

The English Language and the Production of Endogenous Knowledge in Africa: Issues, Limitations and Perspectives for an Authentic African Science

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Abstract

The globalization of science has established English as the dominant language of international scholarly communication, creating both opportunities and challenges for the development of African endogenous knowledge. This article examines how the use of English influences the production, dissemination, and recognition of indigenous African knowledge within the broader project of building an authentic African science. The study is based on a critical review of the literature, drawing on to publications published between 1986 and 2024, with a particular focus on Anglophone African contexts, including Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya. The analysis reveals that English facilitates access to international journals, research funding, and transnational scientific networks, thereby enhancing the global visibility of African researchers. However, the review also identifies recurring mechanisms that constrain the development of endogenous knowledge, including linguistic gatekeeping in academic publishing, the decontextualization of indigenous concepts through translation, and the predominance of Western epistemological frameworks in research evaluation and dissemination. These dynamics often create tensions between international recognition and local relevance. To address these challenges, the article proposes a conceptual framework for authentic African science based on multilingual knowledge production, the integration of endogenous knowledge into research and higher education, and the promotion of bilingual scientific publishing. The framework positions English as a language of mediation rather than domination, enabling African researchers to engage with global scientific communities while preserving local cognitive and cultural traditions. The study concludes that the future of authentic African science depends on balancing international openness with the preservation of Africa's linguistic and epistemic diversity. By identifying key mechanisms of exclusion and proposing a structured model for multilingual scientific practice, the article contributes to ongoing debates on language policy, knowledge decolonization, and the development of culturally grounded scientific systems in Africa.

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Introduction

The English language currently occupies a dominant position in the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge worldwide. Since the late 20th century, English has become the lingua franca of academic journals, international conferences, and transcontinental collaborative networks. For Africa, a continent historically marked by colonialism and linguistic diversity, this predominance poses complex challenges for the development of an authentically African science. The central question then becomes how African scientific production can develop within a framework where English serves both as a vehicle for international integration and as a potentially hegemonic instrument, capable of marginalizing indigenous knowledge and local languages.

According to Abdoulaye “the globalization of science, through English, has increased the visibility of African researchers, but it has also contributed to the gradual erasure of knowledge rooted in local cultural contexts” (23). This observation highlights a fundamental dilemma: the need to publish in English to reach an international audience and secure recognition and funding, versus the desire to preserve the cultural and cognitive specificity of African knowledge. The issue is therefore not only linguistic, but also epistemological and political, as it concerns the legitimacy of local knowledge and the development of an autonomous African science.

The concept of endogenous knowledge refers to knowledge produced from African experiences, cultural practices, and social realities. Dei emphasizes that “the integration of endogenous knowledge into the educational and scientific system is essential to ensure local relevance and strengthen the cognitive identity of African societies” (207). However, the pressure exerted by international publication standards and the predominance of colonial languages, particularly English, often leads to a form of cognitive dependence. African researchers are thus forced to translate, adapt, or sometimes abandon certain elements of their knowledge in order for it to be accepted within Western-dominated scientific circles.

Canagarajah goes further, stating that “while facilitating scientific exchange, the English language can impose foreign conceptual frameworks that disregard local realities, leading to a form of decontextualization of African knowledge” (89). This observation highlights the paradox of the internationalization of African science: while English provides access to

resources, collaborations, and funding, it can also limit the expression and valorization of endogenous paradigms.

In this context, it becomes urgent to consider the prospects for an authentic African science, capable of reconciling international openness with local roots. The strategies considered include bilingual or multilingual scholarly production, cultural mediation in publications, and the encouragement of integrating local knowledge into university curricula and applied research. These approaches aim to create an inclusive African scientific space where English becomes a tool for communication and not an instrument of cognitive hegemony.

The aim of this article is therefore to examine the issues, limitations, and perspectives related to the use of English in the production of indigenous African knowledge. More specifically, we will seek to answer the following questions: 1. How does English influence the visibility and production of African knowledge? 2. What are the risks associated with the predominance of English for the preservation of indigenous knowledge? 3. What strategies can be put in place to build an authentic African science, capable of integrating into international circuits while remaining culturally relevant?

Although previous studies have examined the role of English in African education, language policy, and scientific communication, relatively few have explored how the dominance of English simultaneously promotes international scientific visibility and constrains the development of endogenous knowledge systems. Existing scholarship often treats these issues separately, focusing either on the benefits of internationalization or on the preservation of indigenous knowledge. This article addresses this gap by proposing an integrated conceptual framework that examines the interaction between language, scientific legitimacy, knowledge preservation, and institutional support in contemporary African science.

This study adopts a qualitative critical literature review methodology to examine the role of English in the production, dissemination, and recognition of endogenous African knowledge. The review draws on ten key scholarly publications published between 1986 and 2024, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and policy-oriented studies addressing language, indigenous knowledge systems, African higher education, and the internationalization of science.

The sources were selected based on three criteria: (1) relevance to the

relationship between language and knowledge production in Africa; (2) discussion of indigenous or endogenous knowledge systems; and (3) contribution to debates on scientific communication, multilingualism, or the decolonization of knowledge. The corpus includes influential works by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Dei, Prah, Bamgbose, Canagarajah, and other scholars whose research has shaped contemporary discussions on language and epistemic justice in Africa.

The selected literature was analyzed through thematic content analysis. Four major themes emerged from the review: (a) English as a vehicle for scientific visibility and international collaboration; (b) linguistic gatekeeping and barriers to participation in global knowledge production; (c) the dominance of Western epistemological frameworks and the decontextualization of indigenous knowledge; and (d) multilingual and bilingual strategies for fostering a more inclusive African scientific ecosystem. Rather than evaluating the effectiveness of specific language policies, the study seeks to identify recurring patterns and tensions in the literature and to develop a conceptual framework capable of explaining how African science can reconcile international visibility with the preservation of linguistic and epistemic diversity.

This study proposes a conceptual framework for understanding the conditions under which authentic African science can emerge in a globalized knowledge environment. The framework is based on four interrelated dimensions. The first dimension is international visibility, which includes publication in international journals, participation in global research networks, and access to research funding. English plays a central role in facilitating this visibility. The second dimension is knowledge preservation, which refers to the protection and transmission of indigenous languages, cultural traditions, and locally grounded knowledge systems. This dimension ensures that scientific production remains relevant to African societies. The third dimension is linguistic mediation. Rather than viewing English and African languages as competing systems, this dimension emphasizes translation, bilingual publication, and multilingual knowledge production as mechanisms for connecting local and global audiences. The fourth dimension is institutional support, including language policies, university curricula, research funding mechanisms, and publication platforms that recognize both international standards and indigenous knowledge systems.

Authentic African science emerges when these four dimensions operate in balance. Excessive dependence on international visibility may weaken local relevance, while exclusive reliance on local knowledge may reduce global engagement. The challenge therefore lies in creating a multilingual and epistemically inclusive scientific ecosystem capable of integrating both objectives.

1. English as a Vector of Scientific Production in Africa

Since African independence, English has gradually established itself as one of the main languages of scientific production on the continent, especially in Anglophone countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda. English, a direct legacy of British colonialism, has been integrated into educational, university, and administrative systems. Its dominance in academic research and scientific publication can be attributed to several factors, including international visibility, access to prestigious scientific journals, and participation in transnational collaborative networks.

1.1 English and the Internationalization of African Research

One of the main advantages of using English lies in its ability to enable African researchers to integrate into global scientific circles. According to Abdoulaye, “publishing in English opens the doors of international journals to African researchers, which is crucial for obtaining funding, recognition, and collaboration opportunities” (28). Indeed, the majority of high-impact scientific journals and world-renowned academic conferences use English as their official language. Mastery of English thus becomes a determining factor in scientific visibility and legitimacy.

For example, in the social sciences and education, works published by African researchers in English are more likely to be cited and gain international recognition. Canagarajah observes that “researchers who publish in English are more likely to influence global scientific debates, even if this means adopting Western conceptual frameworks” (92). This observation underscores the instrumental power of English: it is not only a language of communication but also a means of accessing global scientific decision-making spheres.

1.2 English and the Strengthening of Scientific Networks

English also facilitates the building of transnational scientific networks. In countries like Kenya and Ghana, collaborations with universities and research

centers in Europe, the United States, and Asia are conducted almost exclusively in English. These collaborations enable the exchange of expertise, the co-publication of articles, participation in international research projects, and advanced training for African doctoral students. According to Dei, “English acts as a catalyst for scientific cooperation, but at the same time it imposes production standards and paradigms originating in the Global North, which can limit the creativity and originality of local approaches” (210). Thus, English becomes a dual tool: it facilitates international integration but can also influence the direction of research to the detriment of endogenous issues.

1.3 Concrete Examples of Success

Several African initiatives illustrate the benefits of English in scientific production. In Nigeria, the University of Lagos and the University of Ife have established doctoral and publication programs in English, allowing young researchers to be immediately integrated into the international academic journal circuit. Ghana, for its part, has developed the *Ghana Journal of Science*, published primarily in English, which aims to promote local research while remaining accessible to a global readership. In Kenya, the University of Nairobi has established partnerships with European institutions, thereby facilitating access to funding and participation in international research consortia. These examples show that English plays a strategic role in African scientific development. As Canagarajah points out, “without mastery of English, African researchers risk being marginalized, as contemporary scientific production relies heavily on this language” (95).

1.4 English and the Standardization of Scientific Publications

Another advantage of English lies in its ability to standardize scientific formats and codes. Producing articles, theses, and reports in English facilitates peer review, electronic dissemination, and integration into international databases such as Scopus or Web of Science. Standardization also makes African science more accessible to the global scientific community, thereby increasing the credibility and recognition of African research.

However, this standardization means that African researchers often have to translate endogenous concepts or adapt their analyses to conform to external standards, which can sometimes lead to a loss of cultural and contextual depth. Abdoulaye notes that “local concepts are often reinterpreted or simplified to meet the expectations of international journals,

creating a gap between the knowledge produced and African reality” (32).

1.5 Assessment and Outlook

In summary, English is a crucial vector for visibility, collaboration, and scientific standardization in Africa. It allows researchers to publish in high-impact journals, participate in international networks, and benefit from funding and recognition opportunities. However, this linguistic dominance also presents limitations and creates tensions with the production of indigenous knowledge. The question of the authenticity and cultural relevance of African knowledge becomes central: how can we produce globally recognized science while preserving local specificities and indigenous paradigms?

This tension forms the starting point for the following sections, which will examine the limitations and challenges associated with the predominance of English (Section 2) and the prospects for an authentic African science (Section 3). The aim is to propose a balance between international openness and the valuing of local knowledge, in order to build an African science capable of meeting its own needs while participating in the global scientific dialogue.

2. Limits and Challenges for Endogenous Science

While English is a major vehicle for scientific production and international engagement, it also presents significant limitations for the development of an authentic African science. These limitations relate to the marginalization of local languages, the dominance of Western paradigms, and the resulting epistemological tensions. This section analyzes these issues, drawing on recent research and concrete examples from African contexts.

2.1 The Marginalization of Local Languages

One of the most immediate consequences of the predominance of English is the subordination of African languages in the scientific field. The majority of academic publications in Anglophone Africa are written in English, which limits the dissemination of knowledge within local communities. According to Dei, “scientific production in English leads to a disconnect between academic knowledge and local populations, as indigenous languages are undervalued and rarely used in research” (208). This linguistic marginalization has several implications:

1. Loss of cultural content: some endogenous concepts are

- untranslatable and lose their meaning when transposed into English.
2. Social inaccessibility: the majority of African citizens do not master English at an academic level, which limits the dissemination and practical application of the knowledge produced.
 3. Impoverishment of local cognitive frameworks: the exclusive use of English imposes foreign thought structures, sometimes incompatible with African paradigms.

Thus, science produced in English may be internationally recognized but remain disconnected from local realities, which calls into question the relevance of such production for endogenous development.

2.2 Domination of Western Paradigms

Another major issue concerns the preeminence of Western research paradigms. The majority of high-impact journals impose methodological and theoretical criteria derived from European or North American scientific traditions. Canagarajah points out that “publication standards in English often favour standardized approaches that reflect Northern conceptual frameworks, to the detriment of models and methods specific to African societies” (94). This domination has the following effect:

- To force African researchers to adapt their local research questions to make them acceptable in international circuits.
- To reduce the cognitive and epistemic diversity of African science.
- To create an imbalance between international visibility and local relevance.

For example, a researcher studying indigenous agricultural practices in Kenyan villages often has to reformulate their findings in Western conceptual language, which can alter the meaning and scope of their conclusions. This situation illustrates the tension between international integration and fidelity to indigenous knowledge.

2.3 Cognitive and Methodological Obstacles

Beyond language and paradigms, the use of English creates cognitive and methodological obstacles. Translating or adapting indigenous concepts into a foreign language can introduce interpretive biases. According to Abdoulaye, “the transposition of local knowledge into English often requires a simplification of complex ideas and a standardization of concepts, which limits the epistemic richness of African works” (34). Furthermore, the lack of

specialized training in scientific writing in English is a barrier for many young African researchers. The result is twofold: some high-quality work remains unpublished, while other work is rewritten to meet international expectations, sometimes at the cost of losing essential elements related to the African context.

2.4 Institutional and Political Challenges

The predominance of English also poses institutional and political challenges. African universities often depend on international funding, which encourages them to orient their research towards globally valued topics. This orientation can marginalize themes relevant to local development. According to Dei; “dependence on external funding can create an African science oriented by the Northern agenda, rather than by the endogenous needs of the populations” (221). This situation has several consequences:

- African researchers are adapting their projects to meet the requirements of international funders.
- National scientific planning can be influenced by foreign priorities.
- Educational policies tend to strengthen training in English rather than valuing local languages as research tools.

2.5 Implications for African Science

All of these limitations highlight the need to rethink the use of English in African scientific production. While English remains a valuable tool for international visibility, it must not become an obstacle to the recognition of indigenous knowledge. African researchers and scientific institutions face a constant tension: reconciling international demands with local authenticity. Canagarajah emphasizes this point, stating that “the construction of an authentic African science does not consist of rejecting English, but of using it as a means of mediation, while preserving endogenous paradigms and concepts” (98). This approach implies:

- The promotion of academic multilingualism, where English coexists with African languages.
- The integration of local knowledge into research and teaching programs.
- Promoting bilingual or translated publications to ensure accessibility and relevance.

3. Perspectives for an Authentic African science

Given the limitations and challenges associated with the dominance of English in scientific production in Africa, it is imperative to consider strategies for building an authentic African science, capable of reconciling international visibility with local roots. This section explores various perspectives that can strengthen the cognitive and cultural authenticity of African science while using English as a tool for communication.

3.1 Promoting Local Languages in Scientific Research

One perspective involves promoting academic multilingualism by integrating African languages into the processes of knowledge production and dissemination. According to Dei, “the use of local languages in higher education and research helps to preserve the cultural and cognitive richness of African societies while facilitating the appropriation of knowledge by communities” (213). Initiatives already exist in this direction. For example, some Nigerian universities offer bilingual theses, where indigenous concepts are written in the local language and then translated into English for international publication. This approach allows for:

- Maintain the cultural relevance of the works.
- Ensuring access to knowledge for local populations.
- Preserving the cognitive and epistemic diversity of the African continent.

Thus, rather than viewing English as the sole language of scientific production, it can be used as a mediating language, complemented by local languages to ensure the cultural and cognitive continuity of knowledge.

3.2 Integration of Endogenous Knowledge into Research Programs

The second perspective is based on the systematic integration of endogenous knowledge into research programs and higher education. According to Abdoulaye, “authentic African science can only be built by recognizing and valuing knowledge from local experiences, whether it be traditional medicine, agriculture or social organization” (39). This approach involves:

1. The systematic identification and documentation of local knowledge.
2. Adapting scientific methodologies to include endogenous approaches.
3. Training researchers to combine African paradigms and international scientific methods.

Successful examples exist in the fields of agriculture and traditional medicine.

In Ghana, some universities have integrated traditional pharmacopoeia into their pharmaceutical science programs, allowing researchers to publish in English while remaining true to local knowledge. These experiences demonstrate that authentic African scientific practice can coexist with international publication.

3.3 Bilingual Publications and Scientific Mediation

Another strategy is to encourage bilingual or multilingual publications. This means that scientific articles should be written in both English and a local language, or that they should include a full translation of key concepts. This approach allows us to:

- Facilitating access to scientific results for local communities.
- To preserve the semantic richness of endogenous knowledge.
- To ensure international visibility through publication in English.

Canagarajah emphasizes that “bilingual publications represent a promising way to reconcile international visibility and local roots, ensuring that knowledge is not decontextualized” (101). Several African journals are beginning to experiment with this model, thus creating platforms where science is both global and local.

3.4 Training and Capacity Building

For authentic African science to develop, it is crucial to strengthen the capacities of researchers. This includes:

- Training in scientific writing in English, to guarantee the quality and readability of publications.
- Learning methodologies adapted to the study of local knowledge.
- Raising awareness of the challenges of decolonizing knowledge and promoting endogenous paradigms.

Abdoulaye emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary training, stating that “African researchers must be able to navigate between international demands and local realities, using English as a tool and not as a constraint” (24).

3.5 Development of African Scientific Networks

Another perspective involves creating and strengthening African scientific networks capable of sharing experiences and promoting indigenous science. These networks would enable:

- The exchange of practices and methodologies adapted to the African context.
- The dissemination of scientific publications that respect both international standards and indigenous knowledge.
- The construction of a collective and recognized African scientific identity.

Initiatives such as the *African Academy of Sciences* or the *Network of African Science Academies* illustrate the possibility of creating platforms for African scientific exchange, where the English language is used for global communication while valuing local knowledge.

3.6 Science Policy and Institutional Support

Implementing these prospects requires institutional support and appropriate science policies. African governments and institutions must:

1. Encourage bilingual and multilingual publishing.
2. Funding research projects focused on endogenous knowledge.
3. Integrating African paradigms into university curricula.
4. Promote equitable collaborations with international partners.

According to Dei (215), “without a supportive institutional framework, African science will remain dominated by external paradigms, and endogenous knowledge will continue to be marginalized”. Public policies must therefore support the development of a pluralistic African science that respects local identities.

3.7 Implications

In short, it is possible to reconcile the use of English with the promotion of indigenous knowledge, but this requires thoughtful and coordinated strategies. Authentic African science will be built through:

- Promoting academic multilingualism.
- The integration of local knowledge into research and teaching.
- The development of bilingual publications and African scientific networks.
- Targeted training for researchers and institutional support.

These perspectives not only preserve the cultural and cognitive authenticity of African knowledge, but also guarantee its international recognition. As Canagarajah points out, “a truly authentic African science is one that succeeds

in combining global visibility and local rootedness, using English not as an imposed language, but as a tool for mediation” (104).

4: Discussion

The discussion allows us to put the results presented in the previous sections into perspective by analyzing the tensions, opportunities, and implications of using English for the production of endogenous knowledge in Africa. It is part of a critical approach aimed at informing strategies for an authentic African science, while also considering comparative experiences from other postcolonial regions.

4.1 Issues and Limitations

The preceding sections have shown that English presents both an opportunity and a challenge for African science. On the positive side, English facilitates:

- Publication in international journals.
- Participation in global research networks.
- Access to funding and scientific visibility.

However, the exclusive use of English also creates significant limitations:

1. The marginalization of local languages and indigenous knowledge.
2. The dominance of Western paradigms, often ill-suited to African contexts.
3. The decontextualization of knowledge, with a risk of loss of relevance for local societies.

Dei notes that “African science, if it limits itself to the use of English to meet international standards, risks becoming a science disconnected from its population and its endogenous needs” (212). These observations underscore the need for a delicate balance between international integration and the preservation of local authenticity.

4.2 Comparisons with other Postcolonial Regions

To better understand African issues, it is instructive to consider other postcolonial contexts. In the Anglophone Caribbean, for example, researchers have had to negotiate the coexistence of English and Creole. Some studies show that bilingual publication allows for the valorization of local knowledge while maintaining international visibility (Canagarajah 102). Similarly, in India and Sri Lanka, scientific production in English has facilitated integration into global networks but has also created tensions with national languages, limiting

access to knowledge for local populations (Abdoulaye 37). These comparisons indicate that the tension between English and local languages is a global phenomenon, but that appropriate strategies can transform this constraint into an opportunity.

4.3 Linguistic and Cognitive Mediation

The discussion also highlights the importance of linguistic and cognitive mediation. English should not be seen as an imposed language, but as a tool for dissemination and international recognition. Authentic African science relies on researchers' ability to translate and adapt indigenous knowledge without altering its meaning. According to Canagarajah, "English must be used as an instrument of intercultural mediation, allowing African knowledge to participate in the global scientific dialogue without being distorted" (106). This approach implies specialized training, faithful translations, and the integration of local languages into scientific writing.

4.4 Tensions between International Visibility and Local Relevance

The tension between international visibility and local relevance lies at the heart of the debate. Publishing in English is essential for accessing global networks, but it can create a gap between scientific output and local needs. This tension is particularly evident in:

- Applied disciplines, such as agriculture and traditional medicine, where local knowledge is essential.
- Educational policies that favour English in university education.
- Funding choices are often oriented towards projects that address international rather than local priorities.

Abdoulaye insists on the need to articulate local needs with international requirements, so that African science does not become a simple copy of Western paradigms, but remains relevant to its own societies (40).

4.5 Opportunities for a Pluralistic African Science

Despite the tensions, several opportunities are emerging to build a pluralistic and authentic African science:

1. Academic multilingualism: the coexistence of English and local languages in publishing and teaching.
2. Bilingual publications: articles and books available in English and in a local language to ensure accessibility and visibility.

3. African scientific networks: creation of consortia and platforms to pool endogenous knowledge and disseminate it internationally.
4. Institutional valorization: support from governments and universities to integrate local knowledge into research programs and funding.

Dei argues that “African science can be built in a pluralistic way, where English becomes a vehicle for international dialogue rather than a cultural constraint” (217). This approach transforms the challenge of English into a strategic advantage, capable of strengthening both global recognition and local relevance.

4.6 Implications for Science and Education Policy

The discussion also highlights the concrete implications for science and education policy in Africa:

- Universities must promote bilingual education and programs that integrate indigenous knowledge.
- Funding agencies should support projects that value both English and local languages.
- African scientific journals should adopt editorial policies that promote bilingual or multilingual publication.

These measures will help create a more balanced African scientific ecosystem, capable of meeting international requirements while remaining rooted in local cultural and cognitive realities.

4.7 Perspectives

In summary, the discussion highlights that English, while essential for international visibility, should not replace indigenous languages and knowledge. Authentic African science is based on:

1. The harmonious interplay between English and local languages.
2. The valorization of endogenous paradigms and knowledge.
3. The building of networks and institutions that promote international integration without loss of local relevance.

This approach makes it possible to envision a pluralistic, competitive and rooted African science, capable of contributing to the global scientific dialogue while remaining true to its cultural and cognitive roots.

Conclusion

This study examined the challenges, limitations, and prospects of using

English in the production of indigenous knowledge in Africa, within the framework of building an authentic African science. The results show that while English is a major driver of international visibility, scientific collaboration, and access to funding, it also presents significant constraints for the valorization of local knowledge and African languages.

The first lesson from this analysis is that the predominance of English can marginalize indigenous knowledge. Local languages are underutilized in scientific publications, leading to a loss of cultural content, an impoverishment of cognitive frameworks, and limited access for local populations to the knowledge produced. This marginalization can have negative consequences for the social, economic, and educational development of African societies, as research published in English often remains disconnected from local realities.

The second lesson concerns the dominance of Western paradigms. International scientific journals impose methodological and conceptual standards that are not always compatible with endogenous approaches. African researchers often have to adapt their work to make it acceptable, which can lead to a decontextualization of knowledge and limit the expression of African specificity in scientific production. This situation highlights a fundamental tension between global visibility and local relevance.

However, the study shows that effective strategies exist for building authentic African science. Academic multilingualism, bilingual publications, the systematic integration of indigenous knowledge into research and teaching, and the creation of African scientific networks are all avenues for reconciling international visibility with local roots. As Canagarajah) points out, “English can become an instrument of mediation rather than a factor of hegemony, allowing African knowledge to participate in the global scientific dialogue without losing its authenticity” (104).

The article also highlights the essential role of science and education policies. African governments and institutions must provide financial support for projects that value indigenous knowledge, promote bilingual education, and establish scientific journals capable of publishing in English and local languages. These measures are crucial for ensuring a balance between internationalization and cultural relevance, and for creating an environment conducive to the flourishing of African science.

In conclusion, building an authentic African science depends on the

harmonious integration of English and local languages, the valuing of indigenous knowledge, and the strengthening of the capacities of researchers and institutions. Far from being an obstacle, English can become a strategic tool if used as a means of mediation and not as an instrument of cognitive domination. The African science of tomorrow will be pluralistic, competitive, and rooted in the social, cultural, and cognitive realities of the continent, capable of engaging with the world while remaining true to its heritage.

This approach opens promising perspectives for the decolonization of knowledge, the promotion of academic multilingualism, and the development of science truly adapted to African needs. It invites researchers, institutions, and policymakers to rethink their practices so that Africa can participate fully and autonomously in the global scientific dialogue, while simultaneously building its own scientific identity rooted in its indigenous knowledge.

The literature reviewed consistently shows that English plays a dual role in African scientific production. On the one hand, it facilitates participation in international academic networks. On the other hand, it can create barriers for the recognition and transmission of indigenous knowledge systems. This duality is evident in several African contexts.

In Nigeria, English functions as the primary language of higher education and scientific publication. Universities such as the University of Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University publish the vast majority of their academic outputs in English, enabling researchers to participate in international scholarly debates and increase citation visibility. However, scholars have noted that local concepts rooted in Yoruba, Hausa, or Igbo knowledge traditions are frequently translated into English-language academic frameworks, potentially reducing their cultural specificity and contextual meaning (Ngũgĩ 28; Dei 207).

Similarly, in Ghana, English serves as the dominant language of research dissemination and academic communication. While this facilitates access to international journals and funding opportunities, it also creates a gap between scientific production and local communities, many of whom communicate primarily through indigenous languages. Research on language policy in African education suggests that this gap can limit the social impact and accessibility of scientific knowledge (Prah 45).

Kenya provides another illustrative example. Research on indigenous

agricultural knowledge demonstrates that local farming practices often contain sophisticated ecological knowledge developed through generations of observation and experimentation. Yet these practices are frequently reformulated according to Western scientific categories before publication in international journals. Such processes may increase international visibility while simultaneously decontextualizing local knowledge systems and reducing their epistemological distinctiveness (Canagarajah 94).

The literature also identifies linguistic gatekeeping as a recurring mechanism within global academic publishing. High-impact journals generally require publication in standardized academic English and often privilege theoretical and methodological approaches developed in North American and European institutions. As a result, African researchers may face additional linguistic and conceptual barriers when attempting to publish work grounded in local realities. This situation does not necessarily exclude African scholarship, but it often encourages adaptation to dominant academic norms, thereby shaping what types of knowledge are considered legitimate within international scientific communities.

The analysis therefore suggests that the challenge facing African science is not merely linguistic but epistemological. English functions simultaneously as a medium of inclusion and a mechanism of selection. While it enables access to global scientific networks, it may also influence which forms of knowledge gain recognition, how indigenous concepts are represented, and whose epistemological frameworks become dominant. These findings support the argument that multilingual approaches, bilingual publication models, and institutional support for indigenous knowledge systems are necessary to promote a more inclusive and culturally.

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