



POLITICS, PATTERNS, AND PROCESSES OF PSEUDONYM OF DECOLONIZATION: THE SUSTAINABILITY OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND LANGUAGE FRAGILITY IN CHINA-NIGERIA RELATIONS

Babatunde A. Abioro¹, **Samuel Chukwudi Agunyai²**,
Omolara Akinyemi³, **Aluko, Abayomi John⁴**

1. Department of Political Science, McMaster University, ON, Canada. abiorob@mcmaster.ca; babioro@oauife.edu.ng
2. School of Government Studies, North West University, South Africa.
3. Department of International Relations,, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria.
4. Department of Public Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria.

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Abstract:

This study investigates the intricate politics, patterns, and processes involved in the pseudonym of decolonization, focusing on knowledge production and language fragility within China-Nigeria relations. Utilizing a qualitative ethnographic approach, the research probes into the lived experiences of Nigerian communities and Chinese actors engaged in political, economic, and cultural exchanges. The analysis reveals that while China's involvement in Nigeria is often framed as a departure from Western colonial legacies, it simultaneously introduces new forms of power dynamics that shape knowledge production. Using Critical Discourse Theory and Post-Colonial Theory highlights the fragile status of Indigenous languages as both a site of resistance and a medium of engagement, often overshadowed by the dominance of global languages like English and Mandarin. Through participant, Key Informant Interview (KII), and textual analysis, the research uncovers how local narratives and identities are negotiated, contested, and redefined amidst these interactions. The findings contribute to the discourse on decolonization by revealing how purportedly neutral partnerships can perpetuate linguistic and epistemic marginalization. This study revealed the nuanced understanding of China-Nigeria relations, urging policymakers and scholars to consider the complex interplay between global power structures, language politics, and knowledge production in the ongoing processes of decolonization.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, decolonization has been linked to the fight for autonomy and the elimination of the lasting effects of colonialism, especially in Africa¹. However, the emergence of new global power dynamics in the post-colonial era has intensified the complexity of these processes². Some analysts have characterized China's increasing influence in Africa, namely in Nigeria, as an "alternative" development that challenges Western dominance. China strategically participates in diplomatic cooperation, infrastructure initiatives, and investments to position itself as a collaborator in fostering economic development and decreasing reliance on conventional Western nations³. The relationship, as emphasized by Sautman and Hairong⁴ raises concerns about the degree to which these activities truly correspond with the goals of decolonization, namely in knowledge generation, cultural conservation, and linguistic variety. Heleta⁵ argues that the China-Nigeria relationship can be understood as a component of a complex global environment where power is reorganized rather than eliminated within the wider framework of decolonization. China's approach, although often portrayed as a departure from the exploitative practices of Western colonialism, is essential in inadvertently introducing new forms of influence that modify local knowledge systems and cultural identities, as highlighted by Collier⁶. This study utilizes the term "pseudonym of

¹ Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. (2006). The Inventions of African Identities and Languages: The Discursive and Developmental Implications. In *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, ed. Olaoba F. Arasanyin and Michael A. Pemberton, 14-26. Somerville, MA: Cascadia Proceedings Project.

² Thio'ngo, N. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. James Currey.

³ Smith, L. (1999). Imperialism, history, writing and theory. In *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Otago University Press.

⁴ Sautman, B., Hairong, Y (2007). The Forest for the Trees: Trade, Investment and the China-in-Africa Discourse. *Pacific Affairs* 81(1):9-29

⁵ Heleta, S., & Phiri, S. (2023). "Dem European Teachings in My African School": Unpacking Coloniality and Eurocentric Hegemony in African Education Through Burna Boy's *Monsters You Made*. In N. Andrews & N. E. Khalema (Eds.), *Decolonizing African Studies Pedagogies*. Springer

⁶ Collier, M. J. (2009). Negotiating intercommunity and community group identity positions: Summary discourses from two Northern Ireland intercommunity groups. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, 2(3), 285–306

decolonization" to describe this phenomenon and successfully conveys this collaboration's conflicting essence. While it may seem to provide a means of avoiding the lasting consequences of Western hegemony, it also possesses the ability to imitate hierarchical systems of a similar kind, especially in terms of imposing prevailing languages and economic objectives⁷.

China has exerted a significant impact on the process of language and knowledge creation in Nigeria⁸. The extensive dissemination of Mandarin and English often puts Indigenous Nigerian languages at a disadvantage, so heightening the probability of their marginalization in public communication, education, and governance⁹. Although the rationale for promoting Mandarin in Nigerian institutions lies in its ability to improve bilateral relations and mutual understanding, there are concerns about linguistic imperialism¹⁰. The phenomenon known as the "cultural bomb" described by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, which involves the elimination of indigenous cultures and the breakdown of national identity, can be intensified by the preferential treatment of specific languages, so undermining the development of regional epistemologies. Hence, the Nigeria-China relationship exemplifies the difficulties linked to the exhaustive decolonization of the former and the susceptibility of the latter¹¹. The process of negotiating identities and narratives is an integral aspect of the ideology of decolonization in these interactions¹². Apart from facilitating economic and political interactions, China's involvement in Nigeria also shapes the ideological viewpoints of both

⁷ Chipaike, R., & Bischoff, P. H. (2019). Chinese Engagement of Zimbabwe and the Limits of Elite Agency. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 54, 947-964

⁸ Chan-Fishel, M., Lawson, R. (2007). Quid Pro Quo? China's Investment-for-Resource Swaps in Africa. *Development* 50(3):63-68

⁹ Kragelund, Peter and Carmody, Pdraig (2016) "Who Is in Charge - State Power and Agency in Sino-African Relations," *Cornell International Law Journal*: Vol. 49: No. 1,

¹⁰ Alden, C., & Large, D. (2011). China's Exceptionalism and the Challenges of Delivering Difference in Africa. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 20, 21-38.

¹¹ Gimba, Z., & Ibrahim, S. G. (2018). China-Nigeria economic relations: The need for greater resource management for development. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 2(3), 176-188.

¹² Casimiro Zavale, N. (2023). Is Sub-Saharan Africa a Knowledge Society or Economy? In N. Andrews & N. E. Khalema (Eds.), *Decolonizing African Studies Pedagogies*. Springer.

nations¹³. Despite their emphasis on historical resistance to imperialism and solidarity, Chinese narratives sometimes overlook the complex power imbalances that arise in modern interactions¹⁴. The nature of this relationship requires Nigerian communities to continuously engage in negotiations over their identities, cultural traditions, and linguistic legacy, giving rise to both prospects and obstacles¹⁵. Indicative of the broader struggle between global integration and local autonomy, these processes give rise to a contentious decolonization discourse¹⁶.

The objective of this study is to provide a detailed understanding of how current geopolitical dynamics affect language politics and knowledge creation. It does this by using the concept of decolonization to analyze the interaction between China and Nigeria. It refutes the idea that decolonization is a simple, sequential procedure and instead demonstrates the intricate interaction among power, identity, and culture. According to this paradigm, decolonization encompasses not only the removal of colonial influence but also the recognition and resistance against emerging models of dominance that may emerge in the name of collaboration and advancement. The major focus of this study is on the complex dynamics of language fragility and knowledge generation within the framework of China-Nigeria relations. China's engagement in Nigeria is often portrayed as a critique of Western dominance; yet, it also gives rise to substantial apprehensions over the generation and distribution of knowledge, as well as its influence on local cultures and languages. Notwithstanding the growing dominance of Mandarin, English continues to be the favored language in Nigerian public life. Consequently, a new hierarchy may be established, which could potentially threaten the variety of local epistemologies and marginalize

¹³ Khalema, N. E., Masuku, B., & Zakwe, P. M. (2023). The Façade of “Transforming” Post-apartheid Universities in South Africa: Towards African-Centred Practices and Processes of Redress. In N. Andrews & N. E. Khalema (Eds.), *Decolonizing African Studies Pedagogies*. Springer

¹⁴ Marzagora, S. (2016). The humanism of reconstruction: African intellectuals, decolonial critical theory and the ‘posts’ (postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism). *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 28(2), 161–178.

¹⁵ Maffettone, S. (2011). How to avoid the liaison dangereuse between post-colonialism and postmodernism. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 37(4), 493–504.

¹⁶ Matthews, S. (2022). Constructing Knowledge About Africa in a South African University Classroom: Living Creatively with the Colonial Library. In N. Andrews & N. E. Khalema (Eds.), *Decolonizing African Studies Pedagogies*. Springer.

Indigenous languages¹⁷. These languages have a philosophical impact on the narratives and viewpoints of Nigerian communities, going beyond their function as straightforward communication tools. Furthermore, they serve as containers of cultural knowledge and identity¹⁸. Hence, the act of suppressing or disregarding native languages in favor of global languages, so compromising the ability of local communities to autonomously articulate their experiences and knowledge, can be considered linguistic imperialism.

A thorough examination of political and cultural interactions within the framework of China-Nigeria relations is crucial as it reveals how power dynamics impact language and knowledge. China's engagement in Nigeria is often portrayed as a strategic partnership at the political level, characterized by cooperation and mutual advantages, especially in the domains of economic development and infrastructure¹⁹. Nevertheless, this engagement is also accompanied by a constellation of ideological and cultural forces that exert a substantial impact on knowledge generation. An example of a soft power strategy that goes beyond financial profit is the creation of Confucius Institutes in Nigerian educational institutions to promote the Chinese language and values²⁰. Due to the growing emphasis on global narratives over local contexts in educational curricula, this cultural diplomacy may inadvertently result in the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems. The way knowledge is presented, assessed, and shared is deeply shaped by the complex interaction between the political and cultural dimensions of the China-Nigeria relationship.

This study explores the intersection of decolonization, knowledge sustainability, and language fragility within China–Nigeria relations. It critiques dominant Eurocentric epistemologies by examining how South–South engagements, particularly Chinese influence, affect local

¹⁷ Thio'ngo, N. (1986). Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature. James Currey.

¹⁸ Mignolo, W. D. (2018). Decoloniality and phenomenology: The geopolitics of knowing and epistemic/ontological colonial differences. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 32(3), 360–387.

¹⁹ Alden, C., & Large, D. (2011). China's Exceptionalism and the Challenges of Delivering Difference in Africa. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 20, 21–38.

²⁰ Dahl, A. (2023). Beyond the Anglo-world: Settler colonialism and democracy in the Americas. *Polity*, 55(2),

knowledge systems and linguistic vitality. Drawing on postcolonial theory, it advocates for pluriversal knowledge production that respects linguistic diversity and cultural specificity, positioning language as both a vehicle of resistance and a cornerstone of sustainable intellectual sovereignty in the global South. Meanwhile, the problem lies in the possibility of linguistic and epistemic marginalization taking place while they are presented as unbiased collaborations. Chinese involvement in the decolonization process notwithstanding, the worldwide prevalence of Mandarin and English as the dominant languages presents a significant challenge to the preservation of indigenous languages. These languages are crucial for the transmission of regional knowledge and cultural identity²¹. This scenario significantly questions the validity of these collaborations in advancing decolonization, since they seem to uphold hierarchical systems that give priority to particular languages and forms of knowledge. To effectively address this problem, it is crucial to undertake a thorough examination of the intricate connections among language politics, knowledge generation, and global power dynamics. In the absence of this rigorous examination, the dynamics between China and Nigeria are in danger of resembling the colonial structures that they are striving to dismantle²². Hence, it is imperative to conduct this empirical investigation to comprehend the politics, patterns, and mechanics of the "pseudonym of decolonization," which has the potential to erode the significance of the China-Nigeria relationship. Given this, the paper is divided into five different sections. The first section is the introduction, the following section discusses the literature review and methodology, and the next focus on findings on the gaps in existing laws/policies concerning integrating sustainability legal approaches for addressing the challenges of sustainable Indigenous languages in China-Nigeria relations: recommendations and the final section is the conclusion.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The analytical foundation of this study is based on postcolonial theory, critical discourse analysis, and the theory of linguistic imperialism. These

²¹ Chakrabarty, D. (2005). Legacies of Bandung: Decolonisation and the politics of culture. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(46), 4812–4818

²² Seats, M. R. (2022). The voice(s) of reason: Conceptual challenges for the decolonisation of knowledge in global higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 27(5), 678–694.

theories offer distinct viewpoints on the intricate dynamics between China and Nigeria. Postcolonial theory, as elucidated by scholars like Bhabra²³, offers a critical framework for analyzing how contemporary power structures can sustain colonial dynamics. Within the framework of China-Nigeria relations, postcolonial theory helps scrutinize how China's involvement, often portrayed as a response to Western dominance, might perpetuate hierarchical systems that impact the generation of knowledge. This study investigates whether China's involvement represents credible progress toward decolonization or if it simply replaces one type of dominance with another, in line with this theory. This approach allows for the analysis of how these connections affect Nigeria's capacity to establish its own narratives and knowledge systems, consequently highlighting the enduring presence of neo-colonial inclinations.

This analysis is advanced by the paradigm of linguistic imperialism, which emphasizes the dominance of global languages, namely Mandarin and English, over the Indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria. The notion of linguistic imperialism, first proposed by Robert Phillipson in 1992, is crucial for comprehending how the progress of specific languages can drive the displacement of others and hence impact the cultural and intellectual milieu. According to Dahl²⁴, the growing influence of Mandarin alongside English presents a challenge to the position of indigenous languages, which play a vital role in the preservation of local knowledge and identity within the framework of China-Nigeria relations. This study utilizes the concept of linguistic imperialism to analyze how language practices and policies in these interactions can result in the promotion of specific worldviews and the decline of linguistic variety. Through an analysis of the language-related elements of interactions between China and Nigeria, the research highlights how language can be a tool of power that can either bolster or undermine efforts at decolonization.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides an extra viewpoint on the formation, challenge, and distribution of narratives concerning the

²³ Bhabra, G. K. (2014). Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial Studies*, 17(2), 115–121

²⁴ Dahl, A. (2023). Beyond the Anglo-world: Settler colonialism and democracy in the Americas. *Polity*, 55(2), 275–301

relationship between China and Nigeria. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach was formulated by scholars like Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak to analyze the interplay among language, power, and ideology. The objective of this study is to use content analysis (CDA) to examine the influence of different discourses, encompassing political, economic, and cultural interactions, on the perception of China as a partner in Nigeria's process of decolonization. Through the analysis of texts, policy documents, and public narratives, the research aims to reveal the underlying power dynamics that influence these discourses. Through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is possible to critically examine how the framing of China-Nigeria relations may legitimize certain power dynamics while marginalizing other narratives, especially those based on indigenous knowledge systems.

Incorporating these theoretical perspectives, the paper rigorously analyses the "pseudonym of decolonization" in China-Nigeria relations, demonstrating how language and knowledge production serve as both sites of resistance and dominance. In this particular context, postcolonial theory offers the theoretical basis for questioning the validity of decolonization, while linguistic imperialism theory clarifies the processes through which language dominance can sustain epistemic marginalization. Therefore, a thorough analysis of critical discourse allows for a deeper comprehension of how these dynamics are expressed and disputed in public communication. Hence, these frameworks provide a thorough method for comprehending the intricate interactions among language politics, knowledge generation, and global power dynamics, underscoring the need for more proactive involvement in the decolonization processes of the China-Nigeria alliance.

Sustainability represents the ability to consistently maintain a certain level of activity or function²⁵. In this context, it means the ability of Nigeria to maintain the use of its local Indigenous languages, when relating to China in matters of business, trade, investment, and other bilateral or multilateral relations. While China has maintained its indigenous language across continents, Nigeria finds it very difficult to

²⁵ Araromi, M.O. (2018). "Language Policy implementation in multilingual Nigeria: French and mother-tongue experience" in *International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*. 7(1),23-29

project her native languages across continents²⁶. It is imperative to note that the sustenance of indigenous languages in China-Nigeria relations is multifaceted involving language education, economic collaborations, and exchange of cultural values²⁷. Although Nigeria's diverse or multiple local languages are a cultural asset, the growing influence of Mandarin, particularly in economic and educational spheres, presents both opportunities and challenges for the preservation of indigenous languages²⁸. This highlights the need for strategic language policies that balance the benefits of learning Mandarin with the importance of promoting and revitalizing local languages. Evidence has shown that if Nigeria like China maintains consistent use of its Indigenous languages, it could promote cultural identity and heritage²⁹. Local and native languages are fundamental to Nigeria's cultural identity, preserving traditions, history, and social structures. Unlike Nigeria, China's Mandarin plays a crucial role in education, economic mobility, and national cohesion, making it vital for sustainable development. This feat has increased the growing influence of the Mandarin language in Nigeria, as lots of Nigerians are learning the language for economic opportunities³⁰. However, pieces of evidence have shown that Nigeria cannot consistently project its local and indigenous languages when relating to China³¹. This has severe implications for Nigeria's bilateral relations, especially in areas of investment, trade, and international business with China. There is a need for Nigeria to improve its capacity to leverage the economic benefits of learning Mandarin and ensure the promotion and consistent use of its indigenous language in bilateral

²⁶ Ayakoroma, B. F. (2017). "Reviving the use of indigenous languages in the contemporary Nigerian society: The National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO) Initiative" in *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 4(4),1-12

²⁷ Pan H. Y. (2016). *An Overview of Chinese Language Law and Regulation*, Chinese Law and Government, USA: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 48(4), 271-274.

²⁸ Teng Y. (2017). "Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK): Past, present, and future" in *Chinese as a Second Language Assessment*, USA: Springer, pp 3-19

²⁹ Wilson, D & E. U. Ogri (2017). "Mass Media, Indigenous Language Broadcasting and National Development: A Study of Selected Broadcasting Stations in Calabar Metropolis" in *The Nigerian Journal of Communication (TNJC)*, 14(1),1-17

³⁰ Oyesomi, K. O., & Salawu, A. (2019). The uniqueness of indigenous language in advertising and analysis of figurative language used in selected telecommunication Yoruba advertisements in Nigeria.

<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3878&context=tqr>

³¹ Nederstigt, U., & Schulpen, B. (2018). Advertising in a foreign language or the consumer's native language? *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 30(1), 2-13

relations with China. Thus, strategic language policies are expected to be designed by the Nigerian government to support indigenous language education, including curriculum development, teacher training, and resource allocation. For example, more radio programs on agricultural extension and production can be done so that local farmers and rural communities can communicate in their local languages when dealing with Chinese agricultural firms, this would go a long way to boost food security and sustainable practices. This can be done through the reportage of news on national dailies in indigenous languages. This plays a vital role in disseminating information, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering community engagement. For Nigeria to sustain the use of its Indigenous languages alongside Mandarin in China-Nigeria relations, a practical approach that understands the importance of both economic partnerships and cultural preservation is needed. By carefully crafting language policies, promoting language education, and leveraging technology, Nigeria can harness the benefits of its linguistic diversity while fostering a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with China.

To examine the complexities of the relationship between China and Nigeria, with a special focus on linguistic fragility and knowledge production, this study utilizes an ethnographic approach. The selection is predicated on its capacity to offer a thorough comprehension of the power dynamics, traditions, and personal experiences of Nigerian communities and their engagements with Chinese entities. Utilized data collection techniques include Key Informant Interview (KII) and textual analysis. Experiential understanding of how language use and knowledge are shaped by China-Nigeria interactions can be obtained by actively participating in communities and environments such as local markets, educational institutions, and development projects. Extensive interviews with a wide range of participants, including community members, educators, policymakers, and Chinese stakeholders, provide a comprehensive examination of the experiences and negotiations related to language politics and knowledge production. Textual analysis of pertinent documents, media reports, and policy statements enhances the ethnographic data, offering a more comprehensive approach to understanding the discourses on China-Nigeria relations.

This study utilizes thematic analysis to identify and examine patterns in the ethnographic data. The method of thematic analysis is suitable for

this particular research because of its capacity to methodically encode and classify qualitative data. This enables the identification of crucial themes pertaining to power dynamics, language fragility, and knowledge generation. The preliminary stage of the analytical procedure entails transcribing field notes and interview data. Recurring concepts and narratives are coded iteratively to generate themes. Furthermore, these topics are analyzed within the theoretical framework that interprets the process of constructing, challenging, and redefining local narratives and identities in the specific context of China-Nigeria relations. These objectives are accomplished by the application of postcolonial theory, linguistic imperialism, and critical discourse analysis. The credibility of the study is bolstered by the integration of diverse data sources, including textual, interview-based, and observational sources. This facilitates a thorough examination of the intricate interaction among language, power, and knowledge in the continuous processes of decolonization.

3.0 FINDINGS: GAPS IN THE SUSTAINABILITY OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND LANGUAGE FRAGILITY IN CHINA-NIGERIA RELATIONS

The responses highlight a concern about the emergence of new power dynamics similar to colonial influences, even within the context of China's engagement in Nigeria. Interviewees such as Nigerian educators, policymakers, and cultural activists express apprehension about how Chinese-funded programs and institutions are shaping academic curricula and research agendas. This reflects a continuity of power imbalances where external actors influence local knowledge systems. Albeit, the thematic analysis of the interview responses reveals three main themes: (1) Power Dynamics in Knowledge Production, (2) Language Fragility and Global Language Dominance, and (3) Negotiation of Cultural and Local Identities. Each theme is explored through interviewees' perspectives from diverse backgrounds, providing a nuanced understanding of the impact of China-Nigeria relations.

3.1 Gaps in the Dynamics of Knowledge Production

Interviewee responses reveal concerns about how China's influence in Nigeria's educational sector may perpetuate new forms of epistemic dominance. This influence is often compared to historical colonial

practices, where knowledge production was shaped by external powers to serve their interests. Moreover, the responses (KII-1, KII-2, KII-3, KII-7) suggest that while China's involvement is framed as a cooperative and mutually beneficial arrangement, there are underlying concerns about the dominance of Chinese interests in shaping educational content and knowledge production. This reflects a power dynamic where local knowledge systems may be overshadowed by external influences, mirroring historical colonial practices. In light of the aforementioned, four respondents concerning educational curricular and strategic partnership assert that:

Educational Curricula: Interviewee 1 (Nigerian Educator) highlights a shift in curricula towards topics that align with China's strategic interests, potentially marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems. This concern is echoed by Interviewee 2 (Nigerian Policy Maker), who worries that these partnerships might be reintroducing forms of epistemic dominance reminiscent of colonial practices.

While Strategic Partnerships: Interviewee 3 (Chinese Diplomat) acknowledges the complexities of these partnerships and expresses a willingness to address concerns about local knowledge. Interviewee 7 (Chinese Academic) also points to the need for inclusive dialogue to ensure that curricula respect and integrate local knowledge systems.

Furthermore, the responses (KII-4, KII-5, KII-6) highlight how the promotion of global languages, which resonates with Osimen and Micah (2020) particularly Mandarin, impacts the use and status of indigenous Nigerian languages. While there are clear economic and educational benefits associated with global languages, there is also a significant risk of linguistic erosion and cultural marginalization.

Mandarin Promotion: Interviewee 4 (Nigerian Student) and Interviewee 5 (Chinese Business Owner) both recognize the advantages of Mandarin in academic and business contexts but also express concern about the marginalization of local languages. Interviewee 6 (Nigerian Cultural Activist) sees the promotion of global

languages as a form of cultural dominance that threatens the use and relevance of indigenous languages.

In agreement with the assertions of KII-12 and KII-13 a significant theme across the interviews shows the impact of global languages, particularly Mandarin and English, on the status of indigenous Nigerian languages. More so, the responses reveal a tension between the benefits of global language proficiency and the preservation of local languages. These are corroborated below by the four participants:

Similarly, Linguistic Impact: Interviewee 12 (Nigerian Linguist) emphasizes that the rise of Mandarin and English is a threat to indigenous languages and calls for policies that support linguistic diversity. Interviewee 13 (Nigerian Business Owner) advocates for a balance between global and local languages in professional and social spheres.

3.2 Language Fragility and Global Language Dominance

KII-5, KII-9, and KII-12 responses is consistent in emphasizing the fragility of indigenous Nigerian languages in the face of global languages such as Mandarin and English. The interviews reveal a pattern where the promotion of these global languages, particularly Mandarin in educational and business settings, is seen as exacerbating the decline of local languages.

Impact of Mandarin Promotion: Business owners and students (Interviewee 5) observe that Mandarin's growing presence in Nigeria's educational and professional environments creates a competitive advantage but also risks marginalizing indigenous languages. The focus on Mandarin is perceived as aligning with economic opportunities, further sidelining local languages. On the Role of English: The continued dominance of English (Interviewee 9) is seen as another factor that undermines the use and preservation of Indigenous languages. Also, another participant (KII-12), that in my opinion, this dual dominance contributes to the erosion of linguistic diversity, a process described in Phillipson's theory of linguistic imperialism.

Likewise, in line with the study objective, the interviews reveal how Nigerian communities and individuals navigate the complex interplay between global influences and local cultural practices. This means that there is a reflection of a strong desire to preserve and assert local identities amidst external pressures.

On cultural autonomy: Interviewee 8 (Nigerian Community Leader) and Interviewee 14 (Chinese Cultural Exchange Coordinator) discuss efforts to preserve local traditions and languages while engaging in cultural exchanges. in the same vein, interviewee 15 (Nigerian Youth Activist) highlights the challenges faced by young people in balancing global language opportunities, such as the dominance of personal interest more than the interest of the masses, the quest for immediate gain rather than community development, display of opulence and wealth flaunting among the community dweller, undermining community leadership confronts desire to maintain indigenous cultural practices.

Meanwhile, on cultural resistance, the responses reflect a dynamic process where local identities and cultural practices are actively negotiated in response to global influences. This aligns with KII-6 and KII-9 in that despite pressures to adapt to global languages and cultural norms, there is a strong emphasis on preserving and celebrating local heritage.

Cultural Resistance: KII-6 (Nigerian Cultural Activist) and KII-9 (Chinese Students in Nigeria) observe that Indigenous languages and cultural practices serve as forms of resistance against the marginalization and dominance of global languages.

3.3 Negotiation of Cultural and Local Identities: How Sustainable?

In consonance with Gold et al³². (2022) KII responses to the negotiation of cultural and local identities, this paper outlined cultural resistance and agency as well as ambivalence and adaptation in understanding the level of pseudonym of decolonization and language fragility in China-Nigeria Relations. The responses from the KII show how Nigerian communities actively negotiate their identities and cultural practices amidst the influences of global languages and external actors. Given the aforementioned,

In Nigeria today, China's culture transcends beyond the nomenclature of Nigeria's lingua franca as many community leaders and activists use it as a form of cultural resistance and assertion of autonomy. I will also point to the fact that despite the pressures from global languages, local languages remain vital for maintaining cultural identity and local knowledge, but Chinese diplomacy has continued to erode cultural identities, subsequently resulting in language fragility (KII-8 and KII-14).

In a related development, two respondents (KII-4 and KII-15) observe that a tension between embracing global languages for economic benefits and resisting the marginalization of local languages and cultures is the outcome of ambivalence and adaptation of indigenous languages between China and Nigerian communities.

With my little familiarity with trends, politics, and procedures of pseudonyms of decolonization of language fragility between China-Nigeria relations, many Nigerian students and youth reflect an ambivalent disposition towards global languages. While recognizing practical value, there is also a strong desire to preserve and celebrate indigenous languages and traditions, highlighting a

³² Gold, K. L., Etudaiye-muhtar, O. F., Yusuf, h. A., & Alabi, s. O. (2022). China-Nigeria economic cooperation: a. Review. *Journal of Economic, Social and Educational Issues*, 2(1), 169-178.

complex interplay between adaptation and cultural preservation.

This study draws on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and post-colonial theory to explore the complex dynamics of China-Nigeria relations within the broader framework of decolonization. These theoretical frameworks help unpack the intersection of language, power, and ideology in international collaborations. CDA reveals how discourse shapes and reinforces power structures, while post-colonial theory highlights how colonial legacies persist in new forms³³. Together, these perspectives challenge the view of China as a neutral actor in the decolonization process, demonstrating that international partnerships often conceal hierarchical mechanisms of knowledge production, identity negotiation, and linguistic marginalization.

The findings indicate that China's involvement in Nigeria reflects certain colonial-era practices by influencing academic and cultural institutions to align with Chinese priorities³⁴. Initiatives like Confucius Institutes, often presented as tools of cultural exchange, reflect subtle forms of epistemic dominance by promoting Chinese narratives while marginalizing Indigenous epistemologies³⁵. This reinforces linguistic and intellectual hierarchies, similar to the way colonial powers historically manipulated knowledge systems to serve strategic interests³⁶. As Phillipson's concept of linguistic imperialism suggests, the dominance of global languages like Mandarin and English poses a threat to the role of Indigenous languages as repositories of local knowledge³⁷.

The second major theme concerns the vulnerability of indigenous Nigerian languages amidst the global prevalence of Mandarin and

³³ Quadri, L. A. (2020). ONE BELT ONE ROAD: Should Nigeria sieve the Chinese benevolence, or accept it as a free lunch?. *Akdeniz Havzası ve Afrika Medeniyetleri Dergisi*, 2(1), 43-77.

³⁴ Seteolu, D., & Oshodi, A. G. T. (2018). Oscillation of Two Giants: Sino-Nigeria Relations and the Global South. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 23, 257-285.

³⁵ Tiekue, T. K. (2022). A new research agenda for Africa's international relations. *African Affairs*, 121(484), 487-499.

³⁶ Arneil, B. (2017). *Domestic colonies: The turn inward to the colony*. Oxford University Press

³⁷ Thio'ngo, N. (1986). *Decolonizing the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. James Currey.

English³⁸. Although these languages offer access to global economic opportunities, their dominance marginalizes native languages, threatening linguistic diversity and cultural identity. This aligns with theories of linguistic imperialism and epistemic violence, where the erosion of local languages disrupts community-specific worldviews³⁹. The prioritization of global languages in education and development projects reinforces power asymmetries, as these languages often become prerequisites for social mobility, education, and economic participation.

Despite these challenges, the research highlights the agency of Nigerian communities in resisting marginalization by actively negotiating their identities. This aligns with Lal's⁴⁰ view, which contends the concept of "cultural hybridity," where local actors use indigenous languages and cultural practices to navigate and reinterpret global discourses. While some communities see China's influence as a counterweight to Western hegemony, others express concerns about the potential for new forms of control, reflecting the ambivalence inherent in these interactions. Thus, this study advocates those indigenous languages remain crucial in grassroots activism and identity formation, serving as tools of resistance and cultural preservation.

The majority of findings demonstrate that although China's involvement is often framed as a break from Western colonial traditions, it introduces new power dynamics that mirror colonial practices. China's influence over research priorities and curricula in Nigeria reflects the ways colonial powers historically suppressed indigenous knowledge to maintain control. Yahaya⁴¹ and Odeh⁴² (2014) argue that these patterns perpetuate intellectual marginalization and epistemic violence, suggesting that

³⁸ Mohammed, A. (2019). *China-Nigeria Relations: An Opportunity or Opportunism*. Tallinn University of Technology.

³⁹ Msimango, N. (2016). *China's Changing Foreign Policy and Resource Diplomacy Towards Africa: The Role of China in the Socio-economic Development of Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa).

⁴⁰ Lal, P. (2015). *African socialism in postcolonial Tanzania: Between the village and the world*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴¹ Yahaya, I. I. (2022). *Nigeria-China Relations and Rail Transport Infrastructure Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic* (Doctoral dissertation, Kwara State University (Nigeria)).

⁴² Odeh, L. E. (2014). Dynamics of China-Nigeria economic relations since 1971. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 150-162.

global alliances, without critical scrutiny, can reproduce exclusionary knowledge systems while adopting progressive rhetoric.

4.0LEGAL APPROACHES FOR REDRESSING INHERENT CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND LANGUAGE FRAGILITY IN CHINA-NIGERIA RELATIONS

The study underscores the need for a more nuanced approach to decolonization, one that recognizes the complexities inherent in international collaborations. Policymakers and scholars must critically examine partnerships like those between China and Nigeria to ensure they foster inclusive and equitable development (KII-4, KII-3, KII-12). These findings resonate with Agubamah⁴³ who states that strategies such as promoting multilingualism, revitalizing Indigenous languages, and prioritizing local knowledge systems are essential to resisting linguistic hierarchies and epistemic dominance⁴⁴. Ultimately, the research suggests that decolonization efforts must move beyond replacing one form of control with another. Instead, partnerships should aim to empower local communities to preserve their cultural and intellectual heritage while engaging with global systems on equal terms. This requires a critical, intersectional understanding of language, power, and knowledge production to build sustainable and inclusive frameworks for future collaboration. In the subsequent sections, policy and legal reforms that revolve around language policy, knowledge governance, intellectual property law, education law, as well as bilateral cultural and academic agreements reforms were discussed.

The findings indicate that although China's involvement in Nigeria is often portrayed as a deviation from Western colonial traditions, it is also capable of replicating new power distributions that resemble those witnessed in colonial contexts. Hence, it is imperative to undertake a meticulous evaluation of global alliances considering the possibility that they may not consistently correspond with the goals of decolonization. The research's findings on China's strategic influence on Nigeria's

⁴³ Agubamah, E. (2014). Bilateral relations: periscoping Nigeria and China relations. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(14).

⁴⁴ Haslanger, S. (2012). *Resisting reality: Social construction and social critique*. Oxford University Press

educational and cultural landscapes serve to emphasize the need of critically evaluate how these partnerships affect local epistemologies and knowledge production⁴⁵. Policymakers must guarantee that these associations facilitate authentic and fair development, rather than just substituting one type of control with another. Enhancing transparency in the organization of foreign investments and educational programs is crucial to ensure that they uphold and incorporate local knowledge systems, rather than replacing them⁴⁶.

The research findings suggest that Mandarin and English are the predominant languages spoken worldwide, holding considerable consequences for Nigeria's cultural identity and linguistic variety. Mandarin's promotion and the continued supremacy of English led to the marginalization of Indigenous languages, endangering the survival of local languages and strengthening linguistic hierarchies⁴⁷. To combat this trend, policymakers and educational institutions must enact measures that actively support and protect indigenous languages. Included in this could be the integration of Indigenous languages into educational curricula, the provision of support for language revitalization efforts, and the formulation of policies that encourage multilingualism⁴⁸. Thus, by doing this, they can guarantee that local languages persist in their role as reservoirs of cultural knowledge and identity, as well as guardians of linguistic variety. Furthermore, implementing such measures would effectively tackle the problem of epistemic violence, which is worsened by the extinction of native languages and the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems⁴⁹.

The research findings on the influence of Chinese-funded educational programs on Nigerian curricula emphasize the need to reassess

⁴⁵ Marwah, I. S. (2019). Provincializing progress: Developmentalism and anti-imperialism in colonial India. *Polity*, 51(3), 498–531

⁴⁶ Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the Postcolony*. London: University of California Press

⁴⁷ Osimen, Goddy Uwa & Micah, Ezekiel Elton Mike(2022) Nigeria-China Economic Relations: Matters Arising, *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 10, (3), 42-54

⁴⁸ Gold, K. L., Etudaiye-muhtar, O. F., Yusuf, h. A., & Alabi, s. O. (2022). China-Nigeria economic cooperation: a. Review. *Journal of Economic, Social and Educational Issues*, 2(1), 169-178

⁴⁹ Thio'ngo, N. (1986). *Decolonizing the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. James Currey.

educational policies and curricula. The design of education programs and exchanges supported by foreign entities, such as China, should prioritize the local environment and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives⁵⁰. This suggests an inclusive method of curriculum development that engages teachers, community members, and local academics to guarantee that the educational content respects and mirrors the original knowledge systems of the local cultures. Moreover, it is crucial to undertake a thorough analysis of the influence of projects financed by foreign sources on the integrity of academic freedom and the range of viewpoints present in educational establishments⁵¹. To effectively counter the imposition of foreign narratives and improve the representation of local knowledge systems, Nigeria can cultivate a more inclusive and balanced educational ecology.

This study highlights how Nigerian communities utilize their native languages and cultural traditions to negotiate their identities and resist marginalization. This finding has a significant effect on how local resistance and cultural autonomy are strengthened in the context of international interactions. Legislators and development experts must unequivocally acknowledge and advocate for the significant contribution that local communities make in shaping their linguistic and cultural surroundings. This involves equipping grassroots organizations and local governing bodies with the essential resources to promote and safeguard indigenous cultural traditions and languages⁵². Hence, with the facilitation of communication between local communities and external entities, international collaborations can be established in a way that preserves and strengthens local cultural identities, rather than eroding them.

This study stresses the intricate relationship between decolonization, power dynamics, and knowledge production, underscoring the need for nuanced discussions on global alliances particularly within the context of China-Nigeria relations. The process of decolonization must be

⁵⁰ Odeh, L. E. (2014). Dynamics of China-Nigeria economic relations since 1971. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 150-162.

⁵¹ Dahl, A. (2023). Beyond the Anglo-world: Settler colonialism and democracy in the Americas. *Polity*, 55(2), 275-301

⁵² Mohammed, A. (2019). *China-Nigeria Relations: An Opportunity or Opportunism*. Tallinn University of Technology.

examined with a conscious awareness of how power hierarchies shape knowledge systems, marginalizing or co-opting indigenous epistemologies to serve external interests⁵³. The findings emphasize the importance of adopting a comprehensive strategy for navigating these complexities by fostering linguistic diversity, reconsidering educational policies, supporting local agencies, and promoting critical discourse. This approach ensures that international collaborations align with the goals of decolonization, rather than perpetuating new forms of marginalization. In China-Nigeria relations, such efforts must prioritize the preservation of Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems while resisting the homogenizing effects of global power structures⁵⁴. Ultimately, by fostering more equitable and inclusive partnerships, stakeholders can develop frameworks that empower local communities and contribute meaningfully to the broader decolonization process. A critical analysis of development narratives and international partnerships is essential to expose the subtle reproduction of dominance and linguistic fragility embedded in these interactions⁵⁵.

Lastly, building on Alonso Del Percio et al.'s call for further research, future studies must extend beyond the traditional focus on corporate Sino-African relations to explore the dynamics of economic diplomacy between China and Nigeria. A deeper empirical investigation is needed to evaluate how policy development shapes these interactions, with particular attention to the nuances of bilateral agreements and their impact on local economies, governance structures, and indigenous knowledge systems⁵⁶. This shift in focus would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the political and economic patterns within China-Nigeria relations, revealing how economic diplomacy influences not only state-level partnerships but also grassroots development processes. Such research would enhance efforts to align

⁵³ Omodan, B. I., & Tsotetsi, C. T. (2020). "Decolonisation of knowledge construction in university classrooms: The place of social constructivism." *Journal of Gender, Information and Development in Africa*, 9(2), 183-204.

⁵⁴ Tieku, T. K. (2022). A new research agenda for Africa's international relations. *African Affairs*, 121(484), 487-499.

⁵⁵ Del Percio, A. L. F. O. N. S. O., Motobayashi, K., Shanhua, H., Tay, J., & Tebaldi, C. (2024). Language, Power, and the State. *Critical Sociolinguistics: Dialogues, Dissonances, Developments*, 139.

⁵⁶ Tieku, T. K. (2022). A new research agenda for Africa's international relations. *African Affairs*, 121(484), 487-499.

international policies with decolonization goals, ensuring that collaborations foster sustainable development while respecting and integrating local epistemologies.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study provides a nuanced analysis of postcolonial power dynamics by showing that Chinese involvement in Nigeria mirrors specific patterns of Western colonial influence in knowledge creation⁵⁷ and adds to the expanding collection of literature that analyzes China's 'soft power' strategies in Africa, suggesting that these policies may establish a position of intellectual control and marginalize indigenous knowledge systems⁵⁸. This observation highlights the intricate character of power dynamics on a global scale, indicating that the process of decolonization involves more than rejecting Western influence. It also requires a thorough analysis of the emerging power configurations that result from this process⁵⁹. Furthermore, this study significantly enhances the discussion on linguistic imperialism by illustrating how the continuous supremacy of English and China's advocacy of Mandarin in Nigeria establish a hierarchical linguistic landscape that worsens the vulnerability of native languages⁶⁰. The study reinforces and expands upon Phillipson's theory by emphasizing that linguistic imperialism is not limited to Western civilizations but can also occur when non-Western individuals occupy influential roles in culture and economy. This report advocates for the prioritization of linguistic diversity and the safeguarding of indigenous languages. It also calls for a reassessment of language policies and practices within the framework of global interactions. By highlighting the epistemic violence linked to the

⁵⁷ Odeh, L. E. (2014). Dynamics of China-Nigeria economic relations since 1971. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 150-162.

⁵⁸ Matthews, S. (2022). Constructing Knowledge About Africa in a South African University Classroom: Living Creatively with the Colonial Library. In N. Andrews & N. E. Khalema (Eds.), *Decolonizing African Studies Pedagogies*. Springer

⁵⁹ Gold, K. L., Etudaiye-muhtar, O. F., Yusuf, h. A., & Alabi, s. O. (2022). China-Nigeria economic cooperation: a Review. *Journal of Economic, Social and Educational Issues*, 2(1), 169-178

⁶⁰ Grossman, Z. (2017). *Unlikely alliances: Native nations and white communities join to defend rural lands*. University of Washington.

marginalization of these languages, the study enhances our understanding of the cultural dimensions of decolonization⁶¹.

Additionally, the study presents empirical data on the resilience and proactivity of Nigerian communities in managing the complexities of the China-Nigeria relationship. Through the lens of ‘cultural hybridity’, it becomes evident how regional actors deliberately manipulate indigenous languages and traditions to question and reinterpret dominant narratives⁶². The significance of this finding lies in its opposition to the belief that communities in postcolonial settings are solely passive beneficiaries of external influence. Instead, Seteolu and Oshodi⁶³ illustrate the proactive participation in the development of identity and opposition, enhancing understanding of the complex cultural dynamics within global power systems. The study supports that Yahaya⁶⁴ describes the implementation of educational curricula and policies that encourage linguistic diversity and empower local communities. It further calls for a reassessment of the existing practices in China-Nigeria relations. Thus, it advances the primary objective of creating a worldwide knowledge environment that is more comprehensive and fairer, and that appreciates and protects the variety of cultures and languages of indigenous populations⁶⁵. This contribution holds practical significance for policymakers, educators, and academics, who are urged to meticulously analyze the intricacies of language politics and knowledge generation in the continuous processes of decolonization.

⁶¹ Msimango, N. (2016). China's Changing Foreign Policy and Resource Diplomacy Towards Africa: The Role of China in the Socio-economic Development of Nigeria (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa).

⁶² Quadri, L. A. (2020). ONE BELT ONE ROAD: Should Nigeria sieve the Chinese benevolence, or accept it as a free lunch?. *Akdeniz Havzası ve Afrika Medeniyetleri Dergisi*, 2(1), 43-77.

⁶³ Seteolu, D., & Oshodi, A. G. T. (2018). Oscillation of Two Giants: Sino-Nigeria Relations and the Global South. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 23, 257-285

⁶⁴ Yahaya, I. I. (2022). Nigeria-China Relations and Rail Transport Infrastructure Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (Doctoral dissertation, Kwara State University (Nigeria)).

⁶⁵ Savo, H. (2018). Decolonizing knowledge in South Africa: Dismantling the ‘pedagogy of big lies’. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 40(2), 48–65.