

# The Nexus Between Onomastics and Critical Discourse Approach

**An analysis of Selected  
Toponyms in Lagos Nigeria**

# Purpose of the Lecture

- *The lecture, aims at demonstrating the use of Critical Discourse Approach as both a theoretical framework and an analytical tool that can be used to discuss the language and meaning of place names adequately.*
- *Contextualise the study of place names in reconfiguring African Studies.*
- *Discuss the African linguistic dilemma with the use of Zimbabwe and Lagos place naming practices as learning curves.*

# ABSTRACT

- **The study examines selected toponyms in Nigeria using Critical Discourse Approach**
- **As both a theoretical framework and an analytic tool**

# **continuation**

- **Fairclough's three-dimensional model is used**
- **The model divides discourse analysis into three parts: the text; the discursive practice and the social practice.**
- **On the same note, CDA treats any form of language as text**

# **continuation**

- **CDA insists that, texts in any form exhibit unequal power relations, ideological inclination, manipulative tendencies and hegemony.**
- **In the words of Fairclough (2009), there is no text that is neutral toponyms included**

# **Selected toponyms**

- Selected toponyms in Lagos include; Oko/Eko/Lagos, Victoria Island, Banana Island and few others.**
- Toponyms in Lagos include streets, neighborhoods, buildings, and landmarks, among others.**
- These toponyms are influenced by cultural, social, and political factors.**
- They can provide insights into the city's history, identity, and power dynamics.**

# Naming practices in Yoruba

- The naming practices in Yoruba are informed by a proverb: ***“Ile laa wo ka to somo loruko”***
- *meaning that: the circumstances surrounding the home informs the name given.*
- **Names therefore, reflect upon a peoples way of looking at reality**

# continuation

- **Therefore, names are ideological in shaping the society as per the text engraved in the norms and values of a people.**
- **Names have been accepted to reflect upon what a people accept to be normal and should be followed**



# continuation

- It is not by coincidence that a people holds an established belief system: this is achieved through the definition of discourse as provided by Fairclough (1995) who says, ***discourse*** is a particular ***worldview*** that is ***socially constructed*** through spoken or written language use.

# Continuation

- For example if a child is born after the death of the grandmother or grandfather, the Yoruba christian the child: the coming back of the dead, '**Yetunde; Iyabode, Yeside** etc mother has come back or **Babatunde** father has come back'.
- This in essence is a text that has been passed on from one generation to the other and make sense to the Yoruba and other African societies that subscribe to the mindset.

# Critical Discourse APPROACH

- Fairclough (1995) definition of *discourse admits that it is a group of statements that include assumptions and generally accepted knowledge, that belong in a linguistic unit formation (the mindset/ideology of a people)*.
- On the same note, Foucault work of (1926-1984), says discourse has *power* which is exercised in everyday *relationship* rather than *power* which is the direct physical oppression of the powerless by the powerful (Mills 2003)

# CDA

For example, the notion of how slave trade is said to have started through oral tradition; spurred by a gift of man by one Oba

***Foucault here, insists that, some statements are allowed to carry meaning while others are not.***

# Continuation

- He argues that it is not merely because some statements are more coherent than others or have a better argument than others but that there are *filters on discourse practices* which allow some statements *through and excluding others*.

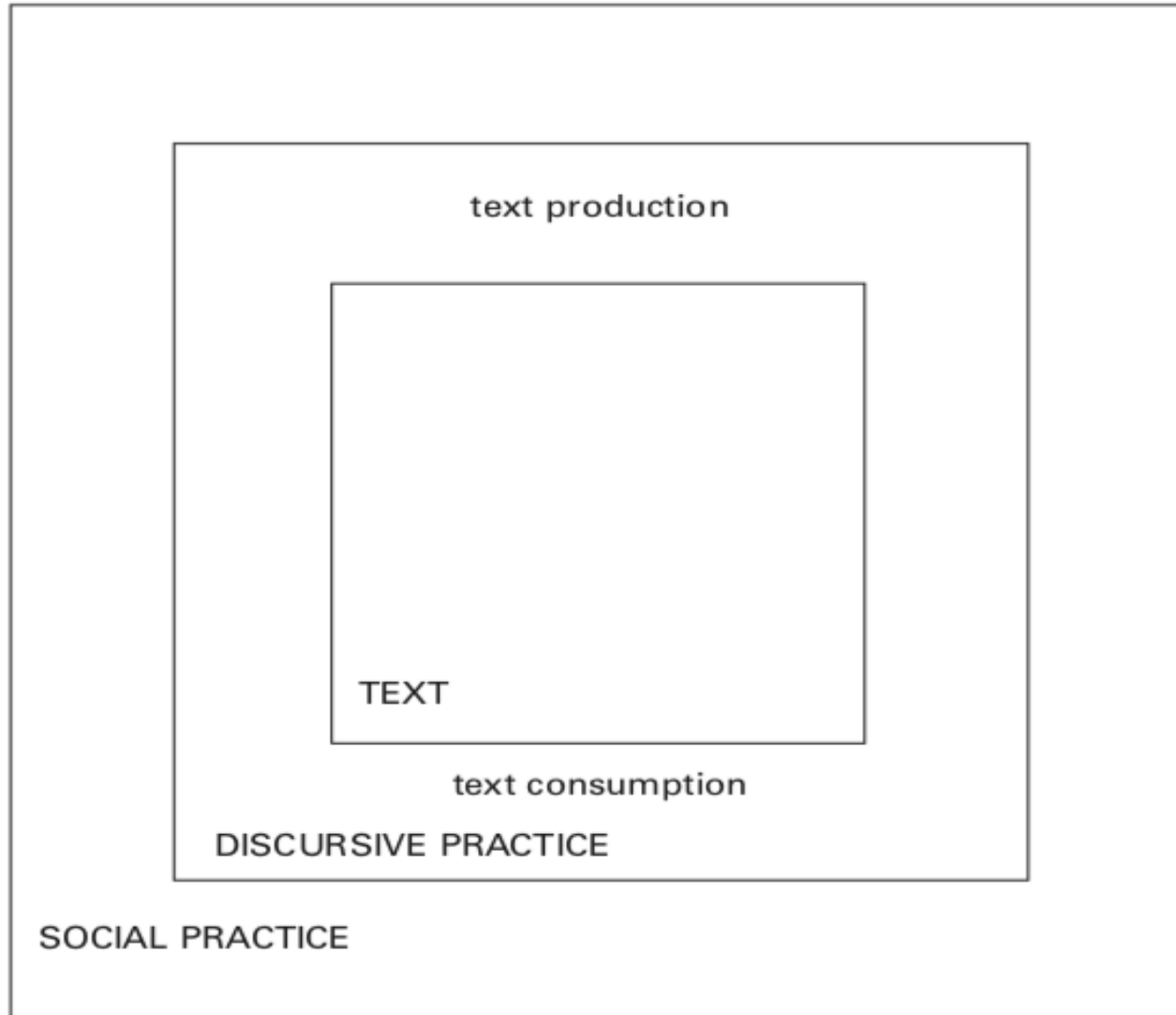
# Application of CDA

Looking at the focus of the study, the name Lagos supercedes the former indigenous names for *Lagos Oko/ Yoruba, Eko a contested name* where others say it is a **Bini** name meaning a *slave camp* that was established by the Bini during the times the Lagos Island was a territory of the Bini while others insist that it is a Yoruba lexical item which means a place of convergence and is captured in the **IFA** an indigenous Knowledge systems archive

# OKO/EKO/LAGOS

- History insist that one Yoruba Oba concerted through coesion to signing a treaty that gave the rights for the Oko/Eko to be named Lagos and be included on the world map as such
- However, the pattern can also be witnessed with most of Lagos place names such as: ***Victoria Island formerly*** identified as ***IRU Island*** the jurisdiction of **Oba Oniru**
- Victoria Island is one of the most exclusive and expensive areas to reside in Logos. A footprint of the colonial master.

# The Three Dimensional Model





# Toponyms Analysis

- The evolving of the name Oko to Eko is given different orientations. A sizeable number of the scholars interviewed, that is five out of six confirmed that the toponym Eko is from the Bini lexical items.
- 'Eko' from Bini means 'camp' the camp referred to, was a military camp used during the slave trade era

# Continuation

- Bini though they were not the owners of the place they named Eko were by then *a powerful force to recon and took the Eko area as an extension of their territory.*
- *The Bini or rather the **Edo people** as powerful as they were did not only establish in Oko a Yoruba territory but the **Oba of Bini** did send surveillance to the territory of the captured Yoruba Oba thereby setting a camp changing the place name from Oko to Eko.*

# Continuation

- The study reveals that, the current Benin City is a colonial notation of the area which was previously named Bini and Edo being the people of Bini.
- Traditionally the Yoruba and the Edo people used to have waterlinks at the same time politically **Eko** was an annex of **Bini** as an island for slave shipment.

# Continuation

- Oko is undoubtedly Yoruba meaning a *separation between the homestead and the farm.*
- The change of the place name Oko to Eko therefore is in sync with the captured history that the first settler within the area was Yoruba however, the area was later under the jurisdiction of Bini therefore used a Bini name.

# Continuation

- For sometime Oko serves as a territorial extension of Bini therefore under Bini this might have resulted in the change of the place name from Oko to Eko assuming the identity of the politically superior group.
- However, one researcher insists that Eko is indeed a Yoruba lexical item which has two parts; ***/E-/ the prefix -Ko the stem /-Ko/ means*** put together therefore Eko describes an area of convergence of mankind from all walks of the world who can find their way to Eko for various reasons through all modes of transport.

# Continuation

- Being highly accessible makes Eko a lucrative market for both the inland traders and international traders.
- The toponym Eko is said to belong to the Yoruba for it is said that, Eko recurs in the IFA the Yoruba Indigenous Knowledge System Archives. (Precisely more than five times).  
**(Debate on its appearance)**

# Continuation

- The place name Lagos supersedes Oko/Eko Bigon (2011)'s study on toponym concludes that, beyond its primary aim as an administrative act facilitating a geographical orientation in space, place names reflect ***political control over both landscape and history***
- What are we saying of Lagos named after a Portual city? In todays discourses on ***Ownership and Identities*** people who live in Lagos are referred to as Lagosians whose identity is the adjective depicting ( an assortment of people from all over the world and some are claiming ownership)

# Continuation

- Lagos the present day extension which is the *Lagos metropolitan* got its name from the now called *Lagos Island/ Eko* even the former *Eko* is well known as the *Island or Lagos Island- the market place*.
- Ideological naming the place is a display of power. For language is power. According to Ngugi ( 1986: 16) concurring with Faircloughs observations, Language is Communication and it is culture .... and culture carries the entire body of values and one's place in the world are products of each other. Communication creates culture, as such language plays a dual purpose as a carrier of identity and a carrier of culture.



# Continuation

- Language creates TEXT, the text, which is observed as culture and is accepted as social practice. The culture that has been created especially by Lagos is that of seeing English as a higher variety language and superior to the local languages. English has been awarded a lingua franca status and a language for business and Education in Nigeria and Lagos in particular.

# Continuation

- The social practice has come to accept English as ***(THE) mode of communication.***
- A purposive sample of elite residential areas like the Banana Island an artificial island has children who are comfortable in communicating in English not only this, from a randomly picked UNILAG Masters students on what language they prefer to explicate reality in, they concur that English is better than any local language. ***What advantages accrue with proficiency in the local languages?***

# Continuation

- *The elite Victoria Island* is referred to as Lagos's business and financial center, it houses many corporate headquarters, financial institutions, and multinational corporations.
- **Lagos just like in Zimbabwe, English is given a higher variety, interlectual capability, assessment and acceptance of elitism is measured against English proficiency.**

# Continuation

- Many of the streets names in Lagos and place names were named by the British government . These include a host of such streets which until today are named after the colonial masters:
- **Cameron Road named after Sir Donald Charles a British colonial governor.**
- **Victoria Island is named after the queen of United Kingdom and Ireland.**

# Continuation

- Victoria Island before it become affluent, it was just an Island surrounded by water called V1 the area was a major hub for commerce and British vessels harboured there during the Colonial era.
- The crime rate according to [fastlagos.com](http://fastlagos.com) is 0.05% making it one of the safest areas to live in Lagos

# Victoria Island Vs Makoko

- Comparing Victoria Island life, physical appearance and the mindset with that of the Makoko the waterfront area, the results give two different worlds depiction.
- Makoko is an informal settlement that can be pronounced as one of the largest slum in Nigeria -neglected by the government.
- Makoko is according to the guardian.com six district villages spread across land and water: Oko Agbon, Adogbo, Migbewhe, Yanshiwhe,

# Continuation

- The guardian insists that, Makoko is the perfect nightmare for the Lagos government, a slum in full view, spread out beneath the most travelled bridge in West Africa's megalopolis and the residents live under constant threat of eviction.
- Makoko means ( Fishermen's village) nicknamed the ' Venice of Africa' the floating village - a third of the village is built on pole along the Lagoon and the rest on the land (*Due to its location the lagoon*).

# Continuation

- If resources allowed for the development of the Banana Island an artificial island, resources needed to turn around Makoko to a habitable area would not be as much as that which has been used to reclaim the vast area from the Ocean that stretches to about 65 kilometers and 6 500, 000 square meters have been reclaimed, the aim is to reclaim a total of nine million square meters.



# Continuation

- The reclaimed land is for commercial purposes not for humanitarian purposes therefore the issue of Makoko can be shelved. - ***the place name remained original for the area. (Text- Lagos Bylaws)***
- Yaba city is an indigenous community in Lagos main land, in the pre-colonial times it was known ***as Oke Ode.***
- It was christioned ***Yaba Estate or the Garden City*** due to its sprawling ecosystem of beautiful and lush vegetation in the manner of ***British landscape.***

# Lagos and surrounding Place names

- Ikeja, the capital of Lagos, is an abbreviation for 'Ikorodu And Epe joint Administration' it was *coined by colonial masters for easy of administration*
- By taking on English as the main language all these names fit in to the linguistic landscape of Lagos. I asked a number of people the local name for the Lagoon they had no idea (**Osa**)

# The intersection

- The analysis targeted the language that builds the toponyms.
- It is in essence a discourse analysis that the study attempted to do.
- Interrogating the unequal power relations, ideological inclinations, hegemonic aspects and manipulative tendencies of the selected toponyms.

# Relocating African Studies

- The study reveals that to take on a language is to take on an identity, an ideology and a culture.
- Place names for as long as they continue to be realised in the foreign language and Lagos continues to use English as the prestigious language with all the political reasons that comes with its use, reality will remain being identified ideologically in English.
- No wonder the likes of Pan-African advocacy Fela Kuti, Ngugi waThiogo, Chinua Achebe radically confronts the use of English especially in Education.

# Relocating African Studies

- **As Africans we cannot continue to cry over split milk for too long a time. Colonisation has had its fair share of Evil and Good.**
- **What are we doing as a people to reposition ourselves linguistically?**
- **Its not even enough to Africanise place names and still explicate reality in Foreign languages. It is a matter of embracing our languages and appreciating our own mindset as a people.**

# Lagos/Zimbabwe naming practices

- Much as Zimbabwe has changed most of the public place names and street names the linguistic terrain has not changed much.
- For one to either enter the job market or higher education they need to have passed English. Therefore, a change might only be political but not socially advantageous.
- There are no advantages that accrue with proficiency in isiNdebele or Shona or any of the recently recognised sixteen languages of Zimbabwe.

# Conclusion

- **The nexus between CDA and Onomastics provides a valuable framework for the study of toponyms in Lagos. The analysis of toponyms can reveal important insights into the history, culture, and power relations of the city. CDA can be used to uncover the ideological and political motivations behind the naming of places, while Onomastics can provide insights into the linguistic and cultural diversity of Lagos. Further research is needed to explore the use and meaning of toponyms in Lagos and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the sociolinguistic and cultural dynamics of the city.**

# Conclusion

- The use of colonial names in toponyms can reflect the legacy of colonialism and the power dynamics that persist in post-colonial societies.
- Additionally, the use of Yoruba names in toponyms can reflect the city's Yoruba heritage, linguistic diversity and resistance to dominant ideologies.
- At this point in time I would like to thank you for listening to this humble presentation of mine.

*E dupe/ Kicheko/Ngiyabonga/ Tatenda/ Thank you*