



Attitudes of Ghanaian Students towards the Establishment of a National Language in Ghana

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DOI: 10.53103/cjlls.v3i6.129

Abstract

The research investigated language attitudes of Ghanaian Senior High Students of the final year towards their own languages, other Ghanaian and African languages that they speak and towards English with the aim of finding out whether any relationships exist between languages that a person speaks and his or her attitudes towards them as well as towards the native speakers of those languages and compares these attitudes with their attitudes towards English, the official language of the country. The research was also conducted to find out if a Ghanaian language will in future replace English as the national language. The methodology employed was the impressionistic approach. Key findings revealed that students have very strong attitudes towards their own languages. It was also discovered that they have relatively less positive attitudes towards other Ghanaian languages that they speak as they were learnt for instrumental reasons. Overwhelmingly, students showed very high positive attitudes towards English to an extent of willing to speak it often to their children in their future homes. It was concluded that there are unlikely chances for any Ghanaian language to replace English.

Keywords: National Language, Ghana, Language Attitudes, Language Policy

Introduction

Language has always been an issue of discussion throughout the world, be it about a local language within a country or an international one. The struggle to survive and possibly to dominate is the current case as people become more aware of the role of their languages. At one end of the problem as stated by Wardhaugh (1987), some people feel comfortable adopting and accepting a foreign language as official or nation for reasons termed "obvious" while at the other end are those who feel that there is a need to use one's own language as an official language within his or her own country. What happens to the local languages in a situation where a foreign language is adopted, and why will people prefer it as an official language instead of a local one as a national language? The answer might appear quite straightforward in situations with a couple of languages but quite

complex in multilingual situations. Reactions and answers to these issues reflect attitudes that individuals and groups of people have towards their own tribal languages and other languages.

Language attitudes involve impressions on languages, perceptions of people of different ethnic groups, about themselves and about others. Attitudes here is limited to what Baker (1992: 12) refers to as "cognitive relating to thoughts and beliefs and affective components referring to the feeling towards the languages." These perceptions depend on social expectations, the role and status of the language. If people feel that they are expected to speak a language which will raise their status within the community in which they are, then they learn it at all cost for this purpose. Schmied (1991), cited by Cheshire (1991), from an economic view point says that attitudes are based on the economic advantages attached to the use of a language.

The study of language attitudes has roots in social psychology and is concerned with the social meanings people assign to language and its users (Dragojevic et al., 2022). Social psychologists generally agree that an attitude is an evaluative reaction to an object. In line with this, language attitudes are explained to mean evaluative reactions to language. People may therefore tend to learn a language because of the gains they get by learning to speak it or some other positive reasons about that language.

However, governments have great influence on the choice of a national language in the country and therefore questions on favourable or unfavourable attitudes may depend on what a particular government thinks. Attitudes towards a language could be quite difficult to determine in certain cases as people are torn between loyalty to their own languages and the gains of using a different language as may be viewed by government. This is the case in multilingual situations as in Asia and Africa. Because of this complex language situation, the choice of a national language remains a problem in these places. There is a general feeling that the African languages are not developed well enough for academic or scientific purposes (except maybe Swahili). It is also believed that the use of a foreign language brings about harmony and therefore unifies a country. For these and other reasons, many African countries still use European languages as their official languages.

Ghana has 60 languages Quaye (1991, p.24), but has used and maintains English as her official language. With the current views on self-realisation in Ghana, some people feel that English should be replaced by a Ghanaian language. This is why this paper looks at the attitudes of the young people towards the language situation in the country and the possibility of replacing English with a Ghanaian language.

Linguistic Environment

The boundaries of Ghana not only cut across major geographical divisions between

the forest and the savannah but also across major ethnic divisions. Ghana is divided into sixteen administrative regions, five in the northern part of the country and the rest in the south. These divisions do not necessarily reflect tribal or ethnic boundaries except in the Ashanti region where Twi (the language of the Asante) and other dialects of Akan, the family to which Twi belongs, are predominantly spoken.

In terms of linguistic classification, there are three main ethnic groupings. It is believed that nearly all the indigenous languages spoken in Ghana belong to the Kwa (mainly made up the languages of southern Ghana except for a few like Gonja Anofu and Nawuri in the north) and the Gur group in the north. Two ethnic groups, the Ligbi and Bisa are classified under the Mande (Hall, 1983). Hall lists forty-four languages as indigenous to Ghana, but the language situation is far more complex than that, a later publication, Quaye, (1991), reveals 60 languages. In earlier classifications, some of the languages were glossed together as one language though native speakers of these languages consider them different from each other. Wali, and Dagaare for example were considered one but the speakers of these languages have never considered themselves as the same though Dagaare and Wali are mutually intelligible. Dagbani, Mampruli and Nanumba have a similar relationship.

Sasu (2022) states that Akan is the most spoken local language with dialects such as Fante, Akwapem, Akyem, Ahafo and Asante. In spite of this situation, even the smaller language groups have maintained their languages and identity. Because of the many languages, bilingualism is a common phenomenon in Ghana. However, it is associated with individuals rather with groups. There is for example no specific language group of people known to be most bilingual in Ghana. Many Ghanaians have grown up being multilingual, using the languages in their immediate environments. Bilingualism became a more common phenomenon because people moved and still continue to move freely from their native lands, especially those in very dry and poor areas in search of arable lands or jobs.

There are also some languages spoken in Ghana which are not originally Ghanaian languages but from neighbouring countries. The most commonly used one is Hausa. With trade routes from North and West Africa through Northern Ghana, Hausa gained roots first in the Northern territories and has now spread to other parts of the country, especially in big cities like Kumasi in the Ashanti region and Accra, the capital. As observed by Gardener and Lambert (1972) people tend to learn languages for integrative and instrumental reasons. The need for a medium of education and interaction at a national level, resulted in the establishment of English as the official language so that the people of the nation, at large, can be made aware of things around them, especially about the policies of government and a need to take part in resolving local and national issues. It was also regarded as a language that will foster a sense of national unity. This did not solve the problem since there are still many people who do not speak English because they have not been to school and do not have any other opportunity to learn it. Naturally therefore, one

would expect communication problems with the language complexity but the fact that people are open to learning languages around them reduces the problem to a lesser degree than it appears to be.

Twi of the Akan family has been learnt by many Ghanaians who speak it with different levels of competency across the entire country. It is unofficially playing many of the roles of English for which English was chosen. The advantage of Akan is that it has three standard forms: Fante, Asante Twi and Akuapim Twi and has a good amount of written and published literature. Twi could have therefore been accepted as a language of wider communication for Ghanaians but in recent years in Ghana, as a result of education and Christianity, there has been a growing awareness of ethnic identity, thus making people more attached to their ethnolinguistic identities. In some cases, the identification of language groups has become even more complicated. In the past some speakers of some "minority language groups" identified themselves with certain larger or more prestigious ones. Examples are the Hanga, the Tampilma, the Vagla, the Laribansi, and the Safalba in the Northern region who though speaking completely different languages from Gonja identified themselves with the Gonja identities. Another example is the Brifor who identified themselves with the Dagaaba or Wala outside their own locality. The situation is changing fast. People are proud to say what they really are even if they still identify with other ethnic groups. Unfortunately, tribal identification in Ghana ends up with struggle for land and separate traditional leadership which has resulted in ethnic conflicts. This is because people think that if they are an independent ethnic group, they must have their own land and their own traditional leadership and because some other ethnic groups would have enjoyed the monopoly of the use of the land and leadership, it becomes difficult to share the land and power.

Other lingua franca like Hausa and Pidgin English have further complicated the Ghanaian language situation as they are in competition with some local languages. While the official recognition of every language group by the State has created positive attitudes in people towards their own languages, many people also have favourable attitudes towards English, which is used for education and government business.

Taking the multiplicity of languages of Ghana into account, this study was undertaken to investigate:

- (i) the extent to which students attach or detach themselves from their mother tongue or first languages in preference for English
- (ii) their attitudes towards their own local or first languages, other Ghanaian languages learnt and English
- (iii) the recognition of a Ghanaian language which could possibly be used as a national language in Ghana

Attitudes And Language Policy in Ghana

The three objectives of the study have a relationship with English and in order to understand this link, it is important to look at the language policy of the country to see its contribution to the acceptance or rejection of a Ghanaian language as a national language. In Ghana, as in many African countries, there is still no dominant indigenous language which could easily be designated the official or national language. In order therefore to foster national unity, remain neutral and fair, governments of these countries have adopted the language of the former colonial power as the official language. Many scholars from early 70s such as Ansre (1970) to Kyeremateng (1996), Markin-Yankah (1999), Anyidoho (2004), Owu-Ewie (2006), Anyidoho and Dakubu (2008), Anyidoho and Anyidoho (2009) and Ansah (2014) and Anyidoho (2018), gave similar accounts for the rationale for adopting a European language as the official language of Ghana. The language policy in education is a bilingual language policy which aimed at giving children an opportunity to learn both in their mother-tongue or first language, first for three years of primary school and switching to the use of English as a medium of instruction in school from primary four. As stated by Mahama and Bawah (2022), Anyidoho (2018), Owie-Ewie (2006), the implementation has not been consistent and depending on the government in power, English is either used as the medium of education from primary one or the mother-tongue used for the first three years as stated in the policy. Because English has been the language of formal education for most part of schooling, seen as an international language, neutral and fostering unity, and also used for government business, English has a prestigious position in the country with even those who have not been to school trying to speak it. Therefore, the use of the local language was not popular and so some schools neglected the policy of local language first and used English from primary one. Many Ghanaians had a negative attitude towards the use of local languages in school. Anyidoho (2018) writes that one of the challenges of the successful implementation of mother-tongue education was the negative attitude that Ghanaians generally have about the indigenous languages. However, the policy to use or learn the local languages in schools is in accordance with language rights, the right for every individual language to develop but given all the constraints of which language to choose as a national language and the resources needed to develop them, the government chose to keep English. While arguments for the use of one's language for education is seen as a right and a preservation of local cultures, other arguments say it will draw the child backwards.

Language Attitudes Research

Language attitude studies are not new. Research has been done on language attitudes in different parts of the world. Some of the commonly cited places are India, Singapore, Malaysia, and the former Soviet Union. In all these studies there is usually a

close relation to language policy. In India native Hindi speakers recognise Hindi as the national language while non-native speakers prefer their regional or tribal languages and English. Though Hindi has been promoted by the Government, English however, has come to be the language that is widely known among the educated class of the country. The situation is not very different in Malaysia and Singapore. Though Malay is the most widely spoken local language, English is preferred because of economic reasons. Another example is the Russian language which was imposed upon all the fifteen republics of the then Soviet Union as the official language. The people had a very negative attitude towards Russian and fought to have their own languages alongside Russian. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, each republic now uses its own language and since 1986, children regularly receive most of their schooling in languages other than Russian. In all the above situations, negative attitudes were developed towards the imposed languages by non-native speakers. Attitudes of authority towards a language can affect the attitudes that people develop towards it. It can either bring positive or negative attitudes. Adegbija (1992) gives his example of pupils of a primary school punished for speaking their local language in school in Nigeria. According to him this is likely to make the pupils feel that their languages are not as important as English. Thus resulting in the formation of negative attitudes towards their own languages.

Comparatively in Africa, particularly in West Africa, not much has been done in this area especially in relation to national language issues though other areas such as varieties of English or arguments for or against the use of English has been looked at.

For most Africans, an Africa language is considered more effective for communication within the local environment while English is considered more appropriate in the expression of technical and scientific ideas. At the national level in countries where people think this is the case, there is a growing need to keep and maintain English or language of the coloniser mainly because of its appropriateness to the local environment. Adegbija (1994), writes that many educated Africans in African English speaking countries do not believe that a decline in the use of English would strengthen national unity. There is also a belief that because English is a neutral language, it gives equal chances to all children.

While these arguments and beliefs are related directly to the nation as a whole, other instrumental and integrative arguments have a personal basis. English is seen as a personal asset, an instrument to help the individual to be international. The instrumental value is recognised by everyone. The integrative arguments are considered personal and important as individuals want to integrate into the bigger community of English speakers. This interaction between integrative and instrumental attitudes are not particular of only Africans Adegbija (1994).

Some results of research in Ghana show that there is generally positive evaluation of European languages, especially in official domains, because of their instrumental roles

and socio-economic gains associated with the European languages (Anyidoho, 2018). As early as in the 70s, Ghanaian languages were studied in school but attitudes towards them were even at that time not very positive in comparison with English (Ansre, 1975; Boadi, 1976 and Saah, 1986). Many arguments have also been made in favour of the local languages in education but results of most of the research in Africa have indicated that the socio-economic benefit or instrumental value of European languages in the social structure of most African countries account for the favourable and more positive attitudes towards foreign languages.

From the preceding, it appears that there is not much hope for the local languages of Africa but it has to be argued that despite all the advantages of English, it has its own sociological and linguistic problems that could be disadvantageous when only English is used in school. The use of English can therefore be regulated to allow the local languages to develop and to create more positive attitudes among their users. The theoretical basis for this study is on ethnolinguistic theory (Giles and Johnson, 1987) which is concerned with ways in which people affiliate with their ethnic identities through language and language behaviour.

Methodology

Methods used in the research of language attitudes in Africa include impressionistic approach, the use of attitude statements, usually made up of favourable and non-favourable ones as well as interviews. Respondents are made to tick according to what they agree with or not. The above methods chose their subjects randomly and made use of questionnaires. Baker (1992), also uses questionnaires but attempts to control more variables such as age, gender, and type of school. Acknowledging that attitudes are more complex than that, he provides some insights into how such variables can affect the measurement of language attitudes. Adebija (1992) uses qualitative techniques such as interviews and observations. Some criticisms of the mentioned research approaches have been the need to be more sophisticated in research design and more thorough in sampling and analytical techniques. Baker (1992) calls for a combination of all the methods to be more effective.

For this study, a questionnaire was administered to two hundred students in their final year of Senior High School. The questions were a mixture of closed and open ended questions. There were also both favourable and unfavourable statements about local languages and English. Some questions also focused on students' loyalty to and use of their own languages. Besides the questionnaire, there were also informal interaction with students (participant observer approach).

Respondents were from Tamale Senior High, Ghana Senior High, Business Senior High and Northern School of Business Senior High in the Tamale Metropolis of the

northern region of Ghana. Tamale is cosmopolitan with several people with different linguistic backgrounds. The schools were purposively selected because I had informal interactions with them on the topic of study and observed their interest, so they were chosen. Students in these schools are from all over the country. They were randomly chosen from the final years in each school but with a limitation of not more than 50 in each school, 111 males and 89 females in all. The key variables were that the participant must be in the final year on assumption that they know more about the school system than the rest. The second criterion is that the student should be willing to participate in the study.

Findings and Discussions

Of the 200 participants, 111 (55.5%) are male students while 89 (44.5%) are females. Their language backgrounds also showed that all 200 students were from 19 different language backgrounds. Some of the nineteen languages are at the same time spoken as second and third languages by some of the students. Respondents have been categorized by whether they are from the northern or Southern part of Ghana. Details of the number of languages spoken are in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of languages spoken by respondents according to sex and region

Number of languages	Regions				TOTAL
	North		South		
	M	F	M	F	
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	31	16	41	26	114
3	22	36	6	2	66
4 or more	10	7	1	2	20
Total	63	59	48	30	200

Key: M= Male F= Female

At regional levels, people usually identify themselves as either coming from the north (made up of the five Northern Regions; Northern, Savannah, North East, Upper East and Upper West Regions) or from the South (the rest of the eleven regions) and then the specific region.

From table 1 above, we see that more students from the north speak more languages than their counterparts from the south. There are for example 58 students from the north who speak three languages, while only 8 from the south speak the same number of languages. There are also as many as 17 students from the north in comparison with only

3 from the south who speak 4 or more languages. The difference seems to get greater as the number of languages increases. The southern part of the country has a large number of Twi speakers and many other people learn it as their second or third language, Since such people are all able to communicate with themselves and others in Twi, they are more reluctant to learn other languages. This observation is true for both male and female students in this study. It is therefore not surprising that the students from the south speak fewer languages.

As indicated in the table above, it is rare to speak one or two languages in the north. This is because there is not such a widely spoken language in the north and since people will have to live and interact with each other, they learn each other's languages, especially the students who in most cases move from one location to another because of schooling. Overall, the students can be described as bilinguals. All respondents speak English and their native language.

Enquiring about the specific languages they speak, one hundred and twelve (112) students (56%) claim they speak Twi. It has the greatest number of speakers. Hausa, though not a Ghanaian language turns out to be the second most widely spoken language, spoken by 102 (51%) students. The interesting point to note here is that 5 of 16 native Akan speakers in this study speak other languages. This is probably because they might have been in contact with people of different language groups that did not understand or speak Twi or did not grow up in an Akan speaking region.

Ethnic And Educational Background of Parents and Languages Learnt First by Students

Table 2 below presents Parents' backgrounds and languages learnt first by students. The linguistic and educational background as well as the order in which students have learnt languages may have an effect on their attitudes. While all respondents responded to the question on whether their parents are of the same ethnic group or not, twelve (12) of them gave no response to the educational backgrounds of their parents. For those of same tribe, nearly 42% and 15% of both male and female students respectively learnt their own languages first because their parents spoke their tribal languages to them. Of those who learnt other languages first, five of them learnt English. Learning English first is a very recent but fast-growing trend in Ghana as parents in the past spoke to their children in the local language at home.

In the case of parents of different language groups, only about 13% learnt their own languages first because they say their parents speak a language different from either of their own languages at home. Some respondents said that their parents code-switched between a local language and English. It was found that even under such circumstances, they showed affection or allegiance to their own language when it comes to ethnic identity.

For literate and non-literate parents, the results show that only about 35% of the students of non-literate parents learnt their languages first while only 9.1% learnt other languages first. Nearly 24% of their counterparts of literate parents learnt other languages first. The literate parents are more likely to be less permanent in particular places and therefore their children are likely to learn more languages as they come in contact with new language groups.

What this may mean is that students who have learnt and use their own languages are more likely to develop strong and positive attitudes towards their own languages while those who do not speak their own languages may develop less stronger attitudes and will be more likely to accept other languages to be as good as theirs or even think that the other languages are more 'useful'.

Table 2: Parents' backgrounds and languages learnt first by students

Parents	Languages								Total
	Own language first				Other languages first				
	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	
Same Tribe	84	41.8	29	14.5	22	10.9	4	1.8	138
Different Tribe	11	5.5	15	7.3	29	14.5	7	3.6	62
Literate	25	12.7	29	14.5	36	18.2	11	5.5	101
Non-Literate	51	25.5	18	9.1	18	9.1	0	0	87

Key: M= Male

F= Female

Generation and Language Use

Language attitudes may also be reflected with different generations and relations. From Table 3, both English and local languages are used with relatives and friends. There is preference for the use of Ghanaian or African languages with relatives. None of the students for example speaks English to his or her grandparents. As many as 73 students speak English to friends. Students said it was possible to speak local languages to some friends but they found it easier to speak English to them. If the number of those who speak English to their friends even though they could speak the same local language is so high, then one would expect more positive attitudes towards English among the younger generation.

Table 3: Generation and language use

Age Group	Languages						Total
	Own	Eng	H	Ak	Others	No Res	
Grandparents	171	0	15	4	0	10	200
Parents	142	7	25	18	4	4	200
Brothers and Sisters	171	7	11	7	0	4	200
Other Relatives	138	18	15	15	4	10	200
Friends	76	73	18	22	11	0	200

Key: Own-tribal language H-Hausa Ak-Akan Eng-English
Others-Other Ghanaian languages No Res- No responses

In answer to a different question that sought to find out whether when students have children in future they will speak English frequently to them at home and outside the home, 138 (69%) of them said they will speak English often to their children at home so that their children will be good at English in school. One hundred and thirty-four (134) of them (67%) will want their children to know English more than any other language. Looking at the number of students who want to speak English at home, one may conclude that it is their preferred language for interactions and instruction. It is therefore surprising that the students have such strong feelings towards their own languages, yet only 42 (21%) of them want to speak their native languages to their children in their future homes. The reason according to most of them is the high status accorded English. Their positive attitudes towards their own languages did not make them lose sight of the role of English at the national and international levels. Overwhelmingly, 170 (85%) of them said they will speak English outside the home to their children. Only 24 (12%) of them want to speak their own language to their future children outside the home though none of this 24 wants his or her child to learn English first. Responses showed that their children will be helped to learn both the local language and English alongside each other because of the unique Ghanaian identity they get by speaking their own languages.

Attitudes towards Local languages and English

Many of the students said they speak their local languages because they want to be understood by both the educated and non-educated within their environment as well as demonstrate their pride in being members of the ethnic groups they belong to. It is interesting to note that despite the individual expressions of the importance and relevance of speaking a local language, they cannot come to a consensus on any particular language as a "Ghanaian identity". They do not exhibit the same degree of positive attitudes towards other Ghanaian languages. Each of them is more attached to his or hers though they do not speak only their tribal languages.

The fact that all respondents speak other Ghanaian or even African languages as well as their first languages but do not express higher attitudes towards them reveals that proficiency could not necessarily be a criterion for positive attitudes towards a language. People are happy just being able to communicate to each other. They may speak a language because of necessity but not because they like it. This phenomenon however suggests speakers' openness and willingness to accept something new, which could be a potential for positive attitudes.

In answer to their preference for a medium of instruction and national language, 54 (27%) of them want Ghanaian languages while a majority of nearly 131 (65.4%) prefer both English and Ghanaian languages. Their reasons included national identity through their local languages and need for English to continue schooling. Failure in English means an inability to continue to higher levels in school in Ghana. English is a world language. What Edwards (1991) said about proficiency in English being a sign of an educated person and a means for personal advancement applies in the case of Ghana. Therefore, both literate and non-literate people place English higher than any local language.

Further probing for reasons why Students rate English so high revealed that the students want to be part of the world's English speakers to have access to all that is done in English. Answers to a question on national culture and identity suggest that students feel there is a Ghanaian identity in speaking a native language because it has the advantage of giving them cultural knowledge but does not give access to membership to the international community. What this situation means is that Africans are caught between pragmatism and nationalism. Despite the positive attitudes expressed by the respondents towards local languages, especially in family affairs, it does not seem that they did not choose a local language over English. Both are seen to have different functions and may remain so.

The data also revealed that the general pattern of language use is a more frequent use of local languages at home with parents and grandparents while English is used more in formal settings such as school and government affairs. Speaking at home is affected by what is spoken at home whereas speaking to someone on the street or market depends on the knowledge of the individual's knowledge and relative communicative control of speaker and interlocutor. English serves this linking purpose better and because of that becomes the most "useful" single language since many more people can use it and can cover nearly all topics of discussion. All these advantages add to the positive attitudes expressed by the students.

Forms of language such as written or oral also reveal the kind of attitudes that people may have towards languages. The students considered the written form a high form of language but that did not influence them much because many of them said they could not read and write their own or other local languages. Sixty-two (62) students said they use local languages to write letters. Their inability to write the local languages does not just indicate their limited knowledge of these languages but also reflects their attitudes towards

the written form. Very little stress is given to the written form of the local languages because they are not commonly used partly because not all Ghanaian languages have their written forms developed. Most people only speak their languages and other languages but do not write them and even if they do, they still prefer English because it has academic advantages and is encouraged by all parents. Though considered prestigious, English has its functional limitations too because of the high number of non-literate people in the country. Many people are still unable to use English for interactions or transactions.

Language Preference for Different Domains

A few domains for language use were also investigated. The use of language for school. Radio broadcast, newspaper, television broadcast, letter writing and discussion of important matters were investigated.

Although some Ghanaian languages are used in the different domains, their preferences point to the use of English. Probing to find out reasons for their choices, respondents showed that English is now the most widely used language in Ghana, and that it cannot continue to be called a foreign language. It opens people to the outside world and is neutral. It is worth noting that not even all those who have their local languages used in the domains prefer the use of their local languages. In some cases, there have been some antecedents. For example, national newspapers are in English. Respondents say they are not aware of any newspaper in any Ghanaian language. Therefore, it looks obvious to prefer English.

Table 6: Language preference for different domains

Own Language used	Responses			Preferred language
	Yes	No	Total	
In school	178	22	200	English
For radio broadcast	178	22	200	Local and English
Newspapers	36	164	200	English
Television broadcast	116	84	200	English and local
Letter writing	62	138	200	English
Discussing important matters	182	18	200	English

Language use in school has balanced in favour of English as the dominant language in education since the local languages were never ever given the chance to be used at higher levels in school. The above reasons by students have contributed in building some level of negative attitudes towards their own as well as other Ghanaian languages.

English has been considered important and necessary for personal as well as for national development. As a consequence, the notion of status is developed associating English with high status and local languages with a low one.

Table 7: National language choice, choice of Ghanaian language as a national language

Reasons	Number of respondents			
	Yes	No	N R	Total
Ghanaian language is more important for Ghana	25	175	0	200
Ghanaian language will unify the country better	47	153	0	200
Ghanaian language will serve the Ghanaian community purpose better	55	124	22	200
Use of Ghanaian language will allow more people to be educated	65	98	36	200
Use of Ghanaian language will give Ghanaian a Ghanaian identity	116	84	0	200

Key: N R = no responses

From previous responses for the use of Ghanaian languages, the students expressed positive attitudes towards the use of Ghanaian languages but they have demonstrated a total rejection of a Ghanaian language as a national language. In other responses they showed that because of the several local identities, they do not see the use of one Ghanaian language resulting in a Ghanaian identity.

They see the importance of using the local languages but do not think that there is any particular one that could be accepted by a majority of Ghanaians as the national language. They therefore think that it is better to have a completely foreign language which has advantages attached to the use of it and also to avoid the problem of choice among the lot. They prefer learning other Ghanaian or African languages as a matter of need.

On the whole, learning a new language is no problem for most of them. They like and are comfortable with the linguistic diversity. It was also observed that both individuals and Government appreciate bilingualism. The government encourages it in school by making it possible to study some of the Ghanaian languages up to even a PhD level.

The last part of the questionnaire was specifically meant to find out the possible establishment of a Ghanaian language as the national language. All respondents see English as an opening to the Western world but do not want it to replace their native languages. They see the local language serving as the link that keeps them bound to their

cultures, for, culture cannot be separated from language.

Despite the international nature of English and extra functions that English performs in official and legal matters, students have not detached themselves from their ethnic languages. They said they need English for certain purposes but showed positive attitudes towards their own languages.

When they were asked which language they preferred as a national language, 164 students preferred only English, 30 did not respond and only 6 students preferred only a Ghanaian language. It is clear from this situation that there is no one Ghanaian language that is equipped well enough to cope with the multilingual situation of the country and for that matter, the choice of English by a majority. There is an affective feeling among the students for Ghanaian languages but the problem of choosing a particular language is not practicable for them. By their preference, they are willing to be part of the English world, but not at the expense of losing their own native languages.

All students find English necessary in Ghana considering how far Ghana has already come with English. One of the students included the need to maintain English in order to reduce the linguistic problems of foreigners or volunteers who come to help in the country. If all these compromises have to be met, then the country is left with a choice of English to maintain a balance between the multilingual situation and the cultural diversity of the country. Positive attitudes have been expressed towards English and Ghanaian languages but higher positive attitudes towards English.

Implications for Ghana

Though questions for the study sought answers from individual students, attitudes are simply not individual but also sociolinguistic phenomena which originate from the community within which one grows up. It is therefore necessary to look at the research within a larger context. Results of this study from other students of the country in a different region could vary but this analysis may suffice for the mean time to give a picture of the attitudes of students of the secondary school level towards their own languages, other Ghanaian languages, English and towards the establishment of a Ghanaian language as a national language in the country.

The expression of some of their attitudes towards English has been on the basis of its importance in the Ghanaian environment as well as at the international level. English is associated with the modern world as there is hardly anything considered international that is not in English. This has led to "the idealising image of English as a world language" (Schmied, 1991). In many places today the knowledge and use of English is considered prestigious.

Another reason for their positive attitude towards English is a perceived communication need. Like every individual, the students consider communication to be the

major motive for learning a language. They perceive a communicative need for English outside their homes and outside Ghana than for any single Ghanaian language. These students live in communities where, despite the use of their own languages and other Ghanaian languages, English is very much used, especially among young people. The fact that nearly all of them speak more than one language illustrates that they see the need to learn more than one language as these different languages suit different situations. Their answers also reflect instrumental reasons for learning English. It is seen as useful and necessary for gaining a qualification for furthering their professional goals and for improving employment prospects. Education is perceived as mainly accessible through the medium of English though in present day Ghana, non-formal education is conducted alongside formal education in some of the Ghanaian languages. People are neither proud of their languages in school nor convinced of getting well educated in them. Nevertheless, positive attitudes were expressed (though not at the same degree as towards English) towards their own languages and other Ghanaian languages. Only six of them thought that a Ghanaian language could be made a national language. Every language group would want their language to be used (one of the most frequently given reasons for the preference of English). There is fear of conflict and division and this is why since colonial days, English is used to avoid what Wardhaugh (1985), terms factionalism. The use of English does not create complete fairness as it certain classes of people. However, some of them feel that a Ghanaian language should be established as the national language because it gives a "cultural identity." What might be more important in the case of Ghana, is a cultural cohesion despite the diversity in languages. Ghana will have to foster this togetherness through other means other than the use of a Ghanaian lingua franca.

If it were for criteria such as number of native speakers, or non-native speakers of a particular Ghanaian language, its oral or written forms, or ease of learning, Akan could easily be adopted because there is quite a good number of both native and non native speakers all over the country. It has both oral and written forms and the fact that it has many speakers would create opportunities to practise what is learnt. The students also mentioned the difficulty in getting money to translate and re-do what is already in English into any of the Ghanaian languages. For these social, economic and political reasons, English is the most sought after language by the students.

The negative attitudes and unacceptance of each others languages as national language could not only be attributed to the above-mentioned reasons but also the role played by authorities. Until recently, very few northern languages were developed for use in school.

The students have stated that English is getting more speakers all over the world and extending its influence beyond its original bounds. This is because of the promotion that English gets from authorities (from parents to the government) and therefore the country should continue to use English. They have also stated that even if there is a change,

Ghanaians will still continue to learn and use English since it has become a World language. But above all, they fear that a change in language may bring a change in identity in which case it is better to opt for a neutral one that does not create such an impression. Some students did not suggest any language when they were asked to suggest a language as a national language, not even their own languages because they didn't find it practicable. In cases where people are unable to form attitudes because they do not have enough experience with other languages, the only criterion for any possible attitude formation is the image of the native speakers of the language.

A Ghanaian language may only be accepted under such circumstances when there is access to social benefits attached to the knowledge of it. Though proud of themselves as Ghanaians, choosing any particular Ghanaian language would stress division instead of unity. The conclusion of the students might be right as Ghanaians see themselves as English speaking Ghanaians but culturally remain members of their tribes. Their integrative reasons were not to be like the English or North Americans but firstly as Ghanaian English speakers and then to the world English speakers. The use of English therefore reduces the problem of identity and puts all Ghanaians at one level.

If any Ghanaian language has to achieve this status, the choice of such a medium in Ghana must be based on appreciating the complex interplay of the needs, resources and linguistic facts of the country at any particular moment since these facts change with time. Le Page's (1964), conclusion of National languages in former British colonies could be considered right when he said the National language question "hardly arises in former British colonies because English is considered important and an international language. The students therefore want Ghana to remain a part of the international growing population of World English speakers.

Conclusion

It is clear that the students show positive attitudes towards both their own languages and English but as far as language preference is concerned, English is preferred. It is also clear that learning another Ghanaian language does not necessarily mean they have positive attitudes towards it because many languages are learnt as a matter of communicative need. Since by the multilingual set up, most of them have grown up speaking more than one language, they see a language policy of bilingualism to be of academic and cultural advantages. This will allow every Ghanaian language group to have a chance to use English alongside its native language in school.

The fact that there was no consensus on a Ghanaian language as a national language proves that English is not in competition with any of the local languages. With change in patterns of lives of people and the likelihood of many more people using English in their homes, (potentially demonstrated by nearly all respondents saying they will speak

English more often to their children if they have some in future), there is fear that the Ghanaian languages might not get the same recognition as they do now but for government policy on the use of a local language or mother-tongue in school.

In conclusion, the students have very high positive attitudes towards English for both integrative and instrumental reasons. English is not considered a foreign language but a second language. Everyone in Ghana including those who haven't been to school think the next language to learn after one's own language is English. They have also shown positive attitudes towards their own languages with few of them exhibiting positive attitudes towards some of the other Ghanaian languages that they speak. Factors such as the past history and the linguistic relationship between tribes, the role of authorities, social and economic gains in using a language, the cost of any change in the existing language situation and the need to preserve ethnic cultures have accounted for the students' positive attitudes towards English. Other factors include the fear of isolating the entire nation from the international scene, maintaining national unity, access to world learning through the use of computers, the radio, television, textbooks and the lack of prestige in the use of any of the local languages in relation to English.

In a way, one could say that state policies are made to reflect the society's values and norms. Therefore, the sociolinguistic reality should be part of language planning and language policy of the country, as they can be undertones to disturbances in a stable country. It does not seem this is an issue for national discourse. Both past and current governments seem to be content with the current situation and this study, though not nationwide has confirmed that there may be no need to establish a national language for the country. Since the national language issue concerns the whole nation, a nation-wide research carried out with different groups of the population would be very useful. It should include the literate, non-literate, the working and non-working classes, and the old and the young. Further research in this area with use of many variables will be very useful.

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