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Research Article



Conversational Thinking as Pedagogy: An Indigenous Approach to Decolonizing Philosophy of Education in Nigerian Primary Schools

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Abstract: This research delves into Conversational Thinking, an African hermeneutic approach grounded in Ezumezu logic, as a method for decolonizing philosophy education in Nigerian primary schools, specifically in Osun and Ondo States. Situated within the Conversational School of Philosophy, this approach draws on complementary concepts of nkwu (affirmative complementarity) and aru (creative struggle) to enhance dialogical interactions in which meaning is collaboratively constructed through mutual epistemic negotiation. Through philosophical analysis and hermeneutic interpretation, the research illustrates how the fundamental tenets of Conversational Thinking resonate with Yoruba epistemological traditions, such as ijnlè ogbòn (deep wisdom) and proverbial discourse, thereby creating an epistemological continuity often missing in Western educational models. The inquiry supports Conversational Thinking as a philosophically sound avenue for fostering critical, culturally embedded thinkers who can actively engage in communal knowledge creation.

Keywords: *Conversational Thinking, Decolonial pedagogy, African philosophy, Yoruba epistemology, Ezumezu logic.*

1. Introduction

The call to decolonize African education has garnered significant academic interest, with increasing demands for integrating indigenous epistemological perspectives into curricula. Academics advocate for incorporating philosophy into African schools through decolonial frameworks that embrace African practices. This demand transcends mere content inclusion, prompting essential inquiries into the methodologies and reasoning that inform educational processes.

Central to this methodological debate is the quest for a logical basis for African thought. As Chimakonam (2017) points out, the discussion about the foundations of African logic is inherently tied to methodology: should we develop new methods for African philosophy, or is the application of Western methodologies sufficient? In response, the Conversational School of Philosophy has introduced Conversational Thinking—an African hermeneutic framework rooted in Ezumezu logic, a three-valued logical system that prioritizes complementary,

relational, and dialogical interactions with concepts (Chimakonam, 2015, 2019).

Conversational Thinking operates through nkwu (affirmative complementarity) and aru (creative struggle), encouraging dialogical interactions in which meaning is generated through mutual negotiation rather than confrontational debate (Chimakonam, 2015; Etieyibo, 2016). As a decolonial approach, this method fosters knowledge creation inspired by African cultural contexts (Chimakonam, 2017; Nweke, 2022). Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya (2024) argue that such frameworks can equip future generations with the skills to think critically, creatively, and innovatively while perceiving reality from African epistemological standpoints.

Choosing Osun and Ondo States is important due to their rich cultural backgrounds, which include Yoruba philosophical traditions that stress dialogical knowledge creation through àbámò (proverbs), àlò (folktales), and ijnlè ogbòn (deep wisdom) (Adegbindin, 2020; Gbadegesin, 1991). These frameworks offer cultural

relevance for the application of the Conversational Thinking pedagogy.

2. Research Objectives and Questions

Objectives:

2.1. To thoroughly investigate the philosophical underpinnings of Conversational Thinking as an indigenous pedagogical model and illustrate how its fundamental elements—*nkwu* and *arụ*—can be integrated into philosophy curricula in Nigerian primary schools located in Osun and Ondo States.

2.2. To establish the epistemological links between Conversational Thinking and Yoruba indigenous knowledge systems by examining how Yoruba philosophical traditions resonate culturally with this decolonial educational approach.

3. Research Questions:

3.1. How do the philosophical tenets of Conversational Thinking correspond with Yoruba epistemological traditions to form a culturally cohesive pedagogical framework for primary education?

3.2. In what ways does Conversational Thinking address discord in Western educational models and provide a philosophical rationale for viewing students as active contributors to communal inquiry?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Conversational Thinking and Ezumezu Logic

The emergence of Conversational Thinking is associated with Ezumezu logic, a system inspired by African culture developed by Chimakonam (2019) to explore whether a logical tradition can arise from African intellectual heritage (Chimakonam, 2017). Ezumezu functions as a three-valued logical framework that emphasizes relational, complementary, and dialogical engagement, standing in contrast to traditional Aristotelian binary logic. Its core principles, such as trivalence and *nmeko* (relationship), stress the complementarity of seemingly opposing variables.

From this foundation, Conversational Thinking evolves as a hermeneutic framework built on *nkwu* and *arụ* (Chimakonam, 2015, 2017). As a decolonial approach, it advocates for knowledge systems inspired by African cultural contexts (Chimakonam, 2017; Nweke, 2022).

4.2 Conversational Thinking as Pedagogy

Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya (2024) argue for introducing philosophy into African schools through decolonial approaches that accommodate African methods. They contend that Conversational Thinking can train generations to be critical, creative, and innovative while viewing reality from African epistemic perspectives. Chimakonam (2019) identifies African education as having two problems: it is

colonial, stifling creative originality, and fitted with alien background logic, estranging learners.

4.3 Yoruba Epistemological Traditions

Adesina (2002) argues that Yoruba studies offer rich idiographic narratives that contribute to global sociology. The “fuzzy logic” in *Òrúnmilà*’s oracular narratives contrasts with Aristotelian “binary logic,” premising epistemic shift. Yoruba traditions emphasize dialogical knowledge production through proverbs, folktales, and deep wisdom (Adegbindin, 2020; Gbadegesin, 1991). Hall (2021) examines the Yoruba concept of *olaju* (enlightenment) and the knowledge-power relations it entails.

4.4 Gap in Literature

While theoretical foundations of Conversational Thinking as pedagogy exist (Chimakonam & Ogbonnaya, 2024), no study has philosophically examined how it can be adapted to Yoruba epistemological traditions in Southwest Nigerian primary education. This study addresses that gap.

5. Conceptual Clarifications

Conversational Thinking: An African hermeneutic framework operating through *nkwu* and *arụ*, fostering dialogical engagement where meaning emerges through reciprocal epistemic negotiation (Chimakonam, 2015, 2017).

Ezumezu Logic: An African three-valued logical system emphasizing complementary, relational, and dialogical engagement, contrasting with Aristotelian binary logic (Chimakonam, 2019).

Nkwu (Affirmative Complementarity): The principle where ideas are affirmed and built upon, recognizing complementary relationships between opposed positions (Chimakonam, 2015).

Arụ (Creative Struggle): The principle where ideas are challenged critically but constructively, fostering innovation through respectful engagement (Chimakonam, 2015).

Decolonial Pedagogy: Educational approaches resisting Western epistemological hegemony, developing curricula reflecting indigenous perspectives (Chimakonam & Ogbonnaya, 2024; Nweke, 2022).

Ìjìnlẹ̀ Ọgbọn: Yoruba concept of “deep wisdom” connecting to broader cosmological and ethical frameworks (Adegbindin, 2020; Gbadegesin, 1991).

Yoruba Epistemological Traditions: Indigenous knowledge systems emphasizing dialogical engagement through proverbs, folktales, and *Ifá* divination (Adesina, 2002; Adegbindin, 2020).

6. Theoretical Framework

This study employs a tripartite theoretical framework integrating African logic, decolonial theory, and hermeneutic philosophy.

Ezumezu Logic (Chimakonam, 2019) provides the primary framework, characterized by three-valued logic, the principle of *nmeko* (relationship), and grounding new methods in African philosophy. This enables analysis of how Conversational Thinking's principles emerge from distinct logical foundations.

Decolonial Theory (Chimakonam, 2017; Nweke, 2022) recognizes that colonial curricula stifle creativity through alien logic, calling for a curriculum transformation grounded in African logic and emphasizing epistemic liberation—where learners become knowledge producers rather than consumers.

Hermeneutic Philosophy emphasizes understanding as active interpretation shaped by cultural location, aligning with Conversational Thinking's emphasis on reciprocal epistemic negotiation and enabling interpretation of Yoruba traditions as living philosophical resources.

Together, these frameworks enable rigorous philosophical examination of Conversational Thinking as pedagogy grounded in African logic, committed to decolonization, and attuned to Yoruba epistemological specificities.

7. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative philosophical research design grounded in African hermeneutics and conceptual analysis, utilizing three interrelated methods. First, critical analysis examines Conversational Thinking's philosophical foundations, including principles of *nkwu* and *arū* and grounding in Ezumezu logic. Second, hermeneutic interpretation engages Yoruba epistemological traditions as living philosophical resources, analyzing concepts such as *ijinlẹ ogbón*, proverbial discourse, and logical structures in Ifá divination. Third, comparative philosophical analysis systematically compares Conversational Thinking principles with corresponding elements in Yoruba thought to establish epistemological continuity.

Data sources comprise primary texts in Conversational Thinking and secondary sources in African philosophy, decolonial theory, and Yoruba studies. Analysis proceeds through conceptual clarification, logical assessment, hermeneutic interpretation, and systematic comparison. Trustworthiness is established through clarity, coherence, depth of engagement, and contribution to original knowledge, guided by ethical commitments to respect intellectual property and cultural traditions. While acknowledging the limitation of lacking empirical evidence for classroom implementation, the study offers rigorous philosophical justification for the cultural appropriateness of

Conversational Thinking pedagogy in Yoruba-speaking contexts of Osun and Ondo States.

8. Philosophical Analysis

8.1 The Philosophical Foundations of Conversational Thinking

Ezumezu Logic as a Fundamental Framework: Conversational Thinking is rooted in Ezumezu logic, an African cultural framework developed by Chimakonam (2019). The “logic criterion” posits that philosophical traditions are recognized by their corresponding logical systems. Ezumezu operates as a three-valued logic that extends beyond classical bivalence, introducing a third truth-value derived from the complementary relationships between seemingly contradictory elements. It operates through *nmeko*, or relationship, emphasizing the interplay between apparent opposites.

The Principles of *Nkwu* and *Arū*: Conversational Thinking formalizes Ezumezu through *nkwu* (affirmative complementarity) and *arū* (creative struggle). *Nkwu* promotes the productive engagement of diverse opinions, embodying collective knowledge creation. In contrast, *arū* represents challenges aimed at fostering deeper understanding, moving beyond mere conflict. Collectively, these principles form a dialogical inquiry framework that positions all participants as co-inquirers.

Conversational Thinking as a Decolonial Method: Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya (2024) advocate integrating philosophy into African educational contexts through decolonial methods that honor African practices. Conversational Thinking prepares future generations to think critically and creatively while perceiving reality through African epistemological lenses, facilitating a shift towards learners becoming active knowledge creators rather than passive consumers.

8.2 Yoruba Epistemological Traditions

The Logical Framework of Ifá Divination: Ofuasia, Dasaolu, and Oladipupo (2023) illustrates that Ifá divination is supported by logical principles akin to those of Ezumezu. A more thorough investigation reveals a trivalent logic where truth is gleaned through interpretive interaction. Ofuasia (2019) highlights how Yoruba ontology transcends classical logic and aligns with Ezumezu tenets.

Socrates and *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*: Fayemi (2021) posits that Socrates and *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* exemplify a dialogical quest for truth, countering the notion that conversational philosophy is a Western phenomenon.

Proverbs, Folktales, and Dialogical Discourse: Proverbs (*owe*) serve as conversational instruments that prompt interpretation. Folktales (*aló*) act as philosophical reflection points. *Ifọ̀ṛobanisọ̀rọ̀* (dialogical discourse) encapsulates the Yoruba focus on dialogue as a method of inquiry.

The Principle of Complementarity: Yoruba ontology highlights complementarity—opposing forces are co-constitutive. To grasp reality comprehensively, knowledge must acknowledge this balance.

8.3 Epistemological Continuity and Pedagogical Implications

Alignment of Logical Foundations: A significant structural congruence exists between Conversational Thinking and Yoruba philosophical traditions. Both utilize complementary logic that embraces ambiguity and consider that truth arises through dialogue. Exposure to Conversational Thinking allows Yoruba children to connect cognitive frameworks with their cultural heritage, mitigating dissonance.

Cultural Resonance: Chimakonam (2019) critiques African education as colonial, arguing that it stifles creativity through foreign logic. Cultural resonance addresses this by grounding pedagogy in local frameworks that nurture originality, creating cognitive continuity with the learners' cultural context.

Epistemic Justice: The dismissal of African epistemological frameworks amounts to epistemic injustice. Conversational Thinking fosters space for indigenous knowledge systems, recognizing them as legitimate. Sulyman and Ukwumaka (2024) argue for a blend of local and global cultures (glocalization).

Communal Epistemology: Both frameworks stress that knowledge is a collective accomplishment. Conversational Thinking organizes inquiry as a communal effort, transforming classrooms into communities of inquiry where instructors guide rather than impart knowledge.

Developing Critical and Creative Thinkers: Conversational Thinking pedagogy equips future generations to be critical, innovative, and imaginative while examining reality through African lenses. The critical aspect emerges through *arù*; the creative aspect through *nkwu*; and the cultural foundation is established through engagement with indigenous resources.

9. Findings

Objective One: Philosophical analysis confirms that Conversational Thinking is based in Ezumezu logic, a compelling three-valued African system articulated by Chimakonam (2019), which functions through complementarity rather than crisp bivalence. Its principles of *nkwu* and *arù* inform dialogical inquiry, fostering learners as active participants in the generation of communal knowledge. As a decolonial methodology, it nurtures epistemic liberation transforming learners into knowledge producers rather than mere consumers—and offers adaptable methods for primary education, turning classrooms into communities of inquiry where teachers facilitate rather

than merely convey knowledge (Chimakonam & Ogbonnaya, 2024).

Objective Two: The investigation reveals a profound structural similarity between Conversational Thinking and Yoruba epistemological traditions. Ifá divination employs trivalent logic reminiscent of Ezumezu, wherein truth is produced through interpretive engagement (Ofuasia, Dasaolu & Oladipupo, 2023). Yoruba ontology aligns with Ezumezu principles, spotlighting complementarity mutual constitution of opposing forces (Ofuasia, 2019). Proverbs and folktales act as conversational prompts for interpretation, while *ifòròbanisòrò* emphasizes the Yoruba focus on dialogue as a methodology. Fayemi (2021) illustrates that *Orùnmilà* exemplifies a quest for dialogical truth, paralleling the Socratic method, confirming the rich roots of conversational approaches in Yoruba traditions.

Implications: This ongoing epistemological connection validates the philosophical endorsement for implementing Conversational Thinking pedagogy in Yoruba primary schools. When Yoruba children engage with these methodologies, they navigate cognitive frameworks that resonate with their cultural heritage, thereby alleviating the cognitive dissonance associated with Western paradigms grounded in foreign logic (Chimakonam, 2019). This pedagogy combats epistemic injustice by reaffirming indigenous traditions while fostering critical thinking through *arù* and creativity through *nkwu* (Chimakonam & Ogbonnaya, 2024). It champions the glocalization approach proposed by Sulyman and Ukwumaka (2024)—integrating local roots with global insights.

10. Conclusion

This philosophical examination reveals that Conversational Thinking, rooted in Ezumezu logic, offers a culturally relevant framework for philosophy education in Yoruba-speaking primary schools within Osun and Ondo States. The study uncovered profound epistemological connections between the essential concepts of *nkwu* and *arù* in Conversational Thinking and the indigenous Yoruba knowledge systems. This includes the trivalent logic associated with Ifá divination, the dialogic nature of proverbs and folktales, and the communal epistemology represented in *ijinlè ogbón*. Such connections provide a philosophical basis for adopting the Conversational Thinking pedagogy as a decolonial strategy that mitigates the cognitive dissonance created by Western educational models, recognizes indigenous traditions as legitimate forms of knowledge, and fosters both critical and creative thinking while anchoring learners in African epistemology. By structuring classrooms as inquiry communities where educators guide rather than merely instruct, the Conversational Thinking pedagogy offers a path for primary education in Osun and Ondo States to move beyond the colonial legacy of rote learning, preparing students to become reflective, innovative, and culturally aware contributors to knowledge production.

Recommendations

To start, the Ministries of Education in Osun and Ondo States should form curriculum development committees consisting of philosophers, experts in Yoruba culture, educators, and community leaders to design age-appropriate materials that merge Conversational Thinking principles with indigenous content such as proverbs (*òwe*), folktales (*àlò*), and Ifá dialogical frameworks.

Next, Colleges of Education in Southwest Nigeria should revise their teacher preparation programs to incorporate training in Conversational Thinking methods and Yoruba epistemological traditions, thereby enhancing teachers' skills to facilitate inquiry-based, dialogical classrooms grounded in Ezumezu logic.

Furthermore, school leaders throughout Osun and Ondo States should create professional learning communities where teachers using the Conversational Thinking pedagogy can exchange experiences and receive continuous support, alongside reforming assessment methods to evaluate contributions to collective understanding, and individual achievements.

Finally, the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should initiate research on how the Conversational Thinking pedagogy can be adapted to Nigeria's diverse cultural contexts, identifying the logical frameworks of other ethnic groups to facilitate culturally specific yet philosophically consistent strategies for decolonizing primary education across the nation.

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