

## Re-Evaluating the Hegemony of English Language in West Africa: A Meta-Analysis Review of the Research, 2003-2018

**Authors :** Oris Tom-Lawyer, Michael Thomas

**Abstract :** This paper seeks to analyse the hegemony of the English language in Western Africa through the lens of educational policies and the socio-economic functions of the language. It is based on the premise that there is a positive link between the English language and development contexts. The study aims to fill a gap in the research literature by examining the usefulness of hegemony as a concept to explain the role of English language in the region, thus countering the negative connotations that often accompany it. The study identified four main research questions: i. What are the socio-economic functions of English in Francophone/lusophone countries? ii. What factors promote the hegemony of English in anglophone countries? iii. To what extent is the hegemony of English in West Africa? iv. What are the implications of the non-hegemony of English in Western Africa? Based on a meta-analysis of the research literature between 2003 and 2018, the findings of the study revealed that in francophone/lusophone countries, English functions in the following socio-economic domains; they are peace keeping missions, regional organisations, commercial and industrial sectors, as an unofficial international language and as a foreign language. The factors that promote linguistic hegemony of English in anglophone countries are English as an official language, a medium of instruction, lingua franca, cultural language, language of politics, language of commerce, channel of development and English for media and entertainment. In addition, the extent of the hegemony of English in West Africa can be viewed from the factors that contribute to the non-hegemony of English in the region; they are French language, Portuguese language, the French culture, neo-colonialism, level of poverty, and economic ties of French to its former colonies. Finally, the implications of the non-hegemony of English language in West Africa are industrial backwardness, poverty rate, lack of social mobility, drop out of school rate, growing interest in English, access to limited internet information and lack of extensive career opportunities. The paper concludes that the hegemony of English has resulted in the development of anglophone countries in Western Africa, while in the francophone/lusophone regions of the continent, industrial backwardness and low literacy rates have been consequences of English language marginalisation. In conclusion, the paper makes several recommendations, including the need for the early introduction of English into French curricula as part of a potential solution.

**Keywords :** developmental tool, English language, linguistic hegemony, West Africa

**Conference Title :** ICFLTAL 2019 : International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics

**Conference Location :** Cape Town, South Africa

**Conference Dates :** November 04-05, 2019