



## LINGUISTIC REALITIES AND PERCEPTIONS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN GHANA: THE CASE OF THE OBUASI MUNICIPALITY

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### **Abstract:**

English and Ghanaian indigenous languages are employed at different levels of education as mediums of instruction and are taught as subjects in Ghanaian schools. This study explored this linguistic situation using data from interviews and recordings of classroom interactions in a Junior High School located in the predominantly Twi-speaking community of Obuasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. To achieve this objective, three research questions and a research hypothesis were formulated to guide this study. In all, four language teachers and twenty students were randomly selected purposively for the study. The outcomes of the study showed that students' lack of competence in English and the linguistic gaps in Twi is the pragmatic factors that influence language choices in this classroom and that code-switching is the main medium adapted to cater to these linguistic challenges. Furthermore, all participants had positive attitudes towards English as a medium of instruction and as a subject of study because of its utilitarian function, and code-switching as a medium of instruction because it aids in lesson comprehension but they have negative and uncertain attitudes towards Twi as a medium of instruction and as a subject of study respectively because it has a low aspirational function. The study concluded with recommendations that there should be a distinction between the medium of instruction and medium of class interactions or put a premium on students' needs as the basis for language-in-education policies; that Ghanaian indigenous languages be made compulsory subjects of study from primary school to the Senior High School level and that competence in at least a Ghanaian indigenous language be made a condition for employment in Ghana to give a strong aspirational function to Ghanaian languages as well as trigger positive attitudes towards these languages.

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## 1. Introduction

The language situation in Ghana is in many respects quite similar to that of other African and post-colonial contexts where multilingualism is the norm (Alexandre, P. 1971). Different scholars have given different numbers because it is sometimes quite difficult to draw a clear distinction between what should be considered a language and dialects of other languages. Lewis, Simons, and Fennig (2015) postulate that there are 79 indigenous languages in Ghana. These indigenous languages are distributed among a speaker population of approximately 26,428,000 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013, cited in Lewis, Simons and Fenning, 2015) people spread across sixteen administrative regions. These languages are spoken by people of different ethnic groups. It may be therefore perceived that there are as many ethnic groups as there are languages. Upon a critical examination, however, one discovers that what may be considered a language group is typically a cluster of socio-culturally and linguistically homologous groups that see themselves as inhomogeneous (Ansah, 2014). For instance, Akan ethnolinguistic group in Ghana consists of a cluster of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups who have greatly mutually intelligible dialects of the Akan language. This group alone constitutes 47.5% of the population of Ghana. The other major language groups are Mole-Dagbane 16.6%; Ewe 13.9%; Ga-Adangbe 7.4%, and Mande 1.1% (Ghana Statistical Services, 2012).

The nine government-sponsored Ghanaian languages selected to serve as mediums of instruction and as subjects are: Akan, Dagaare, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, Gonja, Gurenne, Kasem, and Nzema. Each of these Ghanaian languages is used in their various geographical areas. Akan is used in schools in the Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Central, Eastern, and parts, of the Volta and Western regions. Dagaare, Dagbane, Gonja, Gurenne, and Kasem, are used mainly in the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions. Ewe is mainly used in the Volta region and parts of the Eastern and Greater-Accra regions. Ga-Adangbe is mostly used in the Greater-Accra region and parts of the Central region, and Nzema is mostly used in the Western region. Fundamentally, the idea behind choosing these languages is mainly that they are the dominant languages in their respective geographical areas. English is a compulsory subject of study in the first three years of education while the medium of instruction (MOI) is supposed to be a Ghanaian native language. English becomes the MOI in both the classroom and in the school compound for the rest of a child's education; commencing from the fourth year of basic school to the university. All national and international examinations, except those of other languages, are conducted in English.

The present study is conducted at the Junior High School level. It has been designed to investigate the relationship between language choice in the Ghanaian classroom, the legislation that is supposed to regulate it, as well as the attitudes of the

main participants (teachers and students) in this multilingual setting. Therefore, this study bridges several sociolinguistics sub-disciplines including language attitudes, language choice, and language policy research.

This study enables us to find out whether the language policy is adhered to in Junior High School classrooms or not, and why it is so. The study also contributes to a growing corpus of sociolinguistic research that has to do with multilingualism in Ghana. Though some studies have examined language-in-education policy in Ghana (e.g., Ansah, 2014; Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014; Yevudey, 2013; Owu-Ewie, 2006), there is a paucity of studies that address socio-psychological influences on language choices even though socio-psychological factors are believed to influence language learning and academic achievement (Garrett, 2010). Therefore, there is a need to investigate linguistic realities and perceptions as a way of acquainting ourselves with the knowledge of language choices in Ghanaian classrooms.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

The following questions inform the study:

- 1) What pragmatic factors influence the language choices of students and teachers in the classroom?
- 2) What are students' and teachers' attitudes toward the various language choices and how do these attitudes affect language choice in practice?
- 3) How can students' and teachers' attitudes inform future language-in-education policies in Ghana?

### **1.2 Limitations to the Study**

There were several limitations to the present study which should be highlighted so avoid any over generalizations in the interpretations of the results. Due to time concerns, the present study was confined to 20 students and 4 teachers. Although the minimum sample size recommended by many researchers (Cohen et al., 2006) is thirty subjects, the findings might be reflective of the motivation and attitudes of those who participated in this research. The generalization of research findings should be made with caution. Finally, the pedagogical implications of this study are limited to those which can be based on the participants' responses and recorded data from this particular Junior High School classroom in Obuasi, although this classroom may be a microcosm of Ghanaian Junior High School classrooms.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Population**

In all, 24 respondents were used for this research. This comprised of 4 language teachers; 1 male and 1 female language teacher each from a school, and 20 students; 10 male and 10 female students from each school. The 2 teachers were made up of a Ghanaian language and an English language teacher respectively.

## 2.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consists of 4 language teachers and 20 students. This population consists of 2 male and 2 female language teachers, and 10 male and 10 female students. Both schools share very similar linguistic peculiarities: they are both located in Obuasi and in both schools Twi and English are mediums of instruction as well as subjects of study.

Initial interactions with our first respondents (teachers) revealed that while the male teachers were competent in at least three languages, the female teachers could speak at least two languages. All of them had English and Twi as common languages.

Public (government-sponsored) schools were purposively sampled for this research. This is because the teachers and school management are formally trained (professionals) on how to use appropriate methods and materials for pedagogy. Therefore, they expected to be abreast of the rules and regulations governing classroom language choice since this research aimed to investigate language choice in a Ghanaian Junior High School classroom. Again, the researchers purposively selected two Junior High Schools. The researchers are native speakers of the Akan language which is further complemented in the data transcription and analysis.

Also, the intrusive nature of the attitudinal project demands that participants are mature enough to describe their beliefs and feelings about the attitude object. The researchers believe that the students at this level of Junior High School education are mature enough to be able to express their attitudes toward their language choices. Although gender is not a significant variable in this project, the researchers sampled equal numbers of male and female participants as a means of ensuring gender representation in the whole process.

## 2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Observation of lessons, and classroom interactions through semi-structured interviews, and audio recordings were employed. These instruments helped to solicit the in-depth attitudinal data that were needed for this project. The audio recording of lessons and classroom interaction were chosen because of their relatively high level of detail while minimizing intrusion in the classroom interaction.

Firstly, interviews. This was to provide insight into students' and teachers' attitudes toward the various language choices they make and how these attitudes affect language practice in this classroom.

Secondly, lesson recording. Data collection started with classroom observation and recording of teaching and learning activities. This data was studied, after which a structured interview questionnaire was drafted.

A lesson each was recorded from English and Twi lessons in the two schools. The English lesson recorded was a reading comprehension lesson while that of Twi was on "Greetings and Responses" Both lessons were fully recorded for the entire 30 minutes duration. These recorded data were manually transcribed. The transcription of the Twi

data for this project follows the orthography of the standard Twi and also relates, as closely as possible, to participants' utterances to maintain the authenticity of the data.

Additionally, all participants were interviewed in the English Language at the school. Teachers' interviews probed such issues as their pattern of language choices in an average day and their feelings towards these choices, their personal beliefs regarding the choice of languages used in the classroom and the reasoning behind them, the language preferences of the school, teachers' satisfaction or otherwise with their students' performance in the languages they teach and what they observe to be the factors that motivate their students to learn a particular language. Students were also probed on the pattern of language choices in an average day and their feelings towards these choices, their personal beliefs regarding the choice of languages used in the classroom and the reasoning behind the choices, the language preferences of the school, the challenges students face in learning languages and how they solve these challenges, as well as students' motivations for learning a particular language.

### 3. Data Analysis

#### 3.1 Language Choices

**Table 1:** Students' (ST) Language Use in an Average Day

Students	Languages Used in An Average Day
ST1	Asante Twi and English
ST2	Asante Twi and English
ST3	Twi (Fanti), Asante Twi, and English
ST4	Asante Twi and English
ST5	Asante Twi and English
ST6	Asante Twi and English
ST7	Asante Twi and English
ST8	Asante Twi and English
ST9	Asante Twi and English
ST10	Asante Twi and English
ST11	Asante Twi and English
ST12	Ewe, Asante Twi, and English
ST13	Gonja, Asante Twi and English
ST14	Dagaare, Asante Twi and English
ST15	Asante Twi and English
ST16	Ga, Asante Twi, and English
ST17	Asante Twi and English
ST18	Asante Twi and English
ST19	Asante Twi and English
ST20	Asante Twi and English

### 3.1.1 Students

Three main questions together with their follow-ups were orally used to obtain students' language choices. All the questions are open in nature, which made the questions serve as general topics for the following conversations.

These questions are:

- 1) What languages do you use on an average day?
- 2) Do you use them (the languages) in school and at home?
- 3) Does your school prefer you to use Twi (or the other languages you speak) instead of English, or vice versa on the school premises?

Respondents to (1) reported that they use at least two languages on an average day.

From the collected data on the first question, it was realized that about 15 of the respondents could speak at least two languages which were Asante Twi and English. The rest of the five respondents had competency in 3 languages.

The second question tried to analyze the pattern of language use, that is, whether a specific language is used in a particular domain for a specific function or whether all the languages used in an average day are used randomly without following a specific pattern. The question also sought to find whether there are situations where all the languages used in an average day are mixed by respondents and whether the mixing of the languages has any motivations. STs' responses to this question showed that there are significant patterns of language use and that, certain language choices are made based on the domains of use. For instance, ST1, ST3, ST12, ST13, ST 14, and ST16 stated that they use both English and other languages on an average day. English is averagely used at school while other languages, out-of-school domains.

**Table 2:** Pattern of Language Use

Students	Responses
ST1	<i>"Yes. I use Twi in town and English in school."</i>
ST2	<i>"Me, I speak Twi at home and school."</i>
ST3	<i>"I often speak Fanti (a dialect of Akan) at home with daddy. I often speak Twi with mummy. [...] In school, I speak English."</i>
ST12	<i>"I often speak Twi and Ewe at home and in town. I speak English in school"</i>
ST13	<i>"I use Gonja with my mother at home, Twi with my friends, and English with teachers and in school."</i>
ST14	<i>"I speak Dagaare with my parents but now I stay with my grandfather so I speak Asante Twi with him and English in school."</i>
ST16	<i>"I speak Ga at home and English in school."</i>

In an isolated case, ST2 stated that he uses both English and Asante Twi on an average day. However, he adds that he uses both languages in school and out of school. The assertion by ST2 shows that it is not all the respondents that follow the pattern of using English at school and other languages outside of school domains. It can also be observed that ST2 mixes English with Asante Twi in his response. This may be interpreted as a confirmation that he uses the two languages:

ST2: *"Me, I speak Twi at home and school."*

Researcher (R): What about using Twi and English in classes? Do you use both languages?

ST2: *"I do. In Twi class. And English too. Me I speak it (Twi). Because English is not good for me. English teachers too speak it (Twi) sometimes. Enti na me nso meka. (So, I also use it.)"*

As can be deduced from this response, ST2 does not follow a particular pattern of language use mainly because he is not very competent in English: *"English is not good for me"*. Here, ST2's switch to Twi is to emphasize the fact that, apart from his challenge with English, his teacher's use of CS motivates him to use it as well. It is the same reason for lack of competence in a language that motivated the respondents who use specific languages in specific domains, just that the languages in which they are not competent varied from that of ST2. For instance, ST3 and ST16 speak Fanti and Ga respectively at home and English at school because they do not speak Twi very well:

ST3: *"... My Twi is not good."*

ST16: *"... I don't speak Twi well."*

The third question sought to find whether the school made compulsory the exclusive use of one language on the school premises and the extent to which respondents adhered to this regulation. Respondents stated that the school has a no-mother tongue policy where students are not allowed to use their mother tongue on the school premises. In other words, they know only English must be used by students on the school premises. In contradiction to this, however, some student respondents said they use their mother tongues on the school premises even during classroom lessons and that teachers do not penalize any student who flouts the no-mother tongue regulation. They added that the teachers also mix languages during lessons and out-of-classroom interactions with respondents:

ST1: *"We are not allowed to use Twi here (in school) enti (so) I try to use English always. But sometimes there are some things I can't say in English so I speak Twi for them."*

R: *"Have you ever tried to use Twi in English class?"*

ST1: *"Yes, sometimes when I can't speak English to explain myself, I speak Twi."*

R: *"How do your teachers and your friends in the English classes react when you use Twi?"*

ST1: *"Nothing. They don't say anything."*

R: *"Have you ever mixed Twi and English in one conversation?"*

ST16: *"Yes."*

R: *"Where and why?"*

ST16: *"In a school with my friends. Break times. Because I can't say some words in English. They are hard. So, I use Twi words there."*

R: *“Can you give me an example of a sentence like that?”*

ST16: *“I want you to be the *kyeame* (chief’s linguist) for us.”*

Most of the students use both English and Twi and often mix these two languages. In the Markedness Model, this mixing itself is an *unmarked* choice (Myers-Scotton, 1993) while few respondents make *marked* choices by adhering to the norms of the speech community; where, in this context, *marked* choices are those that conform to the school rules. However, there is the suggestion that those who make *marked* choices could have made *unmarked* choices had they been competent in their mother tongues.

It has been established so far that all student respondents use more than one language; that some respondents use these languages either separately or together depending on the domains of use and that although there is a rule that bans the use of their mother tongue in school premises, respondents use their mother tongue anywhere on campus and are not reprimanded for breaking the rule of the school since they are not enforced.

Presented next are the teachers’ responses.

### 3.1.2 Teachers

All the teachers involved in this study responded to questions (1), (2), and (3) above in (3.1.1). To Question 1 (choice of language use), all the teachers stated that they use more than one language in an average day.

**Table 3:** Teachers’ Languages Use (Account/view of language use) in an Average Day

Teachers	Languages Used in an Average Day
TR 1	Twi and English
TR 2	English and Twi
TR 3	English, Waala, Twi
TR 4	English, Twi, Ga, Ewe, and Gonja

All the teachers reported using all the languages they use on an average day on both the school premises and out-of-school premises, in response to (2):

R: *“Do you use them (these languages) both in school and at home?”*

TR 1: *“I use both languages in school and at home.”*

TR 2: *“Yes, I use the two at both places.”*

TR 3: *“I do.”*

TR 4: *“I use all the languages everywhere I meet the speakers.”*

The teachers had similar opinions to the students about the school’s language policy which stated that only English should be used on school premises. TR1 confirms that the school places emphasis on the use of English and that this decision is good since the greater part of the world speaks English. TR2 also reported that the school holds English in high esteem, however, it also makes room for all languages *“in their appropriate*



spheres". She justifies the position of the school with the fact that all national examinations in Ghana, except local language examinations, are set in English. When asked what she meant by "*in their appropriate spheres*", TR2 said that she uses Twi in her Twi classes and that the students are encouraged to speak English in out-of-classroom settings on one school premises "*but (the students) are not punished if they speak Twi (in such domains)*". She was further asked whether Twi was the only L1 of her students since her responses suggest that:

R: "*To the best of your knowledge, do all your students have Twi as their only indigenous language?*"

TR 2: "*No. There are two Ewes, I think, and one Ga speaker and another Waala speaker, I think... I am not sure. But since this is Twi town, I think they will use Twi. They will learn it or they must (with a raised eyebrow, then laughter.)*"

This teacher sees as compulsory the learning of the dominant language of this geographic space. This brings up the issue of the effect of dominant languages on minority languages. This, however, is not a focus of this project. TR3 said that the school, following the Ghana Education Service's regulations (the national language-in-education policy), gives preference to English as the language of instruction at this level of education, that is the Junior High School level. He thinks, however, that "*the combination of English and Twi is perfect because Twi has a bearing on English*". The researchers tried to find out from TR3, the "bearing" that Twi might have on English. He responded that some students can transfer the meaning of words from English into Twi for better understanding. In that case, no student will be shy to "*break the pot (laughing)*" (make a mistake in speech) and make their classmates laugh at them. TR4, in response to (3) also confirmed that English is preferred to any other language as the medium of communication in the school. For him, the students are not competent in spoken and written English; using English in all spheres of the school compels students to learn the language through usage. This teacher teaches Twi so the researchers tried to find how his students practiced the subject he teaches. He responded that the students practice Twi at home, "*...But we don't punish those who use Twi in school. After all, most of the students cannot speak or understand English*". One point that strongly emerged was that both STs and TRs confirmed that STs are not fluent and competent in the English language.

It is clear that all the teachers use more than one language on an average day and that they try as much as possible to constrain the use of these languages to various domains, that is school and out-of-school domains. Also, the usage of the mother tongue in the school is not permissible per the regulations of the school but students are not punished for flouting the regulation, the reason being their perceived lack of competence in English and should be pardoned. The student's ability to switch from English to Twi and vice versa suggests, on the contrary, that they possess some level of competence. These varied choices: using English, using Twi, and mixing the two, also reflect in the language of choice for interviews by students as well as in classroom interactions.

### 3.1.3 Language Choice for the Interview

Each student was asked the language in which they would prefer the interview. 13 respondents preferred English, 1 preferred Twi, and 6 preferred a mixture of English and Twi (see Table 4). The researchers observed that although some students chose English as the language for the interview, they ended up mixing it with Twi. For instance, ST1 preferred English as the language of the interview but when the researcher asked him whether he likes it when his English teacher mixes English with Twi during lessons, he responded with a mixture of English and Twi: *“Yes. Some words in English must be explained εwɔ Twi kasa mu sɛdɛɛ ɛbeye a yɛbete aseɛ yie (... in the Twi language so that we can properly understand them)”*

**Table 4:** Students’ Preferred Languages for Interview

Students	Preferred Language
ST1	English
ST2	English
ST3	English
ST4	Twi
ST5	English
ST6	English
ST7	English
ST8	English
ST9	English
ST10	English
ST11	English
ST12	English
ST13	A mixture of Twi & English
ST14	English
ST15	A mixture of Twi & English
ST16	A mixture of Twi & English
ST17	A mixture of Twi & English
ST18	A mixture of Twi & English
ST19	A mixture of Twi & English
ST20	English

All the teachers in this study used English as the language for the interview. It is observed, however, that there is a mixture of Twi and English in the responses of some of the teachers. The response of TR 2 as found below shows this mixture:

TR2: *“I teach the local language Twi. It is my mother tongue too. I speak it with pride everywhere. Obi nfa ne nsa benkum nkyere ɔno ara ne papa akuraase kwan. (“...you do not point to your hometown with the left finger.” An African proverb which means a person must value what they own). Do you understand? Aha, that is it.”*

## 3.2 Language Choice during Classroom Lessons

### 3.2.1 Language Use in the English Classroom

By what the national language policy stipulates, English was averagely seen to be used in lesson delivery. However, teachers and students occasionally switch to other languages, mainly Twi, for functional effects such as explanation and reiteration. In the extract below a student answers a question with a switch between English and Twi. The teacher also switches to Twi to instruct the class, when she thought the students did not understand the question she asked. After receiving an acceptable answer, she switches to Twi to indicate a change of focus of the lesson.

#### **Example 1:** English classroom extract 1

TR: *"What is the meaning of the word 'various'?"*

ST: *"'Another' (TR disagrees), 'different' 'anaa soronko' (or different)"*

TR: *"Yes, I will take that. Who can put it in his/her sentence? (A ST reads the sentence in the passage containing the word "various")"*

TR: *"fa fɔme sentence (I said use it to form your)"*

ST: *"I have various pens."*

TR: *"Correct. Yoo momma yentoa so (Okay let us continue)"*

All the English teachers interviewed stated that they mix the two languages in their English classes because students do not do very well in understanding English. While TR1 sees this mixture of the two languages as a good influence on students' English language learning abilities, TR3 sees it as retarding it because students needed consistent verbal practice to become competent in English.

Although the teachers are of the view that the students are incompetent in English, the language choice of the students in the English classroom does not differ from those of the teachers. Example 1 above, demonstrates that the student mixes English with Twi as the teacher does.

Another case is Example 2 below where students mixed English with Twi to respond to the teacher's question. The students did not understand the English explanation of "proceeds" as submitted by the teacher so they could not answer when the teacher asked them whether they understood the explanation. When the teacher switched to explaining the word in Twi, however, the students understood and responded in the affirmative when the teacher asked whether they understood the word:

#### **Example 2:** English classroom extract 2

TR: *"Who can tell us what it (proceeds) means?"*

ST: *"To move on and do something. " (TR disagreed)*

ST: *"The seed farmers plant."*

TR: *"Me se, daabi (I said no) 'proceeds'." (STs couldn't answer)*

TR: *"Can anyone form a sentence with it?"*

ST: "(ST raises her hand), *Aane* (Yes) madam, *mɛtumi* (I can)." (TR asked ST to answer the question).

ST: "I got proceeds from selling *pianos* (bread)."

The ST's switch to respond "Yes, I can" cannot be attributed to a lack of competence in English since it would not be too difficult for the student to say it in English. A possible explanation is that the ST made this choice since this choice is *unmarked* (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The same explanation can be given to the choice of using "panooo" instead of "bread" in Example 2. "Bread" is a common commodity in Obuasi so it cannot be the lack of knowledge about the name of the item in English that informed this choice; this choice may be part of the active vocabulary of the ST and may be used unconsciously.

It can be concluded that the main medium of practical interaction during this English lesson is code-switching where English and Twi are mixed. The discussion also pointed out that both teachers and students do this mixing of languages. While teachers stated that this kind of language use was triggered by students' lack of competence in English, it is also clear that students would not have been able to switch between English and Twi had they been unable to speak English. It, therefore, became essential to find out whether language use in the Twi classroom is different or similar to that of the English classroom.

### 3.2.2 Language Use in the Twi Classroom

In the Twi classroom, the language used does not differ from the pattern observed in the English classroom. During the recorded Twi lesson, both the teacher and the students mixed English with Twi to perform various functions. Some English words were used to fill linguistic gaps while others were used for reiteration.

#### Example 3: Twi classroom extract 1

001. TR: "Yerebesua nna ne mmerɛ a ewɔ Akan mu. Yen Kalanda ye. (We are going to learn about Akan days and seasons or our calendar)."

002. "Nsonsonoeɛ da Akan deɛ ne Aborofo deɛ no mu. (Our calendar is different from the whites (Europeans) ..... Nina dodoo sɛnana Akann wɔ wɔ bosome baako mu? (How many days are in one Akan month?) Yes..., (calls ST)." ST answers in English: "Four (4)."

003. TR: "Eye nokware? (Is it correct?) anaa, obi pɛ sɛ ɔka no yie anaa (silence). (or someone would put it differently?" (STs affirmed.)

004. TR: "Or, does someone want to polish it for him/her?" (silence)

In line 001, for instance, there is no Twi word for "calendar" so the teacher used the English equivalent without changing it in any way to fit into the phonotactics of Twi.

In Example 4 below, students named the months on the 4-month calendar and the teacher asked that the students reiterated this knowledge in English.

**Example 4:** Twi classroom extract 2

040. TR: "...enti wo saa bosome wei mu ... (So, among these months) Aborɔfo ne dee he? white (Europeans/English) ones are which ones?"

042. ST: "*January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December.*"

So far, the teacher has not rebuked the students from answering questions or engaging in classroom interactions by using both English and Twi in the Twi class. She rather encourages the practice by asking students to reiterate their knowledge of English. Hitherto, the data demonstrate that there are mainly two pragmatic factors that influence teachers' and students' language choices in the classroom. These main factors were:

- 1) students' perceived lack of competence in English, and
- 2) the linguistic gaps in Twi.

Although the first factor manifests itself in the Twi classroom, its influence is not as significant as the second factor so only students with a minority mother tongue showed signs of lacking competence in Twi. The language choice in this classroom is then made with these pragmatic factors in mind. As their way of managing and solving the challenges posed by these factors, both teachers and students mix English and Twi in classroom interactions so that one language performs the communicative function as expected.

### 3.2.3 Language Choice on School Premises

The study tried to find whether the language choice of participants on the school premises during interactions was similar to that of the choice made during classroom lessons. It was observed that both teachers and students have similar patterns of language choice; a pattern similar to that of the classrooms.

#### 3.2.3.1 Some Students' Expressions in the Canteen

"Meretɔ waakye, egg ne macroni." (I want to buy waakye, egg and macaroni.)

"Meretɔ *pure water sachet* baako." (I want to buy one sachet of pure water.)

"Mepa wokyew, fa ateree no ma me." (Please lift for me the spoon.)

"Aka me nsesa *fifty pesewas*." (It remains fifty pesewas of my change.)

"Mame *kenkey*, na ma me shito." (I want to buy kenkey, give me a black source.)

"Mfa *oil* beberee ngu shito no so." (Do not pure a lot of oil on the black source.)

"Wate dee *Madam* ..." (Have you heard what madam (female teacher).)

"ka faa nsa hohoro ho no?" (said about the washing of hands?)

"Yoo." (Okay.)

#### 3.2.3.2 Some Students' Expressions on the Football Field

"*Passe ball* no ma me." (Pass the ball to me.)

"Wa *drii* no papa." (You dribbled him well.)

"*Tosso ball* no wae." (Toss the ball to X.)

*"Nne deε woabrε. Boys abrε."* (You are tired today. Boys are tired.)

### 3.2.3.3 A student's Conversation with a Teacher Outside the Classroom

TR: *"X, kɔ library hɔ nakɔfa ICT textbook brε me."* (X, go to the library and bring me one ICT textbook.)

ST: *"Madam, the library is not yet opened."*

TR: *"whae na key no wɔ ne hɔ?"* (Who has the key?)

TR: *"Call the library perfect for me."* (Call the library prefect for me.)

*"Ka kyere no se ɔmra ha seesia."* (Tell him/her to come right now.)

ST: *"Yes, madam. All right, madam."*

The researchers also observed that Twi and English were mixed in official conversations while Twi was for unofficial conversations such as jokes, gossip, and asking about people's family, health, and progress of work. The researchers paid particular attention to the two language teachers and realized that their language use, however, did not differ from teachers of other subjects.

As has been discussed in this section, CS is used by all participants on the school premises just as it occurs in the classroom.

In the following section, we examine the attitudes that teachers and students have toward the language choices they make as well as the bearings these attitudes have on students' language practice.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Attitudes of Teachers and Students towards Classroom Language Choice

This section presents the outcome of the interviews carried out among the participants in this study. There are three language choices to which the interview sought participants' attitudes: English, Twi, and English-Twi code-switching. The interview questions, together with their follow-ups, tried to find the cognitive, affective, and behavioural components (Garrett et al, 2003) of participants' attitudes by seeking participants' personal beliefs regarding the choice of languages used in the classroom, the languages they think should be used in teaching and learning and whether it is positive or negative to teach English with only English, Twi with only Twi or both languages should be mixed in both classrooms.

### 4.2 Code-switching

The cognitive component of attitudes embodies people's beliefs about the attitude object (Garrett et al, 2003). Most of the teachers (TR1, TR3, TR4) believed that English and Twi should be mixed during teaching and learning. They gave the following responses:

TR1: *"I believe that we should use our local language in imparting knowledge in our pupils."*

R: *"How do you intend to use the local language to impact knowledge in a second language classroom like the English classroom?"*

TR1: *"We could use both languages in the English class."*

TR3: *"We should be encouraged to use the two languages in teaching."*

TR4: *"A particular language should be used for teaching and learning [...] However, some terminologies are difficult to explain, other in languages should be used sparingly."*

These responses are evidence of the positive cognitive component of teachers' attitudes towards CS as an MOI. Most of the students also have positive cognitive attitudes about CS as MOI. Although they have not explicitly stated their belief, there is an established link between CS as an attitude object and the attribute of CS as an aid to classroom lesson comprehension, especially in the area of vocabulary learning (Eagley & Chaiken, 1993).

ST16's response below shows that this link may trigger a subconscious belief that using CS as MOI increases ST16's chance of being successful in simultaneously learning English and Twi vocabulary:

R: *"Do you like it when your teacher mixes languages (e.g English, Twi, or any other language) to teach English? Why?"*

ST16: *"Yes. (It) makes Twi learning easier. I put the meaning of words in the two languages on the same level for understanding."*

R: *"What do you mean by "on the same level"?"*

ST16: *"... it helps me know (the/an) English word in Twi too. When someone says (s) the word in Twi I know the meaning in English too."*

Most of the students preferred their teachers to use CS in the English classroom because.

ST1: *"Some words in English must be explained wɔ Twi Kasa mu sɛdɛɛ yɛbɛtɛ asɛɛ yie (in the Twi language so that we properly understand)."*

ST3: *"Not all students understand English. Using Twi and English together makes all students get what the teacher is teaching."*

ST13: *"It makes better understanding come clear. I also learn some Twi in this way. (It helps in better understanding of lessons.)"*

ST16: *"It makes (s) I understand better what she (teacher) is saying."*

The few students who do not approve of CS use in the English classroom also gave their reasons; the main ones being their low competence in Twi and that CS confuses them:

ST2: *"Using two languages for English confuses (s) me."*

ST12: *"I don't get Twi..."*

ST14: *"I cannot speak Twi well. The two together confuse(s)."*

Stemming from this discussion, it is ascertained that most of the teachers and students have a positive attitude towards CS use in this classroom given the instrumental role it plays in facilitating classroom interaction.

#### 4.3 Teachers' Impression on English as MOI

The attitude of teachers and students towards English in the classroom was positive. This positive attitude was demonstrated both as a medium of instruction (MOI) and as the subject of study.

TR1: *"... without English, hhhmmm you can't do anything meaningful in this country. You need English everywhere, you know."*

TR2 (Twi teacher): *"My school holds English in high esteem ... I think my school's position is very good."*

TR3: *"... We have made it (English) ours. That is why we learn it from childhood. Don't claim it (English) and see where you will be in the world."*

TR4: (Twi teacher): *"I expect my students to converse and communicate in English and be able to read and write. ... English is foreign and it is more difficult than Twi so there should be more attention paid to it."*

#### 4.4 Students' Motivation for Learning English

Some of the students are motivated to learn English because they want to get good employment opportunities when they grow, make money and buy cars and houses, be respected in society, be able to travel, and be able to converse with Europeans, among others.

**Table 5:** Students' Motivation for Learning English

Students	Motivation for learning English
ST1	...so that in the future I get a good job, make money and buy cars and houses
ST2	...to get a good job when I grow up
ST3	...to get a good job
ST4	...to become a big person in a company
ST5	...to be an important person in society and to get respect
ST6	...to pass exams, get good work and be rich
ST7	...to travel wide, have a good job, and respect
ST8	...to become a prominent politician and make more money
ST9	...to get a good job when I finish university
ST10	...for respect and to speak with white people in future
ST11	...to pass exams and go to university
ST12	...to pass exams, get a good job and become a big person.
ST13	...to get a good job
ST14	...passing exams, to be like teachers to speak English well
ST15	...to travel abroad and to work there



ST16	...to get a job in the future and travel abroad
ST17	...to get a white-color job and plenty of money
ST18	...to get international jobs and huge money and respect
ST19	...for a good job in the future
ST20	...good job, respect in society, and travel abroad

This motivation is also reflected in how seriously they took learning English. As earlier demonstrated in the data by students, it was clear that they performed better in English than in Twi. This is further corroborated by the raw examination scores of the previous term with an average score of 61.95% in English and 50.35% in Twi (see Table 6 below).

**Table 6:** Examination Scores in English and Twi for the Previous Term

Students	English Scores	Twi Scores
ST 1	54%	51%
ST 2	65%	43%
ST 3	80%	72%
ST 4	75%	74%
ST 5	68%	62%
ST 6	68%	58%
ST 7	62%	51%
ST 8	76%	51%
ST 9	71%	41%
ST 10	63%	62%
ST 11	50%	Forgot
ST 12	74%	49%
ST 13	60%	37%
ST 14	63%	75%
ST 15	57%	45%
ST 16	60%	60%
ST 17	50%	50%
ST 18	58%	72%
ST 19	71%	63%
ST 20	74%	45%

#### 4.5 Students' Motivation for (not) Learning Twi

Most of the teachers and students have a negative attitude toward Twi as MOI. Most of the students also have an ambivalent attitude towards Twi as a subject of study. Cognitively, both teachers and students believe that Twi does not need attention in school life as does English. A clear manifestation of this belief is the promulgation of a no-mother-tongue policy. This regulation could also be seen as the affective and behavioral components of their attitude towards Twi as MOI. It may be due to the negative attitude toward Twi as MOI and ambivalent attitude to Twi as a subject of study that students do not take seriously the learning of Twi.

During the interview with participants, the researchers tried to find students' motivations for studying Twi as a subject and whether it is needful to study the language. The students do not think that learning Twi in a formal setting like school is necessary.

Then, they speak Twi every day especially when they are not in school, and they claim competence in using it. It is only when it comes to writing it that they find difficulties. Also, Twi has no usefulness apart from helping them pass their final basic school certificate examination and getting admitted into a good Senior High School. The students' self-reported examination scores for the previous term (see Table 7 above) reflects the significantly low performance in Twi in comparison with their scores in English.

**Table 7:** Students' Motivation for Learning Twi

Students	Motivation for learning Twi
ST1	... nothing motivates me
ST2	... to know my culture more.
ST3	... to pass exams.
ST4	... nothing
ST5	... I don't know
ST6	... to know my roots.
ST7	... to speak it well with my family.
ST8	... to write it well
ST9	... nothing.
ST10	... to work at Time Fm when I grow up.
ST11	... I don't know.
ST12	... to chat with people in town.
ST13	... to pass exams in Twi
ST14	... to understand town people.
ST15	... to pass Twi exams.
ST16	... for passing exams in Twi.
ST17	... to pass Twi examinations and go to senior high school.
ST18	... to talk with people around.
ST19	... the school says we should learn it.
ST20	... the school says we should learn it.

## 5. Findings and Discussions

From the analysis, it was realized that there were various types of CS that participants used in their interactions. From a structured point of view, participants used CS both intrasententially and inter-sententially (Myers-Scotton, 1992). However, there is the usage of more intrasentential CS than intersentential CS. These two types of CS are used in classroom interactions, in conversations on the school premises, and during interviews; their main functions are reiteration (Gumperz, 1982) and explanation. Another CS type used mainly in classroom interactions is tag switches which is the use of tag forms from one language into another (Mahootian, 2006). The main function of tag switches in this classroom is addressee specification and acknowledgment during classroom interactions (Gumperz, 1982).

Again, the analysis pointed out that Twi is mostly used as the *we*-code by student participants for informal and in-group interactions while English is used as the *they*-code

for formal and out-group interactions (Gumperz, 1982). As evidenced in the Twi classroom (Example 5), contextualization cues can be essential for CA as some turn-taking in an interaction can become important cues that guide interlocutors in interpreting a conversational situation (Auer, 1995). In this example, the cue occurs where the translation of a student's answer from English to Twi by the teacher is interpreted by students as an instruction to make them give their subsequent answers in Twi.

The analysis thus far of language choices and attitudes in the classroom for this study draws attention to one key fact, that is, the language-in-education policy is not fully implemented in practice. Although there is a positive attitude by most participants toward English as the MOI, it is CS that is used as MOI in language classroom discourses. The basic reasons for choosing CS over English as MOI are students' perceived lack of competence in English and the lexical gaps in Twi. This makes CS readily available as a tool to solve the challenge, and because of its practical functionality, it attracts a positive attitude from participants. On the school premises too, CS is used by all participants more than English although the legal language is supposed to be the English language. Despite teachers' emphasis on the use of English as the medium in all spheres of the life of the school, some freely use CS and do not penalize students who use CS in the classrooms. What these teachers profess is therefore not what happens in practice since they (teachers) also code-switch. This categorical statement by these teachers confirms Yevudey's (2013) study in Ghana where the teachers made the same assertion and portrayed a positive attitude towards CS use as MOI.

Lastly, the main motivation for those who try to constantly use the English language is the instrumental role it plays in job acquisition. Competence in English brings with it good employment opportunities and prestige. Contrary to this was also the realization that Twi learning was of less importance in our basic schools. This is because the respondents thought that competence in it does not play any crucial role in securing white color jobs after completion and that, it can easily be learned in settings other than school. They however agreed that Twi played an important role in the local and immediate socio-economic lives. For instance, carrying out transactions at the market, or securing local menial jobs, etc. This means that Twi does not have a strong aspirational function. This accounted for the ambivalent attitude of participants towards Twi as a subject of study. One clear thing in this research was that there is a drive toward learning English. However, Twi was seen to be the tool for achieving the goal of competence in English. Twi is used as a means of facilitating English learning so English-Twi CS is the main medium for English competence in this classroom. This draws attention to some demerits of monolingual approaches to MOI in multilingual educational contexts. This research, therefore, proposes to curriculum developers and policymakers consider making less rigid MOI policies since that could also facilitate more successful teaching and learning in the multilingual classroom, and in fact, the actual reality in the classroom.

## 6. Summary, Recommendations, and Suggestions

In summary, this study set out to explore the language choice and attitudes in a Ghanaian public/government Junior High School classroom. By focusing on the context of education, the study intends to provide insight into the extent to which the language-in-education policy of the country is being implemented in practice. The socio-psychological and socio-political wing of sociolinguistics has long established a direct link between attitudinal studies and policy development and implementation (Ansah, 2014; Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014; Garrett, 2010; Baker, 1992). In practice, however, educational policies are frequently in conflict with recommendations from studies in applied sociolinguistic and educational research (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). An important goal of sociolinguistic research is to suggest solutions to practical societal problems. This study is no exception. The present research may be a single case study of 2 classrooms and may not be representative of the general Ghanaian student population at the Junior High School level of education, however, the authors are convinced that it still is relevant in raising awareness of and triggering discussions about classroom language choices and the language-in-education policy of Ghana especially when viewed from the broader spectrum of other studies (e.g., Yevudey, 2013). The study demonstrates that the medium of instruction in this classroom differs from what is prescribed by policy. While policy requires English to be used as the MOI at this level of education, CS is what is used in reality.

To this end, CS could be conceived as an MOI as it performs the functions that the policy-prescribed MOI is supposed to do in multilingual classrooms. This conception falls in line with the tradition that sees CS as a code or medium in its own right (Gafaranga, 2009a, 2007b, 2007a; Muysken, 2000; Meeuwis & Blommaert, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 1988). Gauranga suggests a medium of interaction as being a specific linguistic code that may be either monolingual or bilingual depending on the linguistic needs of participants in a conversation (Gafaranga & Torras, 2001) and it can take many forms in the bilingual medium.

The present study, following Bonacina & Gafaranga (2010), argues for a distinction between '*medium of instruction*' and '*medium of classroom interaction*' in the study of language choice and language-in-education policy in multilingual settings. The medium of classroom interaction is defined as "*the linguistic code that classroom participants orient to while talking, as opposed to the policy-prescribed medium of instruction*" (Bonacina & Gafaranga, 2010: 331).

To recall, language choice during English lessons in this classroom is an English-based CS while that of Twi lessons is and Twi-based CS. The concept of a medium of classroom interaction can account for all these patterns as well as the others encountered in the available literature. A distinction between '*medium of instruction*' and '*medium of classroom interaction*' will give the freedom for teachers to be as creative as possible in their classroom language choices to meet students' needs.

Inferring from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are presented:

- 1) This study addresses the link between language choices, language attitudes, and future language-in-education policies in Ghana. The study raises awareness about some issues that could be considered by teachers in their classroom language choices.
- 2) There is a deviation from the present language-in-education policy of Ghana which holds that English be used as MOI at the Junior High School level, to the use of CS. This choice is prompted by practical challenges and CS is seen as the solution to the problems. Participants' attitude toward CS is positive. It is clear too that they have a positive attitude towards English as MOI.
- 3) Students' competence in both English and Twi is a challenge. This study suggests for consideration, the introduction of the *medium of classroom interaction*. What this will do is that the present MOI will exist for reference upon which the *medium of classroom interaction* will be based. That is, the MOI will be the base language for practical classroom interaction but can be manipulated by participants to fulfill the particular linguistic needs of the class. In this case, students may get input from both the L1 and L2 and this might increase their competence over time in both languages (Yevudey, 2013; Liu, 2010).

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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