spoken of the need to employ the language of the colonizer as an *instrumentum laborat* (a working tool) so as to reach out to the colonizer in a language that he can understand, regarding the implications of his disintegration and distortion of the culture of the African people. But this does not apply in the area of philosophy, for African philosophy is not a letter or a message to the colonizer or a counter-argument to the position of the colonizer. African philosophy must go beyond reactions to address fundamental issues regarding the existence of the African personality. Of course, philosophy is open to any tool that is available for the furthering of its purpose; however, philosophy is not an effort to prove to the colonizer that the black person is capable of what the colonizer has denied him of having the capacity for. And since African philosophy goes beyond this, it then means that Achebe and Ojimba have not provided enough reason for doing African philosophy in Western languages.

However, an interesting part of the position of Achebe is that while he speaks of the language of the colonizer, he refers to the English language; he brings in a new concept regarding the English when he talks about "...a new English, still in full communication with its ancestral home, but altered to suit new African surrounding" (p. 44). This new English is different from the English that was spoken by the colonizer because as an artist, he has now weaved the elements of his culture and intuition around the 'old English' to now make it 'new English'. It is now such that while the African, although not originally an English person, hears the 'new English', he understands it differently, not within the context of the framework of the Western world, but within his own African conceptual framework. The new English is the product of a



decolonized African mind which the colonizer listens to with a different meaning, as it is now shaped by the African worldview and history.

This new method of speaking the colonizer's language in an African way, meaning that it is spoken in a manner that integrates the Western and African worldviews into one, such that the English language becomes an African language and the African language becomes English language, is conceptualized as the *Igwebuiké* approach. The concept *Igwe bu ike* is an Igbo proverb and also a typical Igbo name. Igbo proverbs and names are among the major traditional vessels where African philosophy, religion and culture have continued to be preserved. They contain the wisdom and experience of the African people, usually of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression (Kanu 2018a&b). The expression, *Igwebuiké* is a combination of three Igbo words. It can be understood as a word or a sentence: as a word, it is written as *Igwebuiké*, and as a sentence, it is written as, *Igwe bu ike*, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. Literally, *Igwe* is a noun which means number or multitude, usually a large number or population. The number or population in perspective are entities with ontological identities and significances, which are, however, part of an existential order in which every entity is in relation to the other. *Bu* is a verb, which means *is*. *Ike* is a noun, which means *strength* or *power* (Kanu 2019). *Igwe*, *bu* and *Ike* put together, means 'number is strength' or 'number is power' (Kanu 2017a).

Beyond the linguistic expression of *Igwebuiké* lies a deeper meaning. *Igwebuiké* is an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations (Kanu 2016a). *Igwebuiké* at this level means *otu obi* (one heart and one soul) – *cor unum et anima una*. In a metaphoric sense, it is used within the Igbo linguistic setting to refer to relational engagement in the world, accomplished in solidarity and complementarity, and the powerful and insurmountable force therein (Kanu 2017b). The closest words to it in English are complementarity, solidarity and harmony. *Igwebuiké* provides an ontological horizon that

presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations; one that can only survive through complementarity. The *Igwebuiké* approach, therefore, is about synthesizing the language of the colonizer in such a manner that it serves the interest and the worldview of the African in such a manner that the English language becomes a local language and expresses local realities.

Within this context, the *Igwebuiké* approach presents African languages and the colonial languages as not being fundamentally opposed to each other; and that both can be at the service of each other for the achievement of the fundamental purposes of African philosophy. In fact, rather than being the enemy of the African language, the colonial languages are understood as complements of the local languages in Africa. In this new relationship between African language and colonial languages, language is understood as not being a completed project but as one that is dynamic and still growing. Where the African language fails, the African language becomes a complement, especially on typical human realities that are universal or sometimes peculiar to other worlds outside of Africa, and when the colonial language fails, especially in relation to typical African realities, the African language would complement the colonial language.

The need for the use of the colonial language at the moment is also based on the fact that African philosophy cannot stop because Africans do not understand their language or because their language is limited. Between now and the time when the African language can be developed further to serve the interest of African philosophy in a profound manner in African languages, African philosophy done in colonial languages does not cease to be African philosophy, as long as the colonial language is employed in such a manner that it works according to the conceptual framework of the African world. When we are able, as a continent to close up the vacuum in our indigenous languages, then they can be employed fully in the doing of African philosophy. In this case, while it is agreed that there is a strong connection

between thought and language, it is not only the language that shapes thought. A people's worldview can shape a person's thought too, even when expressed in a different language. More so, that a person is speaking, writing or researching in a colonial language does not mean that the person is still under the bondage of colonial ideals. Therefore, it is not just language that determines the authenticity of a philosophy, in this case, African philosophy (Ezenabor 2004; Basse, Enang and Nwaeke 2018). Going by the *Igwebuiké* approach, the colonial language and the African worldview would work together to fill up the missing link. And it is on this ground that the works of African philosophy written in colonial languages remain authentic African philosophies.

There is always a typical African reality and a typical human reality. In doing African philosophy, it might be necessary to understand or use African language for the understanding of a typical African reality which might not find expression in the colonial language. However, African philosophy does not concern itself with only typical African realities. There are also other typical human realities that African philosophy concerns herself with. These typical human realities can be well expressed in languages outside of the African language. Is this to say that the African language development project be abandoned? No! If language reflects the structure of a people's world and reality (Imbo 1998 and Brown 2006), it becomes important that African philosophers must make an effort to develop a tradition of writing in African languages, if African philosophy must perdure in African languages; this culture has to begin from the early stages of the development of the child.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

There is, therefore, the need to achieve the following for the integration of African languages in the philosophical enterprise.

- a. It is necessary to begin educating young Africans with local languages and about local languages right from their elementary education to their tertiary education, especially beginning from their first three years in school. This would help the African child develop confidence in his mother tongue or local language before making a transition to another language. If children are exposed to imported languages at their early age and are expected to do philosophy in their local languages, that would be difficult.
- b. Major information regarding the national life of countries in Africa should be given in the local language of the people so as to underscore the importance of the local language in both the public and private domains. Even if it does not become the national language, major aspects of the national life which include: constitution, communication, participatory democracy, media, access to justice and information regarding health should be communicated through the local language.
- c. For the purpose of harnessing support towards local languages, the United Nations should include local languages in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This would help in giving it the attention that it deserves. African countries also need to include this in their annual budgets and create a well laid out program for the development of local languages.
- d. There is the need for the standardization of African languages beyond where they are at the moment. Some African languages are yet to be put into writing so as to be used in schools, and those that have been put into writing also need to be developed so as cope with domains and realities that are outside of the domain where the local language is spoken. If this is not addressed, then it is difficult to discuss the use of African languages in doing African philosophy.
- e. There is the need to restructure the educational systems in Africa that are still operating on the structures of the colonial educational policies. There is need for a system of

education that puts into consideration the local categories for the education of the child.

This would also give the rightful place to local languages in Africa.

- f. There is need for the political will on the part of the government in implementing language policies. As far back as 1997, 51 out of 54 countries in Africa attended the Intergovernmental Conference on Language Policies in Harare, Zimbabwe. During that conference, they defined frameworks for the establishment of national languages in African states; however, since then, not much has been achieved, except in Tanzania, Kenya, Botswana, Somalia, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi, Lesotho Eswatini. It is not enough to make policies, countries in Africa must develop the will power to act on and implement such decisions. Some countries have explained their passivity towards the implementation of this policy on the grounds of the multiplicity of African languages; even this is not enough reason as there are other countries that recognize more than one national language, such as Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Ghana, Zimbabwe, etc.

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