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Language Choice and the Problematics of Ideology in the Pre- and Post-Independence Ghanaian Press: A Historical and Cultural Analysis

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Abstract: This study adds to the existing literature on the history of the Ghanaian press from pre-colonial times to 1992, focusing on language: its choice and ideological, socio-cultural, and political ramifications. While the history of the press has received massive scholarly attention, the same cannot be said of language and its use in historical accounts. Thus, from a historical research perspective, employing an analytical and interpretive study of secondary data sources, and underpinned by cultural theories such as linguistic imperialism and hegemony, this study analyses how language was featured in the press during the research period and the implications thereof. This analysis shows that various institutions and individuals exploited language to foster narrow socio-cultural, ideological, and political agendas in the Gold Coast, later Ghana. This study also revealed that language use and its ideological forces during the pre- and immediate post-independence periods contributed immensely to Ghanaian media's current state and Ghanaians' general language attitudes. This study's significance lies in the realisation that language, as a cultural artifact, and its choice, use, and consumption could have far-reaching consequences for the self-realisation, actualisation, and general progress of a society. Thus, African societies should be mindful of the ideological implications of language choices not just in the press but also in other societal contexts. This study, therefore, invites further studies on language and its use in the media, especially from 1992, for a more comprehensive appreciation of the issues raised in this study.

Keywords: English and indigenous Ghanaian newspapers; Ghanaian press history; ideology and linguistic imperialism; language use; pre- and post-independence Ghana

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1. Introduction

The Ghanaian media, as we have it today, began in 1822 when the first newspaper was published in English in the then Gold Coast. Since then, the Ghanaian press and the media industry have had a chequered history and undergone significant developments and changes, and the history has been told and retold. The historical accounts have often come from three perspectives. The first portrays the colonialists as bringing the press to serve their needs and enhance their colonisation enterprise. The second recounts vividly how the indigenous press[1] vigorously supported Ghanaian and other African nationalists to wrestle Ghana's political independence from the British (see, for example, Lindberg 2006; Nyamnjoh 2005; Ake 2000; Bourgault 1995; Karikari 1996). And the third focuses on how the press evolved thereafter (see, for example, Karikari 2007; Hasty 2005; Gadzekpo 1997). These perspectives capture the pre-independence period, the immediate post-independence era until 1992, and the period after 1992, respectively. The first two periods usually present the struggles of the press against suppression and muzzling by the colonial government and later by various indigenous political regimes, while the third focuses on the liberalisation and diversification of the press from 1992. The current state of the Ghanaian media was shaped by the positive and negative experiences of these periods.

Yet, it is remarkable that the historical narratives, detailing how the press began, its vicissitudes and travails, and its developments over the years, have found little space for crucial sociocultural imperatives that should not be overlooked in a portrayal of the historical development of the Ghanaian press. For example, Gadzekpo (2005) berated the near-silence about women and their socio-cultural and historical roles in historical narratives in the press. The author argued for a proper representation of women and their roles in the historical construction of the Ghanaian press. Also subdued in literature is language, its choice and use, and the ideological, socio-cultural, and political ramifications thereof. It must be pointed out that available literature on the language of the press occurs mostly outside of the historical perspective to deal with, among others, language imperialism (Edu-Buandoh 2016; Agyekum 2013), newsroom cultures (Wumpini 2019; Fosu and Akpojivi 2015; Adedeji 2015), ideology and power relations (Anyidoho 2008), and political economy (Owolabi 2021). It is therefore reasonable to say the historical narratives have been incomplete without acknowledging and investigating language and its role in the various accounts. An exception is Anyidoho (2008, 2016), whose ethnographically focused research has produced seminal works: Ethnography of Print and Broadcast Media in Ghana (2016) and Ideologies of Language and Print Media in Ghana (2008).

Consequently, this desk study adds to existing knowledge about the evolution of the press in Ghana with a focus on language. The specific objective is to investigate the use of language and its ideological, socio-cultural, and political implications in the evolution of the press. In this study, media and press may be understood as interchangeable, referring to news media of newspapers, radio, and television. In terms of scope, this study covers the pre-independence and post-independence periods to 1992. It refers to both printed and broadcast news media (as may apply) from a historical perspective and adopts a critical approach that draws on relevant linguistic, press, and cultural theories.

This analysis, covering from the 19th century through independence to 1992, shows that the choice and use of language in the news media in Gold Coast, later Ghana, were inspired by socio-cultural, ideological, and political considerations with far-reaching consequences.

2. Language Ideologies and Their Socio-Cultural Ramifications

Language primarily functions as a means of communication, enabling people to access information, express themselves, and give directives, including sharing aesthetic, phatic, and personal feelings, opinions, values, and experiences. Finegan (2012, p. 5) argued that language is an instrument of knowledge, a "vehicle of thought, a system of expression that mediates the transfer of thoughts from one person to another". Thus, language makes it possible for society to generate and appreciate information about social life, culture, and reality.

Language is strongly linked to ethnicity and culture (Wumpini 2019; Obeng and Adegbija 1999). It is not easy to pin down "culture" in a definition (Mahadi and Jafari 2012), but suffice it to say that it may encapsulate the totality of what uniquely identifies a group of people (Obeng and Adegbija 1999): their language, epistemologies, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing, social norms, taboos and values, and so on. Mahadi and Jafari (2012) and Bodomo (1996) have explained how central language is to the establishment and maintenance of cultural manifestations. The cultural genes of a people are generated and expressed through language, thereby making language indispensable in the cultural advancement of any society. The ominous implication is that a society that loses or de-emphasises its language risks obliterating its identity and stunting its cultural development.

Beyond its uses, functions, and cultural underpinnings, language is also an important carrier of ideology. Ideology, as a shared system of knowledge (Woolard 2021), is ordinarily a neutral concept. However, it rarely occurs in a neutral sense but often constructs a pejorative connotation or a false sense of language-based awareness of reality. And this often occurs insidiously, frequently carrying moral and political meanings. Through language use, ideology overtly or discreetly manufactures differentiation in social life often

leading to the domination of some languages and speakers over others. Thus, ideologies motivate people's choice of language and the way they use it.

The choice of language in communication occurs as a function of language ideologies in society (Perullo and Fenn 2000). Language ideologies imply the beliefs and interests people have when they choose a particular language for communication. Language ideologies, in this sense, may impose value differentiation among people based on the type and nature of language used. People who use some languages or a form of a language may enjoy some recognition more than others who use a different language or form of that language. For example, in Ghana, the introduction of English as part of the imperial project, together with colonisation, partly accorded the (English) language and its culture a preeminent status in the multilingual Gold Coast/Ghanaian society. That is why Ghanaians may prefer English to be used in formal public spaces to an indigenous language (Guerini 2007). It is common knowledge in the media space in Ghana that English medium radio stations like *Joy FM* and *Citi FM* are seen as serious stations for educated journalists and consumers, while the indigenous language radio stations are regarded as stations for "ordinary" people. Thus, language ideologies can turn some participants' practices into symbolic capital with socio-economic rewards and status differentiation.

From an African perspective, scholars, such as Agyekum (2013) and Edu-Buandoh (2016) have explained how language and its use can create ideological and power relations. These researchers explain how colonialism provides a good example of how a language could assume a perceived superior relationship with other languages. The language of the powerful or coloniser assumes a perceived superior posture to dominate the language(s) of the colonised, often with the tacit complicity of the colonised.

Edu-Buandoh (2016) saw colonialism and imperialism as interchangeable concepts. The author argued from a linguistic perspective that *imperialism* is mostly ideological and thrives on dominating other cultures and political structures mostly through language (Edu-Buandoh 2016). For example, and arguably, colonisation has induced many African societies to privilege foreign languages such as French, English, and Portuguese over their native languages (Guerini 2007). According to Phillipson (2009, p. 780), "Linguistic imperialism is the notion that certain languages dominate others internationally. It is the way nation-states privileged one language, and often sought actively to eradicate others, forcing their speakers to shift to the dominant language". Agyekum (2013, pp. 87–88) provides a description of imperialism that speaks directly to the Ghanaian context:

> [A] linguistic situation where the indigenous people are gradually conscientised to shun their indigenous languages and adopt foreign languages because of the benefits they expect to derive from them. They are made to believe that their languages cannot be used in any transaction in education, economics, science and technology but instead, a foreign language is the best.

Thus, Agyekum raises issues about how Africans are manipulated to form certain language-based (un)desirable attitudes and tastes for the colonisers' language. The supposed functional superiority of the colonisers' languages to indigenous African languages has been contested in arguments eloquently expressed by Edu-Buandoh (2016). Nevertheless, the impact of English in the socio-economic and political space of Ghana leaves little doubt about the imperialistic positioning of English in Ghana. This situation began in the colonial era with the news media playing a key role therein.

According to Conboy (2007, p. 12), news carries social and political power and is crucial in helping to construct a normative view that regulates the interaction of people in society. Ideology is inherently associated with the press as an institution of information production and dissemination. An understanding of language issues related to the press, particularly during the pre- and immediate post-independence era of Ghana, should shed light on the contestations that marked the choice and use of language in the press at the time and the possible consequences beyond those times. It follows from a view that the press and its language represent one of the major means by which some ideologies are

formed and consumed. The language selected to present news is inseparable from the ideologies implied by the news since the ideology occurs in the language.

Scholars have also taken a more radical view of the ideological role of the press beyond the innocent reproduction of power and dominance. Conboy (2010, p. 10) argued that the press has not been an unwilling tool in the hands of the powerful in society but has been involved in using language to create various ideas that often insidiously influence people's beliefs and attitudes. This means the press, through its choice of language in, particularly, a multilingual environment, may consciously or unconsciously construct relations of power, dominance, and social inequality (Matheson 2005).

3. Methods

This study employed historical research (Hassan 2024) and depended on secondary sources for data. Thus, published works on language choice and use in the Ghanaian press covering the research period were analysed and interpreted to understand the overt and covert influences and motivations in the language choices and uses and the overall implication on the development of the press and Ghanaian society. The analysis depended on secondary sources that have (a) investigated and/or presented the history of the Ghanaian press, (b) described the language situation in Ghana, (c) discussed ownership of the press, (d) discussed language attitudes, (e) discussed language ideologies about Ghana, and (f) discussed linguistic imperialism. An extensive search for references for the critical data on newspapers, ownership, and language choices during the research period yielded an absence of comprehensive studies on these areas except for Anyidoho (2008, 2016), Owusu (2011), Bourgault (1995), and Jones-Quartey (1975), which were used. These references are the most authentic published sources on the pre- and immediate post-independence newspapers in Ghana. The analysis yielded themes around the language situation in Ghana over the research period, the pre-English and indigenous medium newspapers, the immediate post-independence newspapers and language use, and the language ideologies and literacy in the press. These themes constructed the rest of the discussion in the subsequent sections.

4. The Language Situation in Ghana before and after the Arrival of the Press

The language situation in Ghana from pre-colonial times has received much research attention. Writers like Bodomo (1996), Kropp-Dakubu (1988), and others have provided detailed analyses of the language situation of now-Ghana, covering societies in the northern and southern parts of the country. According to Boahen (1975), the pre-Gold Coast settlers were made up of two language subfamilies, the Gur and the Kwa that settled in the northern and southern parts of the Volta River, respectively. The writer submitted further that these two main language subfamilies reflected the dominant ethnic groups with further subdivisions in the territory. For example, the Kwa "mother" language, had three subcategories: the Akan, the Ga-Adangbe, and the Ewe, each of which had further sub-ethnic and dialect divisions. The Gur, towards the north, also had three main linguistic subgroups: the Gurma, Grusi, and Mole Dagbani. These settlements and linguistic patterns have remained up to contemporary times. Indeed, researchers are unanimous that before Europe made its first contact with the then-Gold Coast, the various people of the area, now identified as Ghana, were living as defined states and as distinct ethnic linguistic groups (Obeng and Adegbija 1999; Bodomo 1996).

Language is fundamental to these groups, and it functioned as a major element that identified and bound the people into autonomous cultural groups. As Wumpini (2019, p. 237) noted, "[Today,] language remains one of the most important aspects of ethnic identity articulation in many African countries". Through their languages, the various groups expressed their unique cultural values and saw themselves as the same people. Existing literature identifies various patterns of the ethnic groups and their languages, but Bodomo (1996)'s classification could offer a close approximation of the precolonial period, which may largely reflect the current situation. This author categorised the languages into

ten language subgroups with their corresponding languages or dialects as follows (see Table 1).

Table 1. Major ethnic groups and their sub-groups and/or languages (Bodomo 1996).

Major Groups	Languages
Akan	Agona, Akuapem Twi, Akyem, Asante Twi, Brong, Fante, Kwahu, and Wasa
Mabia	Dagbane, Dagaare, Gurenne, Kusaal, Mampruli, Buli, Waale, Talni, Birifor, Nanuni, Nabit, Konni, and Hanga-Kamara
Gbe	Ewe, Fon, Aja, and Mina
Ga-Dangbe	Ga, Dangbe, Ada, Shai, Krobo
Gurma	Konkomba, Moba, and Bassari
Guang	Gonja, Gichode, Nchumburu, Krachi, Nkonya, Anum-Boso (Gwa), Kyerepong (Okyere), Larteh, Awutu-Efutu, and Nawuri
Nzema	Nzema, Sehwi, Anyi (Aowin), Ahanta, and Anufo (Chakosi)
Grusi	Kasem, Isaaleng, Chakali, Tampulma, Vagla, and Mo
Buem	Adele, Lelemi, Bowiri, Sekpele, Siwu, Santrokofi, Logba, and Avatime
Nafaanra	Nkuraeng, Nafaanra, and Ntrubo-Chala

These languages are broad categories with various sub-languages and dialects.

Concerning speakers, Akan and its various sub-languages had the most speakers in the territory in terms of native speakers and those who spoke it as a second language (Ansah 2008; Guerini 2007; Bodomo 1996). Ansah (2008) relied on Ghana's population census to classify the languages into six broad groups in order of high to low speakers as follows: Akan, Mole-Dagbani, Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, Guan, and others. This trend is replicated in the results of the Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census (Ghana Statistical Service 2021, pp. 36, 50), which identifies the following groups with a corresponding percentage of native speakers of the language(s) associated with each group.[2]

ETHNIC GROUP	PERCENTAGE
Akan	46
Mole-Dagbani	19
Ewe	12
Ga-Adangbe	7
Gurma	6
Guan	3
Grusi	3
Others	4

This was the linguistic context in which the English language came to contest for a foothold, and this trend persisted until the arrival of the press and to current times with no indication that the situation would change any time soon. Thus, the evolution of the press in Ghana is strongly and intricately implicated in a passionate multilingual environment that should inform any serious discussion of the history of the media in Ghana.

5. The Pre-Independence English Newspapers and Language Use

It is common knowledge that modern technologically driven mass media began with newspapers. Following the same trend, the newspaper was the first of such mass media in the territory known as the Gold Coast. Before the arrival of the newspaper, people of the territory were already engaging in mass communication in their languages, using traditional forms such as talking drums, fire, gong-gong, etc. Consequently, references to the newspaper as the first mass medium in Africa could only apply to modern technologically driven mass media forms.

Concerning the introduction of the press in sub-Saharan Africa, Karikari (2007, p. 13) provides four sources: "The colonial state, the European settlers, the Christian missionary institutions, and the early African educated elites". The first newspapers came through the first three sources and occurred between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first Anglophone newspapers in sub-Saharan Africa were *The Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser* (1801) in Sierra Leone, *The Royal Gold Coast Gazette and Commercial Intelligencer* (1822) in Gold Coast, and *Liberia Herald* (1826) in Liberia. Thus, newspapers, and for that matter modern mass communication, began in the sub-region long before Gold Coast came under complete control of the British in 1902. *The Royal Gold Coast Gazette and Commercial Intelligencer*, like *The Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser*, was owned by the colonial government, while the *Liberian Herald* was owned by Charles Force (Mytton 1983), a Western-influenced ex-slave from America. As would be expected, these newspapers were written in English and were established purposely to benefit the White settlers who required information about happenings back in their home country as well as in their new "home". Therefore, the newspapers mainly carried perspectives of the Empire, leaving out African views and concerns (Nyamnjoh 2005; Bourgault 1995).

It must be emphasised that the choice of English as the language of this early newspaper occurred naturally since there was no other choice available. The Whites, most of whom were from England, spoke English, so it was a matter of course for the newspaper to be published in a language understandable by the news producer and targeted readers.

It must be noted that the technologically driven means of mass communication, such as newspapers, were introduced in the colonised territories of the empire at the time in colonial languages such as English, French, and Portuguese as a natural consequence of the history of the printing press (Karikari 2007). As such, newspapers came to the Gold Coast as a colonial and imperial transplant into cultural and linguistic environments lacking such forms of communication. The argument can therefore be made that the use of English in the early newspapers might have been initially without any ulterior motive. *The Royal Gold Coast Gazette and Commercial Intelligencer* operated for a few years and went out of circulation.

Other newspapers were established thereafter between 1833 and 1957 by the colonial government and private ownership (see Appendices A and B). The private owners were mostly missionary groups and individuals. As reported by Anyidoho (2016), the pre-independence governments produced *Gold Coast Assize* (1883), *Gold Coast News* (1884), and *Gold Coast Pioneer* (1921) in English in line with the tradition of the first newspaper (see Appendix A). Some religious groups also started English-medium newspapers for evangelistic rather than political purposes. For example, the Methodist Mission established the *Christian Messenger* (1857), *Christian Report* (1857), and *Gold Coast Methodist* (1886). The Catholic Mission also produced the *Gold Coast Catholic* (later *Catholic Standard*) in 1926 (Appendix A). These Christian publications targeted the native people more than the British settlers.

This brings to the fore the issue of literacy because, whether written in English or an indigenous language, such documents require the ability of the consumer to read and understand them. Therefore, the government and missionaries became interested in the literacy of the indigenous people. They established schools to teach learners English and the indigenous languages so that the natives could access information from the Bible and other Christian scriptures, including the newspapers of the missionaries and government. The first such school was opened in the Elmina Castle early in 1572 by Catholic missionaries (Nsiah 2020). Later, the colonial government also opened some schools to train the natives to work as clerks in government offices and White-led private businesses. This began the inclusion of native Gold Coasters in the reading culture in a hitherto oral society of the territory.

Later, individual native Ghanaians, who had benefited from the missionary and government schools, entered the newspaper industry, initially as amateurs and later as commercial journalists (Anyidoho 2016). Their productions provided an alternative to

the government newspapers, and this yielded many newspapers up to 1927 and beyond (Anyidoho 2016, p. 105). From the titles, it is noticed the newspapers were published in English while also indicating the socio-cultural and political situation at the time (Appendix A). Anyidoho (2016, p. 105) notes rightly that: "the names of the newspapers such as *pioneer, royal, echo, people*, and *leader* suggested the involvement of socio-political interest groups and advocates as well as various initiatives in media production during this phase of journalism". The publications were meant to spread nationalist information among the natives and politically empower them to agitate for independence. Thus, although published in English, such newspapers adopted a hostile posture towards the colonial government leading to antagonism between the colonial administration (the state) and the African press (the private press), which invited repressive laws from the government to control the press (Anyidoho 2016). This antagonistic relationship between the early pre-independence Ghanaian governments and the private press was to persist into post-colonial confrontations between the state and private media.

6. The Pre-Independence Indigenous Language Newspapers and Language Use

It must be pointed out that researchers on the history of the Ghanaian press have not done justice to newspapers published in indigenous languages. This observation is not just within the pre-independence period, but also throughout the history of the press in Ghana. As indicated earlier, most research on the Ghanaian media has ignored indigenous language newspapers outright or just provided sweeping statements about the existence of some local language newspapers without specific discussion of any.

However, the available literature indicates that many indigenous language publications circulated during the pre-independence period as captured in Appendix B. Some of them, as indicated by Anyidoho (2016, p. 105), included the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society's *Sika Nsona Sanegbalo* (Christian Messenger for the Gold Coast) in 1859, the Catholic Mission's *Mia Holo* (Our Friend) in 1894, and *Nutifafa Na Mi* (Peace Be with You) in 1903 by the Basel Mission. Remarkably, all these newspapers were published by the colonial government and missionaries. Ironically, the indigenous people themselves, whose languages were used in such publications, appeared not to be interested in publications in their own languages. They rather published in English, thereby making a crucial statement about their attitude to their languages and cultures, at least from the perspective of the press.

Contrary to findings that indigenous language media were viable in some African countries (Ogundimu 1996), these Ghanaian indigenous language newspapers, like most of the English language variants, were not successful. Attempts to run a local language newspaper continued even until the 1990s, but none succeeded (Anyidoho 2008). Various explanations have been provided in the literature about why the local language newspapers failed. Although funding problems and limited readership could be factors (Bergen 2018), Anyidoho (2008) ascribes this to peculiar language ideologies in Ghana that make people prefer English publications to those in the local languages. But overall, as was the case before independence, the postcolonial press, both in English and native languages, contributed little to the cultural traditions, norms and mores, and identities of the natives perhaps because of the appeal of English, as explained by Edu-Buandoh (2016).

7. Broadcasting during the Pre-Independence Era

Broadcasting in the territory began with radio in 1935, over a century after the first newspaper was launched. It began with a relay station called ZOY (later to become Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)), which transmitted news in English from London to Accra (Bourgault 1995). With time, more relay stations were set up in Kumasi, Koforidua, and Sekondi (Bourgault 1995). Gadzekpo et al. (2020, citing Ansah 1985) argued that broadcasting was introduced in the Gold Coast, like other colonised territories, to serve a propaganda purpose of educating the public about policies and events of the British Empire. The intention was to use radio to perpetuate an imperialistic agenda (Edu-Buandoh 2016) and not to include the natives in national affairs (Gadzekpo et al. 2020). The radio programmes were

usually produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which ensured that the productions served the ideological intentions of the government (Gadzekpo et al. 2020). The exclusive use of English on radio projected the English language as the preferred and civilised language and culture, which the natives must imbibe.

However, the colonial government soon realised that beyond the public service function of the radio, propaganda could be produced insidiously to the people through their own languages via radio for a better imperialistic effect. According to Blankson (2005, p. 6), this shift to indigenous broadcasting was because the government realised that radio broadcasting "must use vernacular languages if the programmes were to be understood by the natives". From 1939, broadcasting began in Hausa, Akan, Ewe, and Dagbani (Jones-Quartey 1968). Local language radio broadcasting could have been introduced at the time for war mobilisation purposes since the Second World War (WW2) began at the time. The overarching purpose of the use of indigenous languages was to reach and influence many natives in ways that could serve the interest of the coloniser (Gadzekpo et al. 2020). Even so, only a little time was allocated to indigenous language broadcasting with all media attention on English as the bearer of important and serious information. Not surprisingly, overt imperialistic tendencies began to show at the time since it became fashionable among the natives to be able to speak and write English the way it was heard on the radio. Therefore, the pre-independence radio contributed immensely to the processes that established a hegemonic and imperialistic power of English as we have it today.

8. The Immediate Post-Independence Press and Language Use

The immediate post-independence press until 1992 also presents noteworthy language dynamics. As indicated earlier, the run-up to Ghana's independence in 1957, particularly from 1930, witnessed many newspapers being established by indigenous people to spur the agitation for independence (See Appendices A and B). However, by independence, most of these newspapers had folded up, with only four active newspapers remaining to provide political information. They were the *Ghanaian Times*, *Accra Evening News* (which were already under the control of the President), *Daily Graphic*, and *Ashanti Pioneer* (based in Kumasi). The others had collapsed possibly because they were established to contribute to the independence struggle, and once that was achieved, the newspapers became redundant or lost their raison d'etre.

Thus, by the time Dr. Kwame Nkrumah assumed power as Ghana's first President, the ground was fertile for the state to capture and use the press to advance personal and national political interests. By then, some journalists of the private press and not-so-effective private newspapers had joined either the *Daily Graphic* or the newspapers of the Convention People's Party (CPP), the party of the Nkrumah-led Government. Karikari (1992) argued that the emergence and success of the *Daily Graphic* at the time had thrown many of the African-owned newspapers out of the press market or weakened them significantly. Thus, Dr. Nkrumah took advantage of the situation to capture and control the press. He bought the *Daily Graphic* in 1964, adding it to the stable of the state press. The only surviving private and alternative press at the time was the *Ashanti Pioneer*. However, the editor was arrested and jailed in 1962 under the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) for "publishing subversive information" leading to the collapse of the newspaper. Remarkably, the surviving newspapers were published in English.

Quite apart from the desire to put the press under state control, which provided a reason for openly discouraging private ownership and participation (Gadzekpo 1997), the ideology suggested that the government would use the press to restore the language and cultural heritage of Ghana. This would be by elevating the indigenous languages and de-emphasising the dominant use of English in official public spaces, including the press. However, disappointingly, all the prominent newspapers remained published in English. Nkrumah's regime made it known that English was the foremost language of international integration and other opportunities, thereby putting an official stamp of premium on competency in English. Even the country's educational policy at the time

generally favoured English: from 1957 until Nkrumah was ousted in 1966, English was the only language of instruction from primary one to university (Owu-Ewie 2006, p. 77). Thus, the immediate post-independence period lacked an enabling socially and nationally supportive impetus for the development of the native languages.

This is not to suggest that attempts were not made to establish local language newspapers at this stage. According to Owusu (2011), between 1950 and 1960, the government set up some newspapers, eight of which were in various indigenous languages (see Appendix B) to foster adult literacy in a government's non-formal education initiative. Agyekum (2013) also mentions a newspaper published in Akan called *Nkwantabisa*, while *Graphic* also started an Akan newspaper called *Graphic Nsempa* in the 1990s, although it did not last. From 1960 until 1992, a few more attempts were made: three newspapers, *Kpodoga* (Government), *Wonsuom* (UNESCO) (Obeng-Quaidoo 1988), and *Atumpani* (Government) were published in 1976, 1983, and 1989, respectively. But since all the attention was on the English medium newspapers, these indigenous ones suffocated and went out of operation.

After Nkrumah, other political regimes, cutting across authoritarian and democratic, came and went until 1992. Yet, the language situation for newspapers remained as it was at independence. The state controlled the press and proscribed private ownership, which made sure the status quo that privileged English in the printed press remained. This was coordinated with the general sociolinguistic situation where English continued to enjoy dominance and was used in all the critical sectors of the political economy with the local languages relegated to bearing trivial and popular content.

After independence, radio continued to broadcast predominantly in English alongside some of the indigenous languages. GBC, by the late 1960s, operated GBC Radio 1 and 2. Radio 2 began in 1968 as a commercial service and broadcast exclusively in English, while Radio 1 continued to broadcast in some indigenous languages. In the 1960s, GBC broadcast national and regional programmes in five native languages on Radio 1: Akan, Ga, Ewe, Dagbani, Hausa, and Nzema, while Dagaare, Gurune, Kusaal, Buile, Sisaal, and Gonja were added later in the 1980s (Ansah 1979). Thus, until the deregulation of the airwaves in the mid-1990s, GBC Radio 1 continued to ration national and regional news in some of the local languages, with no stand-alone station broadcasting in an indigenous language.

The broadcasting trends in Ghana changed slightly from 1965 with the addition of television (TV), which was managed by GBC as Ghana Television (GTV). Until 1992, it was also controlled by the state with almost no room for private participation, thereby suffering the fate already discussed regarding radio. From its inception, GTV gave a huge portion of its air space to broadcasting programmes in English and accorded little space to the local languages.

9. The Pre-1993 Press, Language Ideologies, and Literacy

To better appreciate the language underpinnings and implications of this study's discussion, it is important to examine more closely the language and ownership situation of the pre-and post-independence newspapers, the literacy contexts of the research period, and some ideological implications. This is because of the important place of newspapers in the development of the Ghanaian press and the relatively structured significance and advantage of newspapers in knowledge production and maintenance. Appendices A and B present a good impression of the linguistic and ownership patterns of the newspapers published over the research period. Forty-eight newspapers were published, thirty in English and eighteen in the indigenous languages (these numbers may not be exhaustive because of the dearth of systematic literature on the issue.) Nearly all these occurred before independence in 1957; in fact, only two English and three indigenous language newspapers were added after independence. The tables below provide some insightful information on the language and ownership patterns of the publications.

Of the publications in English, as indicated in Table 2, 80% were private/personal and government ownership; the former was 60%. As indicated earlier, most of the private owners were African nationalists who established the newspapers to support the inde-

pendence struggle. Indeed, the two "unknown" items in the Table 2, *Liberator* and *New Nation,* could belong to the private/personal group because of the agitative overtones of the titles. A total of 72% of the pre-independence private/personal newspapers were politically oriented and owned by African nationalists, while the remaining 20%, such as the *Daily Graphic*, were apolitical. The data indicate that before independence, government and Christian newspapers constituted only 28% (14% each). These findings, thus, support the drama, tensions, and contestations in the literature between the colonial government and nationalists for political power. Four newspapers operated immediately after independence from 1957, three of them (*Daily Graphic, Accra Evening News {later Ghanaian Tines},* and *Ashanti Pioneer*) surviving the transition to the post-independence period, with government controlling all, except the *Ashanti Pioneer*.

Table 2. English medium newspapers (ownership).

Ownership	No.
Government	6
Christian	4
Private/Personal	18
Unknown	2
TOTAL	30

Table 3 indicates that newspapers were published in six indigenous languages with Akan (44%) and Ewe (24%) being the dominant languages. This reflects the general population trends and written productions in the indigenous languages at the time. Regarding ownership, many of the newspapers (56%) were established by the government, indicating the government's efforts at reaching the indigenous people with its messages. Many of these government publications occurred from 1951 in the government's efforts to enhance adult literacy in the indigenous languages (Bergen 2018). Christians also commanded 22% with the remaining private/personal newspapers run by NGOs and other individuals who had purposes other than politics (Bergen 2018), leaving the African nationalists with almost no participation in this space.

Table 3. Indigenous language medium newspapers (languages and ownership).

Language	No.	Ownership	No.
Akan	8	Government	10
Ewe	5	Christian	4
Ga	2	Private/Personal/NGO/	None
Dagbani	1	UNESCO	4
Kasem	1		
Nzema	1		
TOTAL	18	TOTAL	18

One cannot ignore revealing issues in the language and ownership patterns. As expected, each owner should have had a readership in mind and chose a language to reflect the socio-cultural and ideological orientation of that intended reader. Yet, interestingly, almost all the native-owned newspapers before 1931 were published in the colonial language, a language spoken by a few indigenous (educated) Africans. It must be stated that a few native-owned newspapers, such as *Asenta* (meaning, *News*) (1935), *Amanson* (meaning, *People*) (1937), and *Amansuon* (meaning, *All Nations*) (1943), all in Akan, were published later from 1935 (Anyidoho 2016), but they were apolitical and failed, leaving English as the dominant language of the press.

The above picture should raise questions about the supposed influence of the indigenous press in the independence struggle as has been commonly touted in historical narratives. The argument is that very few of the native Ghanaians could understand

English at the time, meaning the newspapers could not be directly speaking to many of the natives principally for whom the newspapers were published (Fosu 2014). Possibly, few African elites read the newspapers and used the two-step-flow approach to draw the support of the illiterate population. Additionally, the use of English meant the newspapers contributed little to the development of the indigenous languages and cultures.

The analysis suggests an instrumental and ideological use of language to achieve narrow and factional interests. The governments used English and the indigenous languages to produce hegemonic and imperialist ideologies targeting both the African-educated (mostly European-sponsored) elites and the illiterate populations. This is supported by the meanings of the names of the newspapers. Titles such as *Gold Coast Assize*, *Gold Coast Pioneer*, and *Gold Coast Weekly Review* indicated the owner's attachment to the territory, the owner's leading role, and keen observation of events. Similarly, the government indigenous newspapers had titles such as *Akan* Akwansosem and *Akan Nkwantabisa* implying "Akan news" and "asking for directions in Akan", respectively, which shows the owner's desire to inform the people to shape their decisions and actions. The African nationalists also appropriated English as a weapon of war to reach the government, the educated natives, and the world at large to register their demand for political power. The nationalist newspapers had titles such as *Western Echo*, *Gold Coast People*, *Ghana Statesman*, and *Liberator*, among others, collectively indicating their differential pride as natives fighting for the freedom of their people. As history would show in the immediate post-independence period, this demand was for personal gratification. And the missionaries also used both English and the indigenous languages to reach all categories of the natives with religious and "civilising" messages. Titles such as *Catholic Voice* and *Christian Messenger Mia Holo* (Our Friend), *Nutifafa Na Mi* (Peace onto you), and *Akan Kyerema* (Akan notifications) palpably show the Christian background of friendship, peace wishes and good news.

The language issues being interrogated would be further understood within the literacy context of the time. As indicated earlier, newspaper readership and information access in English would necessitate the ability to read and/or understand English. Thus, the missionaries and colonial government found it necessary to provide literacy education to the natives. This began as formal education in 1572 when Catholic missionaries started teaching native children reading, writing, and catechism (Nsiah 2020) initially in English. Other missionaries, such as the Basel, Wesleyan, African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion), Anglican, and others, later opened schools in various parts of the territory and included some of the native languages such as Akan, Ewe, and Ga (Nsiah 2020). With the efforts of acclaimed people such as Wilhelm Johann Muller, Rev. Westermann, and Johannes Christaller, among others, the schools radically began spreading literacy in the country. The schools helped to develop these native languages thereby shaping the literary enlightenment of the Gold Coast (Nsiah 2020).

The print media also contributed to this revolution. As Nsiah (2020) notes, some of the missionaries established press houses that published newspapers and other forms of literature in the native languages. For example, the Basel Mission set up a printing press in Akropong to publish the *Christian Messenger* and other publications. A book on Ga fables by C. P. Moir and Twi *Pilgrim's Progress* by R. R. Watt (Nsiah 2020) are some publications by Christian missions, all of which contributed immensely to the spread of literacy in the territory before and after Ghana's independence.

That was how the English language insidiously accrued legitimacy as the most important language in the multilingual environment of the territory. The introduction of English as part of the imperial project, together with colonisation, partly accorded the (English) language and its culture a preeminent status in the multilingual Gold Coast/Ghanaian society. As Obeng and Adegbija (1999) noted, the colonialists and their missionary counterparts succeeded in imposing English on the territory as the official language, making it the language of choice, leading to its formalisation and use as the language of instruction in education, business, government and almost all serious and official spaces. An implication is that language attitudes are constructed to favour English. This set the tone for the

marginalisation of the native languages, which were outlawed in schools and other official and political spaces (Nsiah 2020).

Various reasons have been offered to justify the elevation of English in the territory, the most popular being the need for English to serve as a neutral language to bring harmony and cohesion among the different ethnic and political groups in the territory (Nsiah 2020; Guerini 2007; Obeng and Adegbija 1999). Boadi (1971) was of the view that the colonial government and subsequent post-independence governments saw English as a symbol of national unity and development to eliminate the divisive, sentimental, and jealous feelings that could breed in-fighting if one indigenous language was chosen as the official and/or national language. This popular view was held in other African countries that depended on external languages such as French, Portuguese and Arabic as their official language (see Eribo and Jong-Ebot 1997).

However, behind this veil of what seems reasonable for English to be the official language in the territory is a subtle and deliberate ideology to subdue the linguistic and cultural force of the native population. This was particularly led by the colonial government from the early 1900s as cogently expressed by Owusu-Ansah and Torto (2013, p. 66):

> The impact of some of the various social, political, and administrative institutions that were established by British Colonial Governments on the spread and influence of the English language was immense. ... By 1824, English was the only language spoken in the Cape Coast Castle School. This aligned with the report by the Education Committee of the Privy Council to the Colonial Office in 1847 which, among others, emphasised the need to disseminate grammatical knowledge of the English language as the most important agent of civilisation.

The above effectively sums up how the natives began to largely associate their status with the ability to speak and write good and complicated English and not their native languages. English then assumed a hegemonic or imperialistic posture (Edu-Buandoh 2016; Agyekum 2013) to the extent that the youth began looking down on their languages and cultures and preferred using English like the British (Guerini 2007; Newell 2002; Boadi 1971).

Fosu (2016) has demonstrated how the language of the English newspapers in Ghana has been complicated and difficult to read and understand, although that is what a significant number of the indigenous people admire and prefer for public communication. Stephanie Newell (2002), in her seminal ethnographically focused work, *Literary Cultures in Ghana: How to Play the Game of Life*, vividly captured how in the late 1800s, people of the Gold Coast strived to be literate in English because of its economic, social, and political power. Thus, the people immersed themselves into a reading culture that arose through:

> literary networks which revealed the dynamic way in which local readers appropriated and utilised English language text for their immediate ends using literature to express their own social and economic aspirations within the rapidly changing and highly charged atmosphere of the colonial society'. (Nsiah 2020)

Several reading clubs and social groups sprang up to empower the youth to read material published in English. Newell (2002) listed over fifty-one such clubs in the territory from the 1830s to 1950 (Newell 2002, pp. 33–35; Nsiah 2020). Cape Coast became the hub of prominent literary clubs, whose members included early nationalist politicians like J.E. Casely Hayford and J.P. Brown (Nsiah 2020).

The above situation explains the toll English had on the development of the indigenous language press from pre-independence to contemporary times. The use of English as the major medium of the printed and broadcast press also added to the prominence and dominance of English, thereby contributing to its appeal to the natives to the detriment of their local languages and cultures. The press is a powerful social institution; it confers symbolic power to those who are positively framed in the news. The continuous use of English in the press served to confer power and social capital on the political and business elites who usually receive coverage in the government-controlled press. Thus, it was in the interest of such privileged people for the press to continue publishing in English.

Meanwhile, the indigenous people had been swayed by the appeal of English, resulting in their detachment from newspapers published in native languages. This attitude adds to explain why, especially, the politically focused indigenous language newspapers that came onto the scene, especially from the 1920s to 1950s and beyond, did not do particularly well.

10. Conclusions

This historically focused analysis of the Ghanaian press highlights the significant role language played in constructing different relational ramifications during the pre-independence times until 1992. The literature has largely ignored this aspect of the history of the Ghanaian press. The analysis has strongly established that the choice and use of language by various individuals, governments, and groups over the study period in both print and broadcasting were consciously informed by narrow socio-linguistic, cultural, ideological, and hegemonic motives and considerations. The language of the press became grounds for cultural, ideological, and imperialistic contestations among various groups and individuals with vested interests. The White colonialists and missionaries exploited the power, subtleties, and ideologies of language to help establish a hegemonic and imperialist position for English in the multilingual society of the Gold Coast and later Ghana. Native Ghanaians, in tune with imperialistic principles (Edu-Buandoh 2016), published news exclusively in English to further accentuate the socio-political and cultural dominance of English in the territory. Although the White colonialists and missionaries, as well as some of the post-independence governments of Ghana, published newspapers in the local languages, that was not enough to enhance the languages and cultures of the various ethnic groups. Throughout the study period, broadcasting was monopolised and controlled by the governments for their narrow interests. As Akpojivi and Fosu (2020, p. 209) have noted, a media system that does not produce content that reflects the real circumstances and edification of the audience, but is meant to control the people, may not be seen as indigenised media or press.[3] The ideological repercussions of language use in the press right from the pre-colonial times to the late 1980s could have contributed significantly to over-emphasising English and its cultural baggage in the printed press from the 1990s to contemporary times. The over-reliance on English by both White colonialists and Natives for political capital seriously impinged the indigenous languages negatively, leaving a lesson that if Ghanaians, and for that matter Africans, want their language, cultures, and society to advance, they must project their languages in the press and other social contexts.

Therefore, this study invites further studies on the history of the Ghanaian press towards a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Researchers may focus on areas the literature has ignored, such as the role of women, education and training, and sustainability issues, among others. Specific to language use, researchers may explore linguistic issues in historical accounts from 1992 to contemporary times.

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Appendix A

Pre- and Post-Independence English Language Newspapers of Ghana up to 1992.

Newspaper Name/Title	Ownership	Year
Pre-Independence		
Royal Gold Coast Gazette	Government	1822
Gold Coast Assize	Government	1833
Christian Messenger	Christian	1857
Christian Report	Christian	1857
Western Echo	Personal	1885
Gold Coast Methodist	Christian	1886
Gold Coast Echo	Personal	1888
Gold Coast People	Personal	1891
Gold Coast Express	Personal	1897
Gold Coast Leader	Personal	1902
Gold Coast Pioneer	Government	1921
Gold Coast Catholic/Catholic Voice	Christian	1926
Gold Coast Spectator	Personal	1927
West African Times	Personal	1931
African Morning Post	Personal	1939
Ashanti Pioneer	Personal	1937
Gold Coast Weekly Review	Government	1939–40
Ashanti Times	Private Institution	1947
Accra Evening News	Personal	1947
Ghana Statesman	Personal	1948
Ghana Evening News	Personal	1948
Morning Telegraph	Personal	1949
Daily Graphic	Private British-trained press	1950
Sunday Mirror	Private British-trained press	1953
Daily Mail	Personal (British)	1955
Liberator	NLM Party	1955
West African Worker	Personal	1956
New Nation	Unknown	1956
Post-Independence		
Daily Graphic	Government	1950
Ghanaian Times	Government	1958
Weekly Spectator	Government	1963
Ashanti Pioneer	Private	1937

Source: Anyidoho (2008, 2016), Owusu (2011), Bourgault (1995), and Jones-Quartey (1975).

Appendix B

Pre- and Post-Independence Indigenous Language Newspapers in Ghana and their Details up to 1992.

Newspaper Name/Title	Language	Ownership	Year (s)
	Pre-Independence		
Sika Nsona Sanegbalo	Ga	Christian	1859
Mia Holo	Ewe	Christian	1894
Nutifafa Na Mi	Ewe	Christian	1903
Asenta	Akan	Personal	1935
Amanson	Fante	Personal	1937
Amansuon	Fante	Personal	1943
Akan Kyerema	Akan	Christian	1948
Akan Akwansosem	Akan	Government	1951
Akan Nkwantabisa	Fante, Akuapim, Asante	Government	1951
Motabiala	Ewe	Government	1951
Lahabali Tsunu	Dagbani	Government	1951
Mansralo	Ga	Government	1951
Labaare/Labaari	Kasem	Government	1951
Kakyerole	Nzema	Government	1951
Duom	Akuapim-Twi	Government	1953
	Post-Independence		
Kpodoga	Ewe	Government	1976
Wonsuom	Fante	UNESCO	1983
Atumpani	Ewe	Government	1989

Source: Anyidoho (2008, 2016), Owusu (2011), Bourgault (1995), and Jones-Quartey (1975).

Notes

1 Indigenous press here refers to newspapers owned or established by indigenous Gold Coasters or Ghanaians.

2 See Table 5.5: Ghana by major ethnic group, sex, and region, p. 50. Available online: https://census2021.statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/reportthemesub/2021%20PHC%20General%20Report%20Vol%203C_Background%20Characteristics_181121.pdf (accessed on 5 October 2023) (Ghana Statistical Service 2021).

3 Indigenised press or media in this instance refers to press institutions owned by natives of Africa and used to serve the public interest of the African people.

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