

Language, Education and Linguistic Human Rights in Ghana¹

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Abstract

The use of the familiar language of learners as medium of instruction (MoI) promotes quality education. However, sixty years after independence, Ghana is still grappling with the issue of which language to use in education. Currently, the language policy of education in Ghana mandates the use of the child's first language as MoI only up to Primary Three. This paper uses both primary and secondary sources to argue that the current language policy violates the Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) of the Ghanaian child. To end this violation, the paper argues for the addition of more L1s as MoI, the cultivation of a positive attitude towards the use of L1 as MoI, the constitutional provision on the obligatory use of L1 as MoI, the establishment of structures to monitor the implementation of the language policy and a sociolinguistic study of language representation in the lower primary classroom.

Keywords: linguistic human rights, human rights, education, language policy, Ghana

Introduction

Every individual, irrespective of gender, race, or ethnic background, educational background, and country of origin has rights. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of the United Nations, people of all walks of life have the right to own property; including language and that nobody has the right to obstruct the realisation of this right without good reason (United Nations, 2010). Additionally, every human has the right to have his/her education in a language of their choice. The last article of the UDHR stresses that no person or society should violate the rights enshrined in the declaration. As Philipson, and Skutnabb-Kangas and Rannut (1995, p. 2) succinctly indicate, 'the principle underlying the concept of universal human rights is that individuals and groups, irrespective of where they live, are entitled to norms which no state can be justified in restricting or violating'.

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An aspect of the UDHR which is crucial to this paper is Linguistic Human Rights (LHR). LHR was developed from the UDHR to protect minority language groups. By this assertion, LHR becomes a basic human right. The rights enshrined in the LHR declaration include language and culture. The extension of rights enshrined in the LHR is that every child has the right to have education in his/her mother tongue. LHR marks language as a distinct right because of its importance to success in education and human development. LHR, most importantly ensures that people, especially minorities have their basic education in their mother tongue and that this right should not be violated by any state (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). Notwithstanding this provision in the LHR, many African countries, including Ghana violate these rights in their educational programmes. It must be noted that if a country fails to educate its citizens in their first language (L1) or mother tongue, they are likely to lose their identity and experience little success in education. Not using children's L1 in education at all or to an appreciable level to enhance their academic capabilities is a violation of their linguistic right. This paper critically examines the language policy of education in Ghana to establish how it violates the LHR of the Ghanaian child and then suggests ways that the language policy of education in Ghana can be implemented to promote the Linguistic Human Rights of the Ghanaian school child. The paper used both primary and secondary sources to investigate the matter. The primary (original) sources include the Universal Human Rights Declaration (1948) and Linguistic Human Rights (1994), and Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996), while the secondary (studies by other researchers) sources include published books and journal articles on the topic under investigation.

Literature Review

Language and education are two interrelated concepts which cannot be divorced because education information is disseminated through language and language endures and thrives through education. Language of education is a determinant, crucial to academic success. Educational objectives are likely to be achieved when the language used is the L1 of the child. This assertion has been a major driving factor behind UNESCO's declaration on the use of the child's L1 as medium of instruction in schools, especially at the basic level (UNESCO, 1953). According to Minority Rights Group (2009), the choice of a language for education should reflect the rights of people to develop their own language and culture. Despite the positive effects of using the child's L1 as medium of instruction in education, many multilingual countries in Africa, including Ghana, use a language of education which is not the L1 of the child. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2008), only 13 percent of African children receive their education in their native language. Though some African countries including Ghana have fashioned out language policies which emphasise the use of the child's L1 as medium of instruction, little effort is put in place to ensure that

such policies work or are implemented. Additionally, the policies have escape clauses that make their violation very easy (Bamgbose, 2000). For example, the current language policy of education which was recommended by the Anamuah-Mensah Education Committee Report and accepted by the government indicates that

Where teachers and learning materials are available and linguistic composition of classes is fairly uniform, the children's first language must be used as the dominant medium of instruction in kindergarten and lower primary school. (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004)

The tenets of this policy are not far-reaching enough to guarantee the observance of the linguistic rights of the Ghanaian child in the educational system. In the first place, educational policy implementers use the excuse of lack of textbooks and inadequate teachers to resort to the use of English as medium of instruction. Additionally, the multilingual situation of the country and some of its classrooms is used as a pretext to deprive the Ghanaian child of using his/her L1 as medium of instruction. Little effort is made by government and educational planners to confront the problems inherent in this policy and ensure that the Ghanaian child's LHR are upheld. According to the Asmara Declaration (2000), all African children have the unalienable right to attend school and learn in their L1 and therefore, every effort should be made to develop African languages at all levels of education. However, this important declaration to uphold the LHR of the African child in general and the Ghanaian child in particular is not strictly adhered to in the education of the child.

Much research has been undertaken on the language policy of education in Ghana (Dzameshie, 1988; Andoh-Kumi, 1999; Dzinyela, 2001; Anyidoho & Anyidoho, 2003; Ansah, 2004; Owu-Ewie, 2006, Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014; Opoku-Amankwa, Edu-Boandoh & Brew-Hammond; 2014; Osei, 2015; Dako & Quarcoo, 2017). However, these studies have concentrated on language use in the classroom, language attitude, language policy implementation, debates on L1/L2 use as medium of instruction and the perception of Ghanaian on the use of L1 as medium of instruction. Little attention, however, has been paid in these inquiries, to how the language policy of education violates the Linguistic Human Rights of the Ghanaian child. This paper therefore examines the current language policy of education in Ghana by juxtaposing it against the tenets of the Linguistic Human Rights of the Ghanaian child to see how such rights are violated or otherwise.

Ghana's Linguistic Landscape and Contemporary Language of Education Policy Issues

Ghana is a multilingual country with divergent ethnic groups and languages. According to the United States Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2016), the current population of Ghana is about 27.7 million and is made up of about 75 ethnic groups. Research has not been conclusive on the precise number of languages spoken within the borders of Ghana. For example, Bamgbose (2000) specifies that there are fifty-seven mutually unintelligible speech forms but the Ghana Statistical Service (2002) and Gordon (2005) indicate that there are 83 languages in Ghana. In another instance Simons and Fennig (2017) report that there are about 81 languages in Ghana of which 73 are indigenous and 8 non-indigenous. The discrepancies in the exact number of languages in the country have come about as a result of certain factors and perceptions, prominent among which are difficulty in distinguishing between language and dialect, lack of clear-cut definition between ethnic and linguistic identities, limited and outdated data on many Ghanaian languages, and attitude (Owu-Ewie, 2013). Despite the discrepancies, one fact remains: the indigenous languages of Ghana belong to the Niger-Congo language family and subdivided further into Kwa and Gur groups. Added to the indigenous languages are English (the 'official' language of Ghana) and Hausa (Chadic-Afro-Asiatic). Besides, there exist pockets of Mande language group (Lighi, Zamarama/Bambara and Bisa) and Moore.

The history of education in Ghana reveals that the country has over the years grappled with the challenge of what language to use as medium of instruction in its educational system, especially at the lower primary level. During the colonial era (1925-1957), Ghana (then known as the Gold Coast) had a stable language policy of education which emphasised the use of the child's L1 as the medium of instruction at the lower primary **level (P1-3)*** and English as MoI from Primary Four onwards (Owu-Ewie, 2013). The situation became unstable when Ghana gained independence. For instance, immediately after independence Ghana resorted to the use of English as medium of instruction from primary one until 1966 when the policy was changed to the use of L1 as medium of instruction from primary one to three and English afterwards. This policy arrangement continued with no effective implementation and monitoring procedure until 2003 when the policy was reviewed in favour of the use of English as medium of instruction from Primary One. However, the policy of using all-English medium of instruction was changed to the use of L1 as medium of instruction in 2007. This review was based on the Anamuah-Mensah Education Reform Review Committee Report in 2004 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2004). Currently, the language policy of education mandates the use of the child's L1 as medium of instruction from the kindergarten (KG) to Primary Three and English thereafter. At the lower primary, English is learned as a subject while Ghanaian

language becomes a subject of study from Primary Four to Junior High School. Though this policy is in existence, most Ghanaian children learn in a language which is not their L1 because their L1s are not part of the eleven Ghanaian languages selected by the government as media of instruction. Besides, most schools still use English as medium of instruction as early as the kindergarten stage. The policy is not strictly adhered to. It is obvious then that the language policy is neither enforced nor adhered to. This disregard of the policy constitutes a violation of the linguistic rights of most Ghanaian children.

Language Rights Protection: Universal Human Rights (UHR) and Linguistic Human Rights (LHR)

This section examines certain portions of UHR and LHR documents and how they relate to language rights protection in education. The UHR declaration which was adopted in 1948 is an international document that stipulates the basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled. In plain language, UHR are the inalienable rights of all people, irrespective of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language or any other status. Though it is not binding on all countries because it is not a treaty, it has had profound influence on the development of international human right laws (Australia Human Rights Commission, 2008). Two articles of the UHR relevant to this paper are Articles 17 and 22. Article 17 indicates that everyone has the right to own property and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his/her property. Language, according to Chomsky (1983), is property owned by humans because we acquire language as we acquire other types of property and use them to our benefit. The implication of this in relation to Article 17 of UHR is that every individual has the right to own a language and use it to his/her advantage. Article 22 also states that every citizen of the world has the right (among other things) to social and cultural rights of people which are indispensable in human dignity and free development (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1996). Since language is a key component of culture, Article 22 encapsulates the individual's right to his/her language. These two articles make it an inalienable right for people to own language and use it in education (Owu-Ewie, 2009).

On the other hand, Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) are captured in a document developed from UHR to ensure that the language rights of all people are protected. LHR in the larger framework of the UHR is a subsidiary set of rights which brings to the fore the protection of language rights of individuals.

****The pre-tertiary education system in Ghana is made up of 2 years Kindergarten, 6 years primary (3 years lower and 3 years upper), 3 years Junior high school and 3 years Senior high school*

It is crucial at this point to look at Linguistic Rights and Linguistic Human Rights. Linguistic Rights are the human and civil rights concerning the individual and collective right to choose the language or languages for communication in a private or public atmosphere (Extra & Yagmur, 2004). The most basic definition of linguistic rights is the right of individuals to use their language with other members of their linguistic group, regardless of the status of their language. Linguistic Human Rights, on the other hand is defined as ‘only those language rights . . . which are so basic for a dignified life that everybody has them because of being human; therefore, in principle no state (or individual) is allowed to violate them’ (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008, p. 109). It must be noted that there is distinction between Language Rights (LR) and Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) because the former concept covers a much wider scope as not all LR are LHR. However, all LHR are language rights. What distinguishes LR from LHR is between what is necessary and what is enrichment-oriented (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Both give people the right and freedom to own and use their languages freely (United Nations Human Rights, 1992). LHR is a declaration which aims at dealing with conflicts surrounding multilingualism (Ricento, 2006). The most important point of LHR is that all people have the right to express and develop their culture, **language** [emphasis added] and rules of organisation (The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, 1996). This implies that all humans have the right to use their language in education and any practice contrary to this is a violation of their linguistic right. In this paper, LHR is used as the framework.

Diversity of Positions on Linguistic Human Rights

This section discusses the various approaches to dealing with LHR in multilingual societies. It is crucial in this discussion because it gives an idea of how the choice of language in a multilingual society can be handled to satisfy the language rights of individuals. There are three main theories which underpin language rights debates for improving LHR in multicultural multilingual societies. These theories are the Liberal Multiculturalist Approach of equal recognition (Patten, 2003a), the Liberal Neutralist Approach of language consolidation (Levy, 2000) and the Democratic Liberal Approach of Familiarisation (Valadez, 2001).

Liberal Multiculturalist Approach of Equal Recognition

According to Patten who proposed the Liberal Multiculturalist Approach of equal recognition, people of minority languages must have equal treatment in a liberal state and they should also have their languages used in public institutions (e.g. schools), public services and public businesses as the majority languages. This proposition is anchored on three motives; fairness, the significance of

language for individual identity and equal access to opportunities. The aim of this approach is to create some parity between the different majority and minority languages. Though this proposition is ideal in a multilingual society, Mantouvalou (2009) argues that it does not mean equality of respect for individual identities and equal access of opportunities for minority members. Other critics of the proposition indicate that for minority speakers to have access to equal employment, they should speak the majority language. It also creates discrimination against minority speakers because they often speak the majority language with an accent and are therefore easily identified as non-native speakers of the majority language (Patten, 2007; Mantouvalou, 2009).

Liberal Neutralist Approach of Language Consolidation

The second perspective is the Liberal Neutralist Approach of language consolidation (Levy, 2000). In Levy's view, for individuals to be equally treated in a multilingual society, the State should not explicitly endorse a particular identity (e.g. language) or culture over others. Levy, however thinks that an official language can be legitimately endorsed without violating the principle of State neutrality because of its instrumental values. There are three reasons for this approach (Levy, 2004). Firstly, the use of a common language is necessary because it ensures equal access to opportunities among citizens of the State. The second reason is that it is a fair policy which enhances citizen's participation in politics and controls how State institutions function. Lastly, this approach ensures efficiency, which increases stability within the state. Despite these positives, this approach has attracted some backlash since some linguistic minority people may feel that they belong to a State which is linguistically, historically and culturally different from the majority. Such minority groups are likely to break away and form an independent state (Mantouvalou, 2009). It is also argued that such approach is 'ahistorical' and 'apolitical' (Mantouvalou, 2009). May (2003, 2005) indicates that the consolidation approach may result in the minority losing their identity since the imposition of an official language for instrumental reason is done without considering the silent identity component that is inherent in it. This approach is what the language policy of education in Ghana is portraying. English is used as the official language and only eleven indigenous languages are promoted leaving over 70 plus indigenous languages relegated to the background. English is promoted over the other languages because of its instrumental value to the detriment of the indigenous languages. Additionally, eleven indigenous languages are given hegemonic status to the neglect of many indigenous languages. This means that children of these neglected languages (minority languages) are likely to lose their identity because they are being educated in a different language. Their languages are seen as having no value to them.

Democratic Liberal Approach of Familiarisation

The Democratic Liberal Approach of familiarisation proposed by Valadez (2001) requires the effective participation of minority members under conditions of non-denomination in common institutions. In the view of Valadez, language is a medium of communication that familiarises citizens with each other's beliefs and views in a pluralist society (2001 cited in Mantouvalou, 2009, pp. 477–506). As a democratic principle, familiarisation entails giving equal participation to all. It is a situation where the State gives fair chance to all members of the various groups (minorities) in order to reduce the external and internal forms of domination (Leborde, 2008). This implies that in a multilingual State like Ghana, all languages are to be promoted and used in schools as MoI and subjects of study. Embracing all languages for education impedes the exclusion of minority language speakers. According to Mantouvalou (2009), this approach empowers minority languages to express their cultural affiliations without any other imposed on them. The current language policy of education in Ghana goes against this theory and against LHR because most Ghanaian languages are excluded from being used as medium of instruction in the educational system.

Linguistics Human Rights vis-à-vis Language Policy of Education in Ghana

This section of the article juxtaposes some articles enshrined in the UHR and LHR declarations with the language policy of education in Ghana to see how LHR is adhered to or violated in the education of the Ghanaian child. For readers' appreciation of the discussion in this section, Articles 17 and 26 of the UHR, the concept of LHR in general, Article 27 of The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 2 of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities promulgated in 1992 will be used. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly with resolution 2200A (XXI) on 16 December 1966, and came into force on 23rd March, 1976.

The articles are paraphrased below:

- a. UHR Article 17: Everyone has the right to own property (including language) and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his/her property.
- b. UHR Article 22: Every individual has cultural rights indispensable for his/her dignity and the free development of his/her personality.

- c. UHR Article 26: Everyone has the right to education and such education shall be free and compulsory at least at the basic and fundamental stages and parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.
- d. ICCPR Article 27 and Article 2(1) on Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities guarantee
- e. the rights of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language freely and (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966; United Nations, 1992).

A synthesis of the above articles indicates that individuals have the right to use their languages in their education. The implication of this is that educating children in a language which deviates from their own is a violation of their Linguistic Human Rights.

Ghana practices the early exit transitional bilingual system of education. It is argued that the use of the child's L1/mother tongue in instruction at the early grade level (KG-P3) improves learning and academic performance (Benson, 2004; Trudell, 2005; Mangxamba, 2006, Kosonen, 2009). However, such transitional model is premature and abrupt (Owu-Ewie, 2009). It has detrimental effect on children's learning (Cummins, 1981). It must be noted that after lower primary education, there is a dramatic difference between the levels of L2 (English) language needed to conduct everyday classroom learning, and the amount and complexity of L2 needed to deliver and understand lessons. At this point, learners struggle to cope with lessons especially when classes get more abstract and demanding. This results in frustration on the part of learners thus causing them to fail in academic work and drop out of school.

Ghanaian children, per the statutes of the UHR and LHR, have the right to education in their L1 without intimidation or deprivation. However, Ghanaian children have no right to use their L1 in the learning process beyond Primary Three. They are punished for using their L1/mother tongue in school. This is not only a Ghanaian phenomenon as most African countries and some developed

countries do the same. In Wales, United Kingdom ‘Welsh speaking children were formerly banned from speaking their languages at school. If they were caught doing so, they would wear a placard around their necks... the child who last wore the placard was beaten with a cane’ (Baker, 2001: 370). Though this practice is no more, it gives an idea of how children’s linguistic rights were violated. The practice of punishing children for using their L1 in schools is documented in various studies as coping strategies to maximise the use of English by students (Carson & Kashihara, 2012; Mwinsheikhe, 2009; Prah, 2009). In some schools in Ghana, signposts reading *Do not speak vernacular here*, *Speaking Ghanaian language is prohibited*, *Speaking Ghanaian language is strictly prohibited*, and *Speak only English* are openly displayed (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Boandoh, 2014).

Often, learners who violate these inscriptions are punished. However, teachers use the Ghanaian language in the school without any punishment. This is social injustice and a violation of the children’s rights to language use. The punishments come in various forms; translating what was said in the L1 several times to English, doing extra homework, running round the school field several times, showing of red card to culprits to leave the classroom, having bizarre objects (e.g., snail shell, egg shells, dried lizard or frog) hung around the neck of the culprit, insults, and standing up in class for a period of time. In extreme cases, violators are corporally punished. According to Kwarteng and Ahia (2013), in some Ghanaian schools, both private and public, there are policies which prohibit the speaking of any Ghanaian language. Stiff penalties are meted out to violators. This school level arrangement is justified on the theoretical basis that the prohibition makes students to practice and perfect their proficiency in English. There is serious psychological unintended consequence to this arrangement (Kwarteng & Ahia, 2013) and this goes contrary to the principles of the democratic liberal approach of familiarisation to the minority language debate. It causes pupils to perceive their culture in general and their language in particular in a negative light. In some cases, it leaves a deep, indelible psychological scar which the students carry throughout their lives. The absurdity of the policy is this: it is only in Africa that learners are punished for merely speaking their own languages in the name of English literacy development. The Ghanaian child, by this arrangement, is forcefully transferred from their linguistic group (Ghanaian language) to another group (English). This has caused serious mental harm to many Ghanaian children. This is a form of linguistic genocide (United Nations General Assembly, 1948; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). The excessive use of English over Ghanaian language in school has resulted in many Ghanaian children despising their own language because their indigenous languages are not deemed appropriate for education.

The practice of language use in education where priority is given to English has alienated Ghanaian children from their cultural heritage/indigenous languages. As Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1994) indicates, the use of colonial languages

in all endeavours of life, especially in education in Africa constitutes a form for the colonisation of the mind. Ansre (1979) thinks that the minds and lives of Africans, including those of Ghanaians, are dominated by a colonial language (e.g. English) to a point where they think their indigenous languages are not fit to be used to transact advanced aspects of life like education. Ansre sees this phenomenon as linguistic imperialism. It has contributed to the enslavement of the African mind and has alienated the educated African, including the Ghanaian from his/her own culture and language. The African child has been made to think like the English, Spanish, French, etc. wherever and whenever these languages are used as colonial languages. The Ghanaian child has been forcefully removed from his/her linguistic base to another which is a form of linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). The use of L2 in Ghanaian schools to the disadvantage of L1 has forced many Ghanaian children to assimilate and change identity. This approach is underpinned by the Liberal Neutralist Approach of language consolidation (Levy, 2000) which is not in the best interest of Ghanaians because many Ghanaian languages are relegated to the background. This is a violation of LHR.

Language of education has been noted as a factor to school dropout. It has deprived many children of the world, especially in Africa of quality education, a right they are entitled to. Skutnabb-Kangas (2008), referring to United Nation's 2004 Human Development Report, notes that placing a limitation on people's ability to use their indigenous languages is likely to exclude them from education. Language of instruction used in schools is a factor with the potential of influencing the rate of pupils' dropout. King and Schielmann (2004) report that in educational settings where there is a discrepancy between the languages used at home and school, children face many language challenges when they enter the school environment. Pupils see themselves as aliens in the school system when their native language is not used and this results in school dropout. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2008), more than 30 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa use a language of education which is different from their native language adding that only 13 percent of children receive their primary education in their native language. Global Campaign for Education also estimates that 50% of the world's out-of-school children live in countries that use a different language to the one used in the local school (Global Campaign for Education, n.d.). This has been corroborated by other studies that report that the use of an unfamiliar language in education is among the factors responsible for school dropout (Colclough, et. al., 2000; King & Schielmann, 2004; Brock-Utne & Halmdottir, 2004; O-saki & Obeleagu, 2004; Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook & Hunt, 2010; Ntumwa & Rwambali, 2013).

The language policy of education in Ghana, which puts premium on the excessive use of English to the detriment of the use of indigenous Ghanaian languages, has been found to be a factor in school drop outs (Yokozeki, 1997).

Though statistics is currently not available, there is enough evidence from the literature that the use of unfamiliar language is a cause of school dropout, especially in rural schools in Ghana. Skutnabb-Kangas (2008) confirms this when she notes that the limitation of people's ability to use their native language can exclude them from education. It becomes obvious then that many children in Africa, including Ghana, experience deep frustration and disappointment in academic work leading to dropout not because of physical or monetary barriers, but because they are taught in a language which they do not understand. Such children are deprived of education; a clear violation of UHR as a result of LHR violation (Tomasevski, 1996; Megga, et. al., 2005). In this case, language is used as an exclusionary tool in education; a violation of Article 26 of UHR.

Another area in the language policy of education worth examining is the exclusion of some Ghanaian languages from being used as MoI. Ghana has over 60 languages but only 11 are officially sanctioned to be used as MoI. In this paper, all languages outside the use of the 11 languages of education and English are termed minority languages. This approach is anchored on the Liberal Neutralist Approach (Levy, 2000) where only a few languages are consolidated over the minority ones (May, 2003). The question is what happens to children whose L1 are not part of the 11 languages. These children are forced to learn in English or in a Ghanaian language which is not their L1. They spend their time in school struggling to understand the language of instruction instead of building new knowledge (CfBT Education Trust, 2009). The children are deprived of using their L1 in their education. This phenomenon goes against the right of the child to have education in his/her L1 or mother tongue. The use of English or another Ghanaian language as MoI for such children removes them from their ethnic/language groups causing them mental, emotional and developmental harm. This is a typical example of linguistic genocide, a violation of the linguistic rights of the child. From the discussions in this section, there is no doubt that the language policy of education in Ghana goes against the LHR of the Ghanaian child. Ghanaian children are prematurely transitioned to learning a foreign language and using it to learn other subjects to the detriment of their L1, learning in a different Ghanaian language because their language (L1) is not used as MoI and being punished for using their L1 in school.

Improving Linguistics Human Rights in Ghanaian Schools

According to Leontiev (1995), any educational policy aimed at making linguistic rights practicable in a given society should address the following issues: the choice of languages as medium of instruction, teaching of non-L1s/ mother tongues and teaching the L1 or mother tongue. This statement implies that there is the need to blend the use of L1 and L2 in a way that will ensure the total development of the child linguistically to satisfy their linguistic rights. This calls for the adoption of the late-exit model of bilingual education. In

this approach, the child has the opportunity to use both the L1 and the L2 in the learning process. The two languages are seen as crucial in the educational process of the child. In this way, the child matures in the L1 and appreciates its use and how it works in the learning process before transferring to the use of the L2 as MoI. At this point, the child should be allowed to study and use the L1 up till the Senior High School level. In effect, the study of a Ghanaian language for every child in the Senior High School should be compulsory.

Another means by which the Linguistic Human Rights of the Ghanaian child can be guaranteed in the educational system is ensuring that every child starts his/her education in the L1. Ghana as a nation should employ the Democratic Liberal Approach of familiarisation principle whereby every language within the national borders of Ghana is developed and used in schools as medium of instruction. In the current arrangement, many children start their education in a second Ghanaian language because the government has sanctioned the use of only 11 Ghanaian languages as MoI in schools up till the third year. This goes against the Linguistic Human Rights of such children. A bold attempt should be made to develop the other Ghanaian languages to be used as MoI in addition to the existing 11 Ghanaian languages currently used as media of instruction. This is bound to be costly to the nation but the benefits thereof far outweigh the cost. The colonialist pedagogy of using only 11 indigenous languages as media of instruction should end. The government of Ghana, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service of Ghana should do a language mapping of our schools, especially the lower primary classrooms and select informants from the districts to develop early childhood instructional reading materials for many more languages and educate para-educators or bilingual aides to assist with the use of indigenous languages as medium of instruction. As a sovereign nation, Ghana should develop bilingual high frequency readers based on its many indigenous languages for use in the lower primary classroom. It is easy and cheap to develop such materials for use in schools. The people and government of Ghana need to stop arguing that they cannot produce literacy instructional materials in local languages for learners. Ghana should rather seek to become a model in this endeavour to other multilingual countries in Africa.

There has been financial support from United State Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of International Development (DFID) and other organisations to develop literacy through the use of L1. For example, USAID in partnership with the Ghana Education Service through Family Health International (FHI 360) (consortium-led), Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Olinga Foundation, and the Ghana Institute of Linguistics Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), is spending a colossal amount of \$71 million to develop literacy through the Ghanaian languages. It is to support early grade reading and literacy improvement activities in Ghana. This donor funding supports the use of L1 in schools through the production of

Ghanaian language materials and training of teachers in the use of L1 as medium of instruction in lower primary schools. The project aims to develop 2.8 million lower primary teachers to use L1 as medium of instruction. In addition to this, the project through the Faculty of Ghanaian Languages Education, University of Education, Winneba, has completed a language mapping in 100 districts in Ghana. This mapping collected data on KG- Primary Three pupils and teachers to identify their L1 and L2 (if applicable) to see the viability of using the L1 as medium of instruction in those districts. However, these efforts are geared towards the development of the eleven government sponsored Ghanaian languages and English thus reinforcing the hegemony of these languages to the detriment of other languages. According to Simmons and Fennig (2017), there are sixty (60) plus indigenous languages that are left without funding to develop instructional reading materials in these languages. These donor funds should also be used in developing some of the indigenous languages in terms of literacy primers to bring them to the level of been used for instruction in schools.

Children with a solid educational foundation in their indigenous languages guarantee a future generation that will ensure substantial development in the country. One is not arguing for inclusion of every single language spoken in Ghana to be used as MoI in schools. It would have been the ideal thing but most of these local languages are not ready because they do not have teachers, teaching and learning materials, and standard orthography. There is the need to set criteria which will bring many more languages in as media of instruction in schools. The criteria include the following:

- a. Acceptable standard orthography
- b. Availability of body of written resources
- c. Availability of qualified teachers
- d. Evidence of a sustainable population of learners

The responsibility now lies on the Faculty of Ghanaian Languages of the College of Languages Education, Ajumako of the University of Education, Winneba, the Department of Linguistics of the University of Ghana, Legon, and the Department of Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics of the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, to research into and develop the undeveloped languages in Ghana. These institutions should collaborate closely with the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) which is currently working on some of these languages.

Language attitude plays a key role in either facilitating or obstructing LHR in many multilingual societies. In countries where positive attitudes are cultivated

towards indigenous languages and multilingualism, LHRs are embraced and promoted but in situations where there is negative attitude towards the use of indigenous languages and multilingualism, LHRs are violated. The violation of LHRs in Ghanaian schools is partly as a result of negative attitude towards the use of L1/mother tongue in education (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Boandoh, 2014). People see the promotion of multilingualism and promotion of LHRs as divisive. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2008), the use of mother tongue/L1 as medium of instruction in schools is perceived as a disintegrative factor in nation states. As a result of negative attitudes towards the use of indigenous languages in education, Ghanaian children are asked to drop their L1 as medium of instruction from Primary Four. The Ghanaian child coming to school with knowledge in arithmetic, science or reading is not asked to forget such knowledge or not to use it in class. Yet the Ghanaian child is told not to use his/her L1 in school or stand the risk of being punished. This is unfair to the Ghanaian child and a violation or denial of the LHRs of the Ghanaian child. The L1 is the greatest asset the Ghanaian child has to succeed in education. To ensure that the LHRs of the Ghanaian child is upheld in education, there is the need to cultivate a positive attitude towards the use of L1 as MoI at least during the entire basic education (KG-JHS 3). It is when a positive attitude is cultivated that stakeholders in the education enterprise will become committed to ensuring that the LHRs of the Ghanaian child in education are protected. All Ghanaian languages should be given value and should be used in education. Educational authorities in Ghana hide behind social and political excuses as well as the pretext of inadequate financial and material resources not to develop and use other languages outside the 11 approved in education.

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana, though not far-reaching enough, guarantees the use of Ghanaian languages. Article 26 (1) of the same constitution guarantees right of each Ghanaian citizen to language when it states ‘Every person is entitled to enjoy, practise, profess, maintain and promote any culture, **language** [emphasis added].’ Further, Article 39(3) also says clearly that ‘The state shall foster the development of Ghanaian languages and pride in Ghanaian culture.’ However, the means and strategies to foster the development of the indigenous languages were not stipulated. These provisions in the constitution relating to indigenous Ghanaian language use should see practical application in the Ghanaian educational system. It should also be explicitly enshrined in the constitution that the use of Ghanaian language as MoI at least at the basic level (KG-P6) is mandatory. This then will fulfill Article 26 of UHR and Article 2(1) of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minority. Ghana should also abide by and implement the Cultural Charter for Africa adopted in 1976, Organization of African Unity’s Language Action Plan of 1986, and the Asmara Declaration of 2000 (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995; Bamgbose, 1991; Asmara Declaration, 2000). These declarations all aim

to foster the teaching of national languages, use of African languages as media of education and promote the right of children to attend school and learn in their mother tongue. Implementing and enforcing these declarations will promote the linguistic rights of the Ghanaian child in education.

To ensure that the language policy of education in Ghana guarantees the LHRs of the Ghanaian child, the Ghana government should put in place structures that will enhance the smooth implementation of the policy. In the first place, there should be the establishment of National Language Council (NLC) (Owu-Ewie, 2013) to oversee the effective planning and implementation of language policies in the country. The membership of the council should include eminent educationists, renowned linguists, language experts and language right activists. Besides, there should be a National Education Language Council (NELC) which will plan, implement, monitor, supervise and evaluate language use in education. At the regional and district levels, there should be a Regional and District Education Language Committee (RELC/DELCC) which will be responsible for language issues of education in the regions and districts. This should be headed by the Regional/District Language Coordinator. At the school level, there should be a School-Based Language Management Committee (SLMC) headed by a language coordinator. This means that schools should be empowered to select a Ghanaian language or languages as MoI in collaboration with parents, learners and all stakeholders in the locality. There should also be an effective school-based monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that the language policy of education is enforced. Such identifiable groups should be made to function and not to just exist in name like the Pan South Africa Language Board (PANSLAD) (Perry, 2004).

Another area that can be used to improve the Linguistic Human Rights of the Ghanaian child in education is to conduct a sociolinguistic study of schools, especially at the basic level. This study will look at the Ghanaian language representation in each classroom, especially at the lower primary level. This will help the government and educational planners to know which languages are used in which areas and schools in order to facilitate proper language demarcation and distribution of appropriate teachers to schools where their L1s are used. It will also help in sending the right books to the appropriate schools. Currently, the Faculty of Ghanaian Languages of the University of Education, Winneba with support from the Learning Project of the USAID has conducted such a study in 100 out of the 216 Districts in the country.

Conclusion

According to Prah (2009), education in Africa, including Ghana, should be in the mother tongue. However, in Ghana, children are educated in a language which is alien to them. LHR is routinely ignored and violated in Ghanaian schools. This article has unequivocally indicated that the Linguistic Right of the Ghanaian child is violated in the educational system. This violation has forced some children to drop out of school, has alienated Ghanaian children from their heritage/indigenous languages and identity, and has forcibly transferred Ghanaian children to another linguistic/cultural group. This is a typical example of linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006; Magga, Nicolaisen, Trask, Dunbar & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2005). The paper has also argued that to improve this situation the following should be observed: cultivation of positive attitudes towards the use of L1, expansion of the list of 11 Ghanaian languages as media of instruction to include other languages, establishment of structures to ensure effective implementation of the language policy of education and a sociolinguistic mapping of schools. The fundamental challenge about language use and language policies on education in a multilingual society such as Ghana is essentially one of achieving a balance between the languages used in education and the indigenous languages of the child. Such a balance should take into consideration social unity, access to education and respect for and toleration of diversity. In conclusion, it must be recognised that Ghanaian children have rights which include the use of their language in their education. It is time for all Ghanaians to also recognise the risk that education poses (the better to obviate it) as well as the immeasurable ameliorative possibilities it offers. Appreciating that the Ghanaian child has rights and that these rights include Linguistic Human Rights, is a good starting point.

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