

French Language and Linguistic Praxis in Multilingual Societies: Pathways to Educational Equity, Social Cohesion, and Cultural Resilience

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Abstract

In today's multilingual world, the value of French extends far beyond its role as an international language of communication. Particularly in multilingual African societies, French serves as an important medium for education, regional integration, intercultural dialogue, diplomacy, trade, and professional mobility. Yet, in many educational systems, including Nigeria's, French continues to be taught largely as a school subject rather than as a practical resource for addressing wider educational and societal needs. This disconnect has limited the contribution of French language education to inclusive learning, language policy, and sustainable development. Against this background, this paper examines how linguistic praxis can reposition French language education as a transformative tool for promoting educational equity, strengthening social cohesion, and preserving cultural resilience in multilingual societies.

French is not presented as a competitor to English or indigenous African languages but as a complementary language that enriches learners' multilingual competence while expanding opportunities for regional cooperation, academic achievement, economic participation, and intercultural understanding. The paper therefore argues that effective French language education should reflect the multilingual realities of African societies by recognising and building upon learners' existing linguistic resources rather than ignoring them.

The research adopts a qualitative approach based on a systematic review of scholarly literature and a comparative analysis of language policies and educational practices in multilingual settings. The analysis demonstrates that educational systems which integrate French into multilingual teaching practices create more inclusive classrooms, improve learner engagement, and enhance both academic and communicative outcomes. It also shows that multilingual language policies which recognise indigenous languages alongside English and French contribute to greater social inclusion.

Keywords: French language, linguistic praxis, multilingual, educational equity, social cohesion

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Introduction

Language is one of humanities most valuable resources. Beyond serving as a means of communication, it preserves culture, shapes identity, promotes education, and supports social, political, and economic development. In today's interconnected world, multilingualism has become a defining feature of many societies, particularly across Africa, where individuals commonly use two or more languages in their daily lives. As globalization, migration, technological advancement, and regional cooperation continue to expand, multilingual competence has become an essential skill for effective participation in education, employment, diplomacy, and intercultural communication.

Language is one of humanity's most valuable resources. Beyond serving as a means of communication, it preserves culture, shapes identity, promotes education, and supports social, political, and economic development. In today's interconnected world, multilingualism has become a defining feature of many societies, particularly across Africa, where individuals commonly use two or more languages in their daily lives. As globalization, migration, technological advancement, and regional cooperation continue to expand, multilingual competence has become an essential skill for effective participation in education, employment, diplomacy, and intercultural communication. Recent scholarship further argues that multilingualism should be viewed not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as a strategic educational resource capable of promoting inclusion, innovation, and social development in increasingly diverse societies (Tai & Wong, 2023; Back, 2025).

Within this multilingual landscape, the French language occupies a significant position. As one of the world's major international languages, French is widely used in diplomacy, international organisations, higher education, scientific research, commerce, and cultural exchange. In Africa, it serves as an official or second language in many countries, facilitating communication and cooperation across national borders. Consequently, proficiency in French offers opportunities that extend beyond classroom learning to include regional integration, academic mobility, international employment, and economic collaboration.

The importance of French is particularly evident in Nigeria. Although English is the country's official language, Nigeria shares borders with Francophone countries such as Benin, Niger, and

Cameroon. Cross-border interactions involving trade, security, education, healthcare, tourism, and migration have increased the practical need for French language competence. Nigeria's active participation in regional organisations, especially the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has further strengthened the relevance of French as a language of regional engagement and national development.

Despite this strategic importance, French language education in Nigeria continues to face significant challenges. In many schools, French is still taught mainly as an examination subject rather than as a practical means of communication. Classroom instruction often focuses on grammar, vocabulary memorisation, and written examinations, with limited opportunities for authentic language use or intercultural interaction. These challenges are further compounded by shortages of qualified teachers, inadequate instructional materials, inconsistent implementation of language policies, and insufficient exposure to real-life communicative situations. As a result, many learners complete several years of French study without developing the communicative competence required for academic, professional, or social engagement.

These limitations are even more apparent within Nigeria's multilingual environment. With over five hundred indigenous languages, Nigeria is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. Most learners enter school already speaking one or more indigenous languages alongside English. However, these existing linguistic resources are rarely recognised during French language instruction. Instead, teaching practices often adopt monolingual approaches that discourage learners from drawing on their multilingual experiences. This disconnect between classroom practice and learners' linguistic realities limits both language acquisition and educational inclusion.

Recent developments in applied linguistics and multilingual education challenge this traditional approach. Contemporary research shows that multilingual learners naturally use their complete linguistic repertoire to understand concepts, solve problems, and communicate effectively. Approaches such as multilingual pedagogy and translanguaging encourage learners to use all their language resources as assets rather than treating them as barriers. These perspectives suggest that recognising learners' multilingual backgrounds can improve participation, strengthen critical thinking, and enhance overall learning outcomes.

It is within this context that the concept of linguistic praxis becomes particularly relevant. Linguistic praxis refers to the practical application of linguistic knowledge to address real educational and social challenges. Rather than viewing language learning as the mastery of grammar alone, linguistic praxis emphasises the meaningful use of language in solving problems, promoting inclusion, facilitating intercultural dialogue, and supporting community development. Applied to French language education, this perspective encourages a shift from teacher-centred, examination-driven instruction to learner-centred approaches that prepare students to communicate confidently in multilingual and multicultural settings.

Viewing French through the lens of linguistic praxis also broadens its educational purpose. French should not be regarded as a competitor to English or indigenous African languages but as a complementary language that strengthens multilingual competence and expands educational, professional, and regional opportunities. When integrated into multilingual teaching practices, French can promote educational equity by recognising learners' linguistic diversity, strengthen social cohesion through intercultural understanding, and support cultural resilience by encouraging learners to value both their indigenous languages and the wider Francophone world. In this way, French language education becomes a practical instrument for inclusive education and sustainable development rather than simply another school subject.

Although considerable research has been conducted on French language teaching, multilingual education, language policy, and intercultural communication, these areas have often been examined separately. Limited attention has been given to understanding how French language education can integrate these perspectives through the framework of linguistic praxis. In particular, there is a shortage of studies exploring how French can simultaneously contribute to educational equity, social cohesion, and cultural resilience in multilingual African societies, especially within the Nigerian context. This gap highlights the need for a more integrated and practice-oriented approach to French language education.

This paper addresses that gap by examining French Language and Linguistic Praxis in Multilingual Societies Pathways to Educational Equity, Social Cohesion, and Cultural Resilience. It argues that French should be repositioned from being viewed primarily as a foreign language to being recognised as a strategic educational and social resource capable of promoting inclusive learning, intercultural dialogue, regional integration, and sustainable national development. Drawing on insights from applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, multilingual education, French language education, language policy and planning, and intercultural communication, the paper proposes an integrated perspective that aligns French language teaching with the multilingual realities of contemporary African societies.

The study contributes to the growing scholarship on linguistic praxis by demonstrating how French language education can serve as a bridge between local linguistic identities and regional and global opportunities. Its findings also provide practical insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, and French language instructors seeking to improve multilingual education and language policy implementation. Ultimately, the paper shows that when French is taught through the principles of linguistic praxis, it becomes more than a language of international communication; it becomes a catalyst for educational equity, social cohesion, cultural resilience, and sustainable development in multilingual societies.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

French Language and Linguistic Praxis in Multilingual Societies

The role of the French language has expanded significantly beyond its traditional function as a foreign language taught for academic purposes. In today's multilingual societies, particularly across Africa, French serves as an important language of education, regional integration, diplomacy, trade, scientific exchange, and intercultural communication. Consequently, French language education is no longer limited to developing grammatical competence; it has become a strategic resource for preparing learners to participate effectively in increasingly interconnected linguistic and cultural environments.

Nigeria presents a particularly important context for this discussion. Although English is the country's official language, Nigeria is home to over five hundred indigenous languages and shares borders with several Francophone countries. These linguistic and geographical realities create continuous opportunities for cross-border communication, regional cooperation, education, commerce, and cultural interaction. French therefore occupies a complementary position within Nigeria's multilingual environment by expanding learners' opportunities for academic mobility, professional development, and regional participation while coexisting with English and indigenous languages.

This study approaches French as a form of linguistic capital that enhances learners' communicative, educational, and socio-economic opportunities. Rather than replacing indigenous languages or competing with English, French contributes to additive multilingualism by enriching learners' existing linguistic repertoire. In multilingual societies, the acquisition of additional languages strengthens cognitive flexibility, intercultural competence, and access to wider educational and professional opportunities. French language education should therefore be understood as part of a broader multilingual competence that values all the languages learners bring into the classroom.

Within this context, the concept of linguistic praxis provides an appropriate lens for understanding the purpose of French language education. Drawing on the broader notion of praxis, linguistic praxis refers to the meaningful application of linguistic knowledge to real educational and social contexts. It shifts attention from language as an abstract system of grammatical rules to language as a practical resource for communication, problem-solving, intercultural dialogue, and social participation. From this perspective, effective French language education should equip learners not only with linguistic knowledge but also with the ability to use French confidently in authentic multilingual settings.

Consequently, linguistic praxis extends beyond classroom instruction. It encompasses curriculum development, language policy, teacher education, community engagement, and institutional support. When these dimensions work together, French language education becomes a practical instrument for promoting inclusive learning, regional cooperation, intercultural understanding, and sustainable development. The study therefore argues that repositioning French within the framework of linguistic praxis enables the language to contribute more effectively to the educational and developmental needs of multilingual African societies.

French Language Education, Educational Equity, Social Cohesion and Cultural Resilience

Educational equity, social cohesion, and cultural resilience are closely interconnected objectives within multilingual education. Educational equity ensures that learners from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have fair opportunities to succeed by recognising their diverse learning needs and language experiences. In multilingual societies such as Nigeria, learners often enter school with rich linguistic repertoires that include indigenous languages alongside English. These existing language resources should be recognised as valuable assets for learning French rather than being viewed as barriers to language acquisition.

Recent developments in multilingual education support teaching approaches that encourage learners to draw upon their complete linguistic repertoire during learning. Practices such as multilingual pedagogy, translanguaging, collaborative learning, and culturally responsive teaching demonstrate that learners understand new concepts more effectively when connections are established between their previous linguistic knowledge and the target language. Consequently, French language education should adopt instructional practices that reflect learners' multilingual realities while creating inclusive classroom environments that encourage participation, confidence, and meaningful communication.

Beyond improving educational outcomes, French language education also contributes to social cohesion. Language serves as an important medium through which individuals from different linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds communicate, cooperate, and develop mutual understanding. Within West Africa, French facilitates regional integration by supporting diplomacy, trade, education, security cooperation, tourism, and cultural exchange among neighbouring countries. French classrooms therefore provide opportunities not only for language learning but also for developing intercultural competence, empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

Closely related to social cohesion is the concept of cultural resilience. Every language embodies the history, values, knowledge, and identity of its speakers. For this reason, the promotion of French should never undermine indigenous African languages. Instead, effective multilingual education should encourage complementary relationships among indigenous languages, English, and French. Such an approach enables learners to preserve their cultural heritage while acquiring the linguistic competence required for regional and international engagement. French language education therefore becomes a bridge connecting local identities with wider global opportunities without weakening cultural belonging.

Viewed through the lens of linguistic praxis, these three dimensions are mutually reinforcing. Educational equity creates inclusive opportunities for multilingual learning; social cohesion promotes peaceful interaction among diverse communities; and cultural resilience safeguards indigenous identities while encouraging openness to other cultures. Together, they position

French language education as an instrument for inclusive education, intercultural dialogue, and sustainable development within multilingual societies.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in an integrated theoretical framework that combines the complementary insights of Paulo Freire, Pierre Bourdieu, Jim Cummins, Ofelia García, and Nancy Hornberger. The integration of these perspectives provides a comprehensive explanation of how French language education can contribute to educational transformation within multilingual societies.

Freire's theory of praxis establishes the philosophical foundation of the study by emphasising that education should combine knowledge with meaningful action. Applied to French language education, this perspective suggests that learners should move beyond grammatical knowledge to using French for communication, problem-solving, community engagement, and intercultural dialogue.

Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital complements this view by explaining that languages possess educational, social, cultural, and economic value. Competence in French expands learners' opportunities for regional mobility, higher education, employment, diplomacy, and international cooperation. At the same time, Bourdieu reminds educators that language policies should promote inclusion rather than privilege one language at the expense of others.

Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis further strengthens the framework by demonstrating that knowledge developed in one language facilitates learning in another. This perspective supports multilingual teaching practices that encourage learners to build on their indigenous languages and English while learning French.

Similarly, García's theory of translinguaging argues that multilingual speakers naturally draw upon all their linguistic resources when constructing meaning. Rather than separating languages during classroom instruction, French teachers should recognise learners' multilingual repertoires as valuable cognitive and communicative resources that enhance participation and language development.

Hornberger's Continua of Biliteracy Framework reinforces these perspectives by emphasising that literacy develops through continuous interaction among languages, cultures, communities, and educational contexts. Her framework supports inclusive multilingual policies in which indigenous languages, English, and French function as complementary resources for learning and social participation.

Collectively, these theories provide the intellectual foundation for this study. Freire explains why language learning should lead to meaningful action; Bourdieu highlights the social value of language; Cummins demonstrates the cognitive benefits of multilingual learning; García explains

how multilingual communication occurs in practice; and Hornberger provides the educational context within which multilingual literacy develops. Together, they support the central argument that French language education should be understood as a practical form of linguistic praxis capable of advancing educational equity, social cohesion, and cultural resilience.

Integrative French Linguistic Praxis Framework

Building upon the conceptual and theoretical perspectives discussed above, this study proposes the Integrative French Linguistic Praxis Framework as its principal conceptual contribution. The framework positions French language education at the centre of multilingual educational transformation and demonstrates that its effectiveness depends on the interaction of five mutually reinforcing components: equitable language policy, multilingual pedagogy, intercultural competence, community participation, and cultural preservation.

Equitable language policy provides the enabling environment by ensuring that French is taught alongside English and indigenous languages within an inclusive multilingual system.

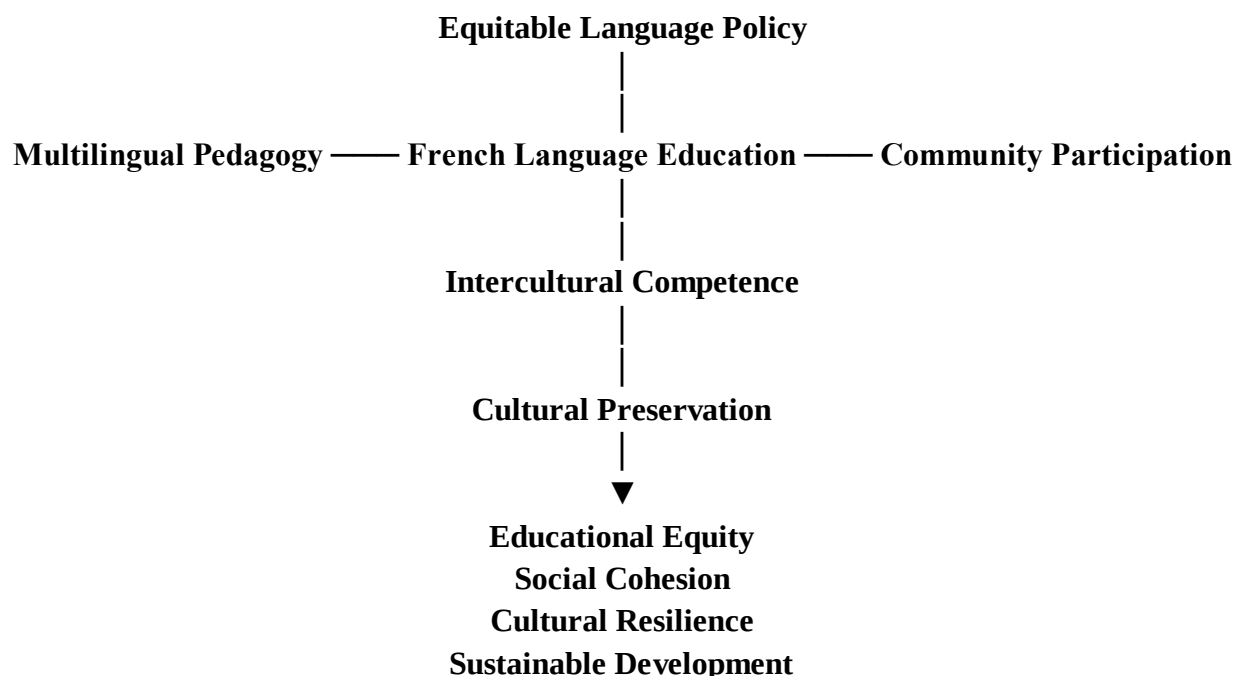
Multilingual pedagogy enables teachers to build upon learners' existing linguistic resources through communicative, learner-centred, and context-sensitive instructional practices.

Intercultural competence prepares learners to communicate effectively across linguistic and cultural boundaries while strengthening regional cooperation and mutual understanding.

Community participation extends language learning beyond the classroom through collaboration among schools, families, policymakers, and local communities. Cultural preservation ensures that learning French complements rather than replaces indigenous languages and identities.

The interaction of these five components produces four interconnected outcomes: educational equity, social cohesion, cultural resilience, and sustainable development. Educational equity is strengthened when multilingual learners receive inclusive learning opportunities that reflect their linguistic realities. Social cohesion develops as French promotes dialogue, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence among diverse communities. Cultural resilience is reinforced when learners preserve their indigenous identities while engaging confidently with the wider Francophone world. Together, these outcomes contribute to sustainable human development by preparing multilingual citizens who can participate effectively in regional and global society.

The proposed framework therefore extends existing scholarship by integrating insights from multilingual education, sociolinguistics, language policy, and French language pedagogy into a single conceptual model. It positions French not merely as a language of international communication but as a practical instrument for educational transformation, intercultural dialogue, regional integration, and sustainable development. This framework also serves as the analytical foundation for interpreting the findings and discussions presented in the subsequent sections of this paper.



Literature Review

The increasing linguistic diversity of contemporary societies has transformed discussions on language education, language policy, and sustainable development. Language is now widely recognised as more than a means of communication; it is a strategic resource for promoting educational inclusion, intercultural understanding, social cohesion, and economic participation. Within this context, the French language occupies a significant position, particularly in multilingual African societies where it serves as a language of education, diplomacy, regional integration, commerce, and intercultural communication. Despite its growing importance, French language education in many multilingual settings continues to be treated primarily as an academic subject rather than as a practical instrument for addressing broader educational and societal challenges. This review examines recent scholarship on French language education, linguistic praxis, multilingual education, educational equity, social cohesion, cultural resilience, and language policy, while identifying the gaps that inform the present study.

French Language Education and Linguistic Praxis

Recent scholarship demonstrates a gradual shift in the objectives of French language education. Traditionally, instruction focused on grammatical accuracy and examination success. Contemporary researchers, however, argue that French should equip learners with the communicative, intercultural, and professional competencies required in multilingual societies (Piccardo & North, 2020). This reflects broader developments in applied linguistics, where

language learning is increasingly viewed as preparation for authentic communication rather than mastery of linguistic forms alone.

Closely related to this shift is the concept of linguistic praxis, which emphasises the practical application of linguistic knowledge to educational and social realities. Drawing on Freire's conception of praxis, scholars maintain that language learning should empower learners to communicate effectively, solve problems, and participate meaningfully in their communities (Kramsch, 2021). While García and Wei (2021) emphasise learners' dynamic use of their full linguistic repertoire, Cummins (2021) explains multilingual learning through cross-linguistic transfer. Although both perspectives support multilingual pedagogy, García and Wei focus primarily on classroom interaction, whereas Cummins provides a stronger cognitive explanation.

Although these perspectives have influenced language education globally, their integration into French language teaching remains uneven, particularly within many African educational systems. In Nigeria, French instruction continues to rely largely on teacher-centred methods and written examinations, with limited opportunities for authentic communication. Consequently, many learners acquire theoretical knowledge of French without developing sufficient communicative competence for academic, professional, or intercultural contexts. This gap suggests the need to reposition French language education within a framework of linguistic praxis that links language learning with real-life application and societal development.

Multilingual Education, Educational Equity and Social Cohesion

Recent scholarship consistently identifies multilingual education as a critical pathway to educational equity and inclusive learning. Educational equity goes beyond providing equal access to schooling; it requires teaching practices that recognise learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds as valuable resources for learning. According to UNESCO (2021), multilingual education enhances literacy, learner participation, and academic achievement by building on learners' existing language knowledge rather than ignoring it. Similarly, Tai and Wong (2023) argue that educational systems that embrace learners' full linguistic repertoires create more inclusive classrooms, increase learner engagement, and improve overall educational outcomes.

These views are reinforced by contemporary theories of multilingual learning. García and Wei (2021) maintain that multilingual learners naturally draw on all the languages they know to construct meaning and solve learning tasks. Likewise, Cummins (2021) explains that skills and knowledge developed in one language can facilitate learning in another, supporting the idea that languages work together rather than in isolation. Tai and Wong (2023) further contend that multilingual pedagogies become more effective when teachers deliberately integrate learners' linguistic resources into classroom practice instead of separating languages into rigid systems. Such approaches promote active learning, confidence, and meaningful communication.

Within multilingual African societies, French has considerable potential to contribute to educational equity by complementing English and indigenous languages. Rather than replacing

existing languages, French can broaden learners' educational and professional opportunities while strengthening multilingual competence. However, many schools still rely on monolingual teaching approaches that fail to reflect learners' linguistic realities. As a result, French is often taught primarily for examination purposes, limiting its role in developing practical communication skills and inclusive learning environments.

The literature also demonstrates a close relationship between multilingual education and social cohesion. The Council of Europe (2020) notes that competence in multiple languages encourages intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence among diverse communities. In West Africa, French strengthens regional cooperation by facilitating communication in diplomacy, trade, education, and cross-border relations. Nevertheless, Bamgbose (2021) cautions that multilingual policies should support indigenous languages alongside international languages to promote linguistic justice. Back (2025) similarly emphasises that effective multilingual education depends on coherent language policies that connect curriculum, teacher preparation, and classroom practice with learners' multilingual realities, thereby fostering both educational inclusion and social cohesion.

Gaps in Existing Literature

The reviewed literature demonstrates substantial progress in multilingual education, language policy, translanguaging, and intercultural communication. Nevertheless, several important gaps remain. First, most studies discuss multilingual education in general terms without specifically examining the role of French language education within multilingual African societies. Second, although communicative language teaching has received considerable attention, relatively few studies examine French language education through the broader framework of linguistic praxis that connects language learning with educational transformation and sustainable development.

Third, educational equity, social cohesion, and cultural resilience are often studied independently rather than as interconnected outcomes of multilingual language education. Finally, existing scholarship rarely proposes an integrated conceptual model illustrating how equitable language policy, multilingual pedagogy, intercultural competence, community participation, and French language education can operate together to strengthen multilingual societies.

This study addresses these gaps by developing an Integrative French Linguistic Praxis Framework that positions French language education as a complementary resource for advancing educational equity, strengthening social cohesion, preserving cultural resilience, and promoting sustainable development. In doing so, the study extends current scholarship by demonstrating that French is not merely a language of international communication but also a practical instrument for educational and societal transformation in multilingual contexts.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach grounded in a systematic review of scholarly literature and a comparative analysis of language policies and educational practices in multilingual societies. A qualitative design was considered most appropriate because the study seeks to develop a conceptual understanding of how French language education, when viewed through the lens of linguistic praxis, can contribute to educational equity, social cohesion, and cultural resilience. Rather than collecting primary empirical data, the study synthesises existing knowledge to provide a comprehensive and integrated perspective on the evolving role of French language education in multilingual African contexts.

The systematic literature review followed a structured and transparent process of identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesising relevant scholarly publications. The review drew on peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, edited book chapters, conference proceedings, policy documents, and reports published by recognised international organisations, including UNESCO, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the Council of Europe, and the African Union. While emphasis was placed on literature published between 2020 and 2025 to capture current developments in multilingual education and French language pedagogy, selected earlier studies were included because they provide the theoretical foundations for linguistic praxis, sociolinguistics, multilingual education, language policy, and intercultural communication.

Relevant studies were identified through comprehensive searches of established academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, JSTOR, Google Scholar, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, and ScienceDirect. Search terms included combinations of French language education, linguistic praxis, multilingualism, multilingual education, translanguaging, mother-tongue-based education, language policy and planning, educational equity, social cohesion, cultural resilience, intercultural communication, applied linguistics, and French language teaching. Reference lists of key publications were also examined to identify additional studies relevant to the objectives of the research.

To ensure academic rigour, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria guided the selection of literature. Publications were included when they addressed one or more of the study's central themes, namely French language education, multilingual education, linguistic praxis, language policy, educational equity, intercultural communication, social cohesion, or cultural resilience. Preference was given to peer-reviewed and high-quality scholarly publications with clear methodological procedures and direct relevance to multilingual educational contexts. Publications lacking scholarly credibility, duplicating existing evidence, or falling outside the scope of the study were excluded.

The selected literature was analysed using thematic content analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring patterns, major concepts, areas of convergence, and points of divergence across the reviewed studies. The analysis was organised around six interconnected themes: French language education; linguistic praxis; multilingual education and translanguaging; educational equity; social cohesion through language; and cultural resilience

within multilingual societies. This thematic approach provided a coherent framework for critically examining existing scholarship and identifying areas requiring further conceptual development.

Complementing the literature review, the study employed comparative policy analysis to examine how multilingual language policies and educational practices have been implemented across selected multilingual settings, with particular emphasis on Nigeria and other African countries where French serves important educational, diplomatic, and regional functions. The comparative analysis focused on policy orientations toward multilingual education, the integration of French alongside English and indigenous languages, approaches to language teaching, and strategies adopted to promote inclusive and culturally responsive education. The purpose of this comparison was not to rank educational systems but to identify policy lessons and best practices capable of strengthening French language education within multilingual societies.

The findings generated from both the systematic review and comparative policy analysis were synthesised to develop the Integrative French Linguistic Praxis Framework proposed in this paper. The framework emerged inductively from the recurring relationships identified across the literature and illustrates how equitable language policy, multilingual pedagogy, community participation, intercultural competence, and cultural preservation interact to reposition French language education as a catalyst for educational transformation, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, evidence was triangulated across multiple scholarly sources, empirical studies, and policy documents from different geographical and disciplinary contexts. This process reduced the likelihood of relying on isolated viewpoints and strengthened the consistency of the interpretations presented. Furthermore, all analytical conclusions were grounded in documented scholarly evidence and critically synthesised to ensure transparency, coherence, and academic rigour.

By combining a systematic review with comparative policy analysis, the methodology provides a robust foundation for examining French language education beyond its traditional instructional function. It enables the study to propose a comprehensive and practice-oriented understanding of linguistic praxis that is responsive to the multilingual realities of African societies and relevant to contemporary debates on educational equity, social cohesion, cultural resilience, and sustainable development.

The findings of this study are derived from a systematic review of contemporary scholarly literature and a comparative analysis of multilingual language policies and educational practices across Nigeria and selected multilingual African contexts. Rather than presenting primary empirical data, the study synthesises established scholarship while comparing policy orientations and educational practices to examine how French language education can be repositioned through linguistic praxis to promote educational equity, strengthen social cohesion, and enhance cultural resilience in multilingual societies. The integration of these two approaches provides a broader understanding of the opportunities and limitations surrounding French language education within multilingual African settings.

The systematic review reveals an increasing scholarly consensus that multilingualism should be viewed as an educational asset rather than a challenge. Recent studies consistently argue that learners achieve better academic outcomes when teachers recognise and build upon the languages learners already speak instead of restricting classroom interaction to a single instructional language. The comparative policy analysis reinforces this conclusion by demonstrating that multilingual educational systems which officially recognise indigenous languages alongside English and French create more inclusive learning environments than systems that depend largely on monolingual approaches. Across the selected contexts, policies that value linguistic diversity encourage greater learner participation, strengthen classroom interaction, and improve opportunities for intercultural communication.

literature review and the comparative analysis identify French as a strategic language within multilingual African societies. Beyond its traditional role as a foreign language taught for academic purposes, French increasingly serves as a language of regional integration, diplomacy, international trade, higher education, scientific collaboration, tourism, and professional mobility. Comparison of multilingual language policies in Nigeria and other African countries demonstrates that French contributes more effectively to educational and national development when supported by coherent multilingual policies, adequate instructional resources, qualified teachers, and communicative teaching approaches. Educational systems that integrate French into broader multilingual strategies provide learners with wider opportunities to participate in regional and international engagements while maintaining strong connections to their indigenous linguistic identities.

Despite these opportunities, the comparative policy analysis also demonstrates that the implementation of French language education remains inconsistent across multilingual African countries. Although Nigeria officially recognizes the strategic importance of French because of its geographical location and regional commitments, classroom practice continues to rely heavily on examination-oriented instruction. The systematic review similarly shows that grammar instruction, vocabulary memorisation, and written assessment remain the dominant features of French language teaching in many schools, while authentic communication, collaborative learning, and intercultural engagement receive comparatively little attention. This mismatch

between educational policy and classroom practice limits the effectiveness of French language education and reduces learners' ability to use the language confidently beyond school settings.

One of the most significant findings emerging from both the systematic review and the comparative policy analysis is the persistent gap between language learning and language use. Across the reviewed literature, scholars consistently argue that language education should prepare learners for authentic communication rather than merely examination success. Likewise, comparison of multilingual educational practices shows that learners in contexts where French is taught through communicative activities, project-based learning, and real-life interaction demonstrate higher levels of communicative competence than learners exposed primarily to grammar-focused instruction. These findings suggest that meaningful language acquisition depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on opportunities to use language in realistic educational and social contexts. Consequently, French language education should move beyond traditional teacher-centred approaches towards learner-centered pedagogies that encourage communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and practical problem-solving.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between multilingualism and language learning. The systematic review demonstrates that multilingual learners naturally draw upon all their linguistic resources when acquiring additional languages. Rather than separating languages into isolated compartments, multilingual learners transfer knowledge, strategies, and experiences across their entire linguistic repertoire. The comparative policy analysis similarly indicates that educational systems adopting multilingual pedagogies—including translanguaging, communicative language teaching, task-based instruction, collaborative learning, and culturally responsive teaching—record stronger learner engagement and more inclusive classroom participation than systems relying on rigid monolingual methods. These findings reinforce the view that indigenous languages and English should not be regarded as obstacles to learning French but as valuable cognitive and communicative resources that facilitate language acquisition.

The findings also highlight the decisive influence of language policy on the success of French language education. Comparison of multilingual policy frameworks across the selected African contexts demonstrates that countries implementing balanced multilingual policies are more successful in creating equitable educational opportunities, preserving linguistic diversity, and preparing learners for participation in regional and global communities. Such policies recognised the complementary roles of indigenous languages, English, and French rather than positioning them as competing languages. In contrast, educational systems that privilege a single language frequently experience reduced learner participation, weakened indigenous language development, and greater educational inequality. The combined evidence therefore suggests that effective French language education depends upon coherent interaction among language policy, curriculum development, teacher education, assessment practices, instructional resources, and classroom implementation.

The systematic review and comparative analysis further demonstrate that French should no longer be viewed simply as an academic subject but as a practical instrument for addressing educational and societal challenges. Across the reviewed literature, linguistic praxis is consistently associated with the meaningful application of language to authentic social contexts, enabling learners to communicate effectively, participate in intercultural dialogue, solve practical problems, and contribute to community development. The comparative analysis supports this perspective by showing that educational systems which connect language learning with community engagement, intercultural experiences, and regional cooperation produce learners who are better prepared for lifelong learning, employment, and civic participation. French therefore becomes not merely a language for classroom instruction but a practical resource for educational inclusion, social participation, and sustainable development.

Curriculum design emerged as another recurring issue throughout both strands of analysis. The systematic review consistently reports that many French curricula continue to prioritise grammatical accuracy and examination performance at the expense of communicative competence and authentic language use. Comparison of educational practices similarly demonstrates that multilingual systems integrating digital communication, intercultural projects, community-based learning, entrepreneurship, and experiential language activities produce learners with stronger communicative confidence and higher levels of motivation. These findings suggest that curriculum reform should move beyond traditional content transmission towards practical language experiences that prepare learners for contemporary multilingual societies.

Teacher preparation also emerged as a significant factor influencing the quality of French language education. The systematic review indicates that many French teachers continue to receive training focused primarily on linguistic knowledge, with limited attention to multilingual pedagogy, technology-supported learning, culturally responsive teaching, or communicative assessment. The comparative policy analysis further demonstrates that educational systems investing in continuous professional development produce teachers who are better equipped to implement learner-centred methodologies and adapt instruction to multilingual classrooms. Continuous teacher development therefore represents an essential requirement for repositioning French language education within the framework of linguistic praxis.

Beyond formal classroom instruction, both the literature review and comparative policy analysis identify authentic language experiences as important contributors to communicative competence. Educational systems providing opportunities through French language clubs, cultural festivals, student exchange programmes, internships, digital collaborations, and partnerships with Francophone institutions consistently demonstrate stronger learner motivation and greater practical language proficiency. These initiatives enable learners to experience French as a living language used for communication, cooperation, and intercultural engagement rather than merely as an examination subject. Such findings reinforce the importance of extending language learning beyond classroom boundaries through meaningful interaction with real communities and authentic communicative situations.

Overall, the combined evidence from the systematic review and comparative policy analysis confirms that linguistic praxis provides a robust framework for transforming French language education within multilingual societies. The findings consistently demonstrate that the effectiveness of French language education depends upon recognising multilingualism as an educational resource, aligning language policy with classroom practice, strengthening teacher preparation, promoting learner-centred pedagogies, and creating authentic opportunities for communication. By connecting linguistic knowledge with practical educational and social realities, French becomes more than an international language; it becomes a catalyst for educational equity, social cohesion, cultural resilience, regional integration, and sustainable development. These findings provide the foundation for the Integrative French Linguistic Framework proposed in this study and reinforce the central argument that French language education should be repositioned as a strategic instrument for educational transformation within multilingual African societies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the role of French language education within the framework of linguistic praxis as a pathway to educational equity, social cohesion, and cultural resilience in multilingual societies. Drawing on a systematic review of contemporary literature and a comparative analysis of multilingual educational practices, the study established that French should no longer be viewed merely as a foreign language taught for academic purposes. Rather, it should be recognised as a strategic resource for regional integration, intercultural communication, professional mobility, and sustainable development. The findings further demonstrate that French language education becomes more effective when it reflects learners' multilingual realities, adopts learner-centred pedagogies, and values indigenous languages alongside English. The proposed Integrative French Linguistic Praxis Framework provides a holistic model that connects equitable language policy, multilingual pedagogy, intercultural competence, community participation, and cultural preservation, thereby repositioning French as a catalyst for inclusive and transformative education.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that policymakers strengthen multilingual language policies that promote the complementary roles of indigenous languages, English, and French. Curriculum developers should redesign French language programmes to prioritise authentic communication, intercultural competence, and real-world language use. Teacher education institutions should provide continuous professional development that equips French teachers with multilingual and learner-centred pedagogical skills. Educational institutions should also expand opportunities for learners to use French through language clubs, exchange programmes, digital collaborations, and partnerships with Francophone organisations. Finally, future studies should empirically validate the proposed framework across different multilingual contexts to strengthen its applicability. By embracing linguistic praxis, French language education can make a significant contribution to educational transformation, peaceful coexistence, cultural sustainability, and regional development in multilingual societies.

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