

The need for equality
in dialogue:
**When English is “the
education,”**
Indigenous
languages are
silenced.

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Gonja Ewe Akan Logba Gikyode Bimoba
Kusaal Ga Avatime Tem Animere Anufo

ENGLISH

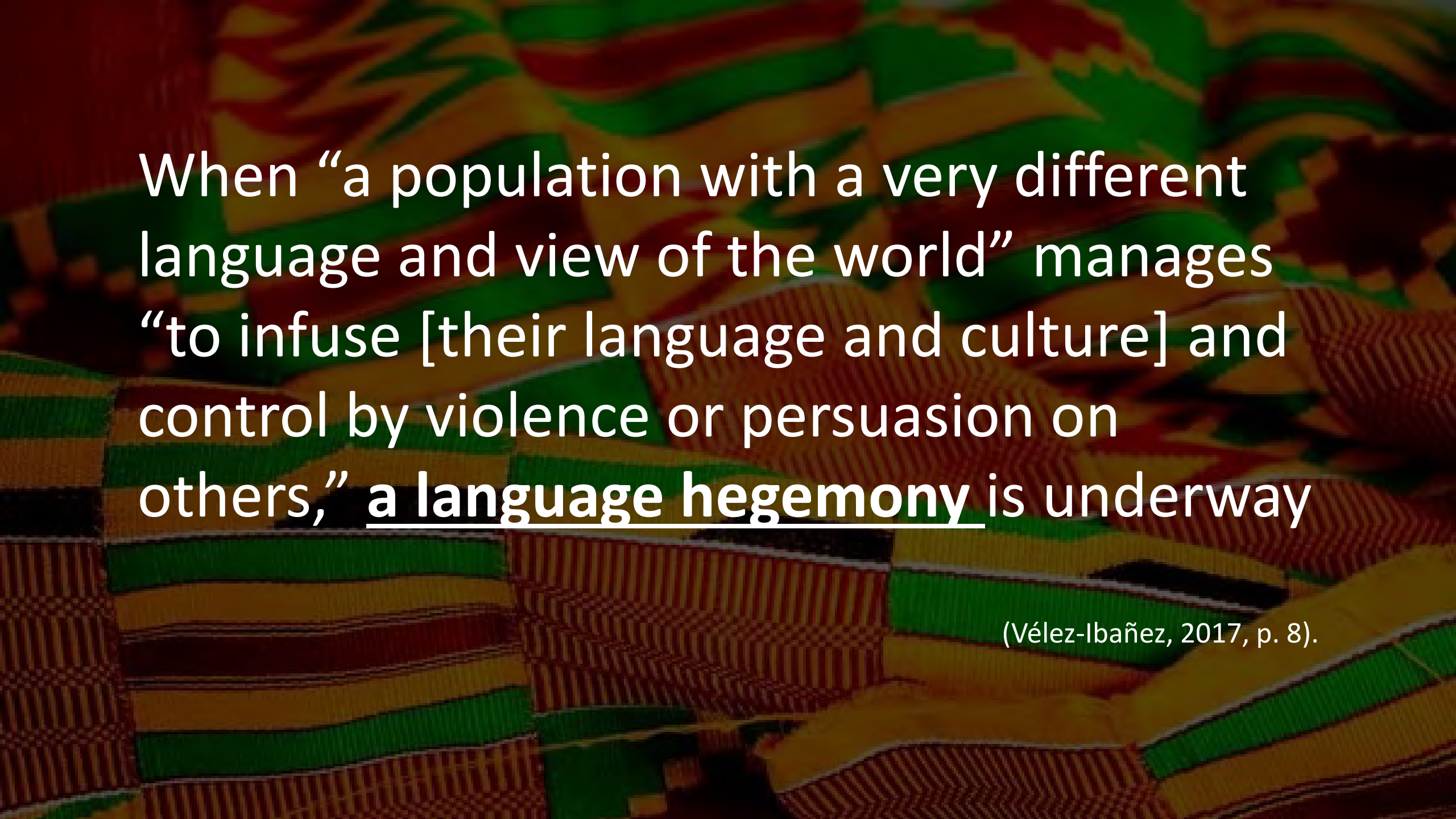
Konkomba Farefare Ahanta Nkonya Kabiye
Nzema Dagaare Dagbani Kyerepon

Why Ghanaian Languages matter...

- Students instructed in Ghanaian languages understood scientific concepts better than in English (Collison, 1974).
- Students were able unable to solve Math problems when they were worded in English (Davis, Bishop, & Seah, 2015).
- Students instructed in a Ghanaian language only for just 9 months performed better in English (Casely-Hayford and Hartwell, 2010).
- Students whose language practices included a Ghanaian language were better writers in English (Ahadzi, Ameka, & Essegbey, 2015).


Discourse about Ghanaian Languages...

- Students would rather prefer speak, read, and write in only English than speak, read, and write in a Ghanaian language (Ansah, 2014; Edu-Buandoh-Otchere, 2012; Mfum-Mensah, 2005).
- Educators considered a student illiterate if they were unable to speak, read, and write in English (Opoku-Amankwa & Brew-Hammond, 2011).
- Both parents and students think Ghanaian languages should not be a focus of study in school (Mfum-Mensah, 2005)



When “a population with a very different language and view of the world” manages “to infuse [their language and culture] and control by violence or persuasion on others,” a language hegemony is underway

(Vélez-Ibañez, 2017, p. 8).



Master narratives are ideological narratives that position the colonial master's language, values, beliefs, rituals, and symbols as superior to and civilized than the native's/colonized's.

(Vélez-Ibañez, 2017, p. 8).

Master narratives hegemonize the idea that the more the Ghanaian rejects their language, the more “English” they will become, and the more “English” they are, the more civilized and successful they will be

(Fanon, 1952; Miescher, 2008).

Question(s)

- How does the curriculum hegemonize English language practices over Ghanaian language practices and cultures?
- Are there any master narratives that position English language practices as better than Ghanaian language practices and cultures?

Method

- A Critical Discourse Analysis of the English language curriculum and Ghanaian language curriculum in senior high school.
- Using Gee's (2014) building tasks on significance, practice, identities, and connections.

Analysis: Stanzas, Units & Building Tasks

- **Significance**

- How is language being used here to build relevance for Ghanaian languages or English in this unit?

- **Practice/Activities**

- How is language being used here to enact practices/activities in Ghanaian languages or English in this unit?

- **Identities**

- How is language being used in this unit to depict or enact identities in Ghanaian languages or English?

- **Connections**

- How is language being used in this unit to make Ghanaian Languages and English connected, relevant or irrelevant to or disconnected from each other?

Data

- Current Teaching Syllabus for English Language (123 pages).
- Current Teaching Syllabus for Ghanaian Languages (53 pages).
- Examination Syllabus and Regulations for the English Language (10 pages).
- Examination Syllabus and Regulations for Ghanaian Languages (6 pages)

Findings

1. English as a need

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2. **Ghanaian Languages as an option**



English as a need

The language used to describe the study of English in all the documents analyzed conveys an urgency for students to be proficient in English

Language is the very essence of our humanity and an important as well as effective tool for socialization.

As individuals or members of a social group, our ability to function effectively and efficiently in almost all spheres of life depends fundamentally on our language skills.

In Ghana, English is used as the official language and medium of instruction in our schools from upper primary school level to all higher levels.

The need to study English is, therefore, crucial for students as well as all sectors of the population since it is the principal medium for teaching and learning, for official work and for international communication.

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- write about incidents in English that are appropriate to specified audiences and situations;
- organize materials in paragraphs that are chronologically, spatially and logically coherent;
- control sentence structures accurately
- exhibit variety in the choice of sentence patterns;
- comply with the rules of grammar, spelling and punctuation;
- comprehend written and spoken English;
- recognize implied meaning, tones, attitudes etc. in literary texts
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Students are to have English ways
of speaking, doing, and being.



2. Ghanaian Languages as an option

The language of the Ghanaian languages curriculum does not convey the same urgency and need to study Ghanaian languages as it does in the English curriculum

Language is not only a medium of communication, it is a library in which the other elements of culture – customs and institutions, the philosophy, technology, architecture, medicine, medical practice, etc. of a people are stored.

Language remains the secret of the continued existence of all ethnic groups, and the most reliable means through which these other elements of culture are transmitted from generation to generation.

Culture defines who and what a people were; who and what they are, and who and what they are likely to be.

The teaching and learning of a language and its culture is therefore the way for ensuring the continued existence of an ethnic group into the future.

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evaluate information in reading material
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articulate, experience and express what is felt and what is imagined.

recognise implicit meaning and attitudes.

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*Students are to appreciate
Ghanaian languages but use them
less.*



Currently, Ghanaian languages at the senior high school level are optional while English is required for all students in Ghana.

What does this mean?

- Placing a priority on English, education continues to perpetuate the **master narrative** that social, economic, national, and individual development occurs only through the colonial language – English.
- By placing less emphasis on Ghanaian languages in the curriculum, the discourse students receive, is that Ghanaian languages serve no purpose for society beyond viewing them as objects of appreciation.

So what?

- The voices of Ghanaian language speakers are silenced in places of power, decision making, and in international relations.
- Ghanaian languages are less likely to survive in the future.



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Thank you

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