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Teachers' Perceptions About the Medium of Instruction in Learning English as A Second or Foreign Language in Ghanaian Lower Basic Schools

Masters Thesis

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Education and Globalisation

2022

University of Oulu

Faculty of Education

Teachers' Perceptions About the Medium of Instruction in Learning English as a Second or Foreign Language in Ghanaian Lower Basic Schools

Master's Thesis, 72 pages, 4 appendices

May 2022

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## Abstract

In teaching a second or foreign language, there is often a dilemma regarding the most suitable language to use as a medium of instruction or interaction. The study of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Ghana is most often than not characterized by this dilemma. This is where educators are conflicted on whether to follow the official language policy that advocates for the use of the mother tongue instruction or strictly use the target language (in this case English), or opt for bilingual education. Research has shown that factors that ensure practical Second Language Acquisition (SLA) are comprehension, interaction and affective elements (attitudes and emotions). These are achievable with the presence of other factors like context, knowledge of the world, and extra-linguistic information (Krashen, 1981). It is critical for educators to consider these in order to be able to select the most suitable medium of instruction (MoI) in an ESL classroom in Ghana. The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using the target language (TL) and, or first language (L1) in an English language class by analyzing learners' behaviours through classroom observations, coupled with teachers' experiences and perceptions. The study uses the qualitative method and phenomenography to understand the perceived effectiveness of the use of the English Language as an MoI for the learning of the language, as compared to using the learners' first language in teaching English and vice versa. Some Ghanaian ESL teachers in the lower basic school were purposefully selected for the study and interviews were conducted to obtain their thoughts regarding the language of instruction policy and teaching ESL. It was evident from the analysis that the teachers mostly used bilingual medium of instruction rather than using the L1 as the dominant medium in the ESL classroom as they perceived bilingual education to be most effective in achieving their teaching and learning outcomes. Teachers perceived that the L1 plays a significant role in ESL learning. It was suggested that the L1 translation offered learners an easy understanding of the English language, improved learners' motivation to learn the language, and enhanced learners' interaction as compared to the use of only the TL/L2. Interestingly, the teachers perceived that the language of instruction policy for suitable for the Ghanaian context, and they also suggested that there needs to be adequate Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) to make teaching and learning more effective. This is not a complete case study hence the results cannot be generalized as they are as subjective to the participant-teachers. Again, further research is needed to look at investigate the perception of other stakeholders in education such as headteachers, parents and students about the phenomenon.

Keywords: ESL teaching, Second Language Acquisition, Ghana's language of instruction policy, early childhood ESL learning

## **List of Abbreviations**

BSE - British Standard English

EFL- English as a Foreign Language

ESL- English as Second Language

FL- Foreign Language

GES- Ghana Education Service

KG- Kindergarten

L1- First Language, native language/ local language, mother tongue, or Ghanaian language for the purpose of this study

L2- Second Language

LHR- Linguistic Human Rights

MoE- Ministry of Education

MoI- Medium of Instruction in this case language of instruction

NALAP- National Literacy Acceleration Program

SL - Second Language

SLA- Second Language Acquisition

TL- Target Language (language under study. Can be the second or foreign language)

ZPD- Zone of Proximal Development

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# 1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the problem under study in Ghanaian ESL (English as a Second Language) teaching and learning. It highlights the aim and significance of the study as well as the research questions the findings seek to answer.

## 1.1 Background

This study investigates the perceptions of Ghanaian English as a Second Language (ESL from here on; see Abbreviations) teachers in teaching English considering the official language policy in Ghana and how learners tend to perform or engage with teaching and learning when the target language (in this case English) is used as compared to the first language/mother-tongue (L1 from here on; see Abbreviations). This is critical in view of the fact that English is Ghana's official language, and every level of formal activity is conducted in the language. It is therefore imperative that every child going through formal education in the country be taught to understand, speak and write at a level that will be appreciable in the rules that apply to English. It is important for formal education to do this because, for many people in such a multilingual state, English is a second language. The adoption of the language is imperative because English has served as a dominant language of education globally as well as for most multilingual societies and it is perceived to have solved communication problems in education systems (Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015, p. 72). This paper looks at the Medium of Instruction (MoI from here on; see Abbreviations) of a second or foreign language and its impact on learners' performance.

As an English language intern teacher in a primary school, I was faced with the challenge of trying to stick with English as the medium of instruction, although I observed the struggles of my learners' in understanding certain rules of the language. Some of my learners could not avoid the temptation of using Kru English (a term given to a variety of West African Pidgin English spoken in the Southern part of Ghana) during language classes. Consequently, I thought of conducting a study on this topic in order to provide empirical knowledge, and also to add a voice to the ongoing debates in this area.

There has been the argument that not using a child's first language (L1 from here on; see Abbreviations) in teaching them violates their linguistic human rights (LHR from here on; see

Abbreviations) and there is the risk of the country losing its identity (Owu-Ewie, 2006). However, selecting which local language to use as the L1 for children in Ghanaian schools would be a challenge because of the multilingual nature of the nation. Ghana's language policy in education stipulates learners should be taught in their L1 for kindergarten (KG from here on ; see Abbreviations) to Primary 3 (Ghana Education System is depicted in Appendix 2) with English taught as a subject. From Primary Four to Junior High School, the learners are to be taught in English, with the local languages taught as a core or major subject (Owu-Ewie, 2015). Many schools have disregarded this policy, for the reason that there is not a uniform distribution of local languages for the pupils in the classrooms. They, therefore, choose to teach in English.

Studies have shown that L1 use is essential in learning a second language or foreign language considering that "L2 learners already have a body of first language lexical knowledge at their disposal" which they tend to fall on to make meaning of the new language (Singleton, 2014, p. 44). This way it becomes easier for L2 learners as they are able to convert or transfer knowledge from their L1 context to the target language (TL from here on; see Abbreviations). Conversely, its associated limitation is the inability for L2 speakers to adequately translate or connect some linguistic ideas between the L1 and the TL. As emphasized by Singleton (2014, p. 44), "more often the meanings of a second language are differently structured and distributed compared with those of the first language".

It can be surmise non-native Ghanaian ESL teachers may encounter issue with the linguistic structure of English during teacher training and teaching practices. Considering this, there is a critical need for general education and resource teachers to know how to effectively build and implement literacy programs that are inclusive of students' language and culture" (Gupta, 2019, p.49). This will promote their effectiveness as ESL teachers and raise teaching and learning outcomes. My observation coupled with some studies shows that most English teachers especially in basic and secondary schools are most likely not trained as suitable ESL teachers, although they may have received general teacher training. This has been argued to be one of the reasons why learners do not perform well in the English Language.

Other studies have also pointed to the interference of native languages as a major cause of poor performance. As observed in a multilingual (with over 350 languages) country like India, learners of English tend to become disoriented once introduced to the patterns and rules of the English language (Latha & Ramesh, 2012). This significantly affects the teaching and learning

process of English as a second or foreign language, leading to poor performance. Considering all these, this study attempts to find out which language, between English and a learner's L1, is the most suitable MoI to enhance students' performance in a language class.

The next sections for this first chapter highlights the purpose of the research and its guiding research questions. The subsequent chapters cover the theoretical framework and literature review, the methodology, results of the study, and discussion of results.

## **1.2 Aim of Thesis and Research Questions**

The aim of the thesis is to investigate the effectiveness of using TL and, or L1 in an English language class by analyzing learners' behaviors through classroom observations, coupled with teachers' experiences and perceptions. The research questions explore teachers' perceptions on the use of TL or L1, and the role of Ghana's language policy in teaching the English Language. This study may be significant in providing some evidence on the need to choose either English or any other dominant native language as the most effective medium of instruction. Again, this may help inform Education policymakers in Ghana on the need to either maintain the current L1 medium of instruction policy or change it. Data is collected from small number of schools and teachers and therefore only aims to understand the teachers' perceptions but the findings cannot be generalized for the whole country but may provide a basis by which other research in English as a second language can be conducted.

The study is conducted in the Greater Accra region of Ghana, which has diverse linguistic population due to it being the capital city of Ghana. This region was selected to help me understand how the teachers are able to cater for the diverse linguistic needs of their learners, and also follow the language of instruction policy in teaching English language. Only ESL teachers were selected from lower basic schools as the study is focused on learning ESL and Ghana's language of instruction policy significantly impacts the lower basic school, where it is required to use mostly the mother tongue instruction. The participants and context of this study is discussed further in the methodology section.

Considering the above aims and background of the study, the following research questions have been generated for this study.

1. How do Ghanaian ESL teachers in selected lower basic schools perceive the effectiveness of the use of English (which is the target language), and/or learners' first



language(L1) as a medium of instruction, based on their observed experience of learners' class attitudes?

2. How do ESL teachers perceive Ghana's language policy in education? Has it been feasible or there a need for change?

3. How do the ESL teachers perceive bilingual medium of instruction?

These questions seek to find out the experiences and perceptions of the ESL teachers. This may help inform how the research participant see, understand and use the language policy to guide their work.

The next chapter discusses language learning theories, ideas and concepts. It also reviews some existing literature that are significant for this study and the Ghanaian context.

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

When it comes to the acquisition and learning of a second language, there are numerous theories that help us understand the phenomenon. For the purpose of this study these four have been selected; a) Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition b) Chomsky's Communicative Language Theory c) Ausubel's and Bandura's Learning Theory. These theories have been purposefully to help interpret the phenomenon of language acquisition in diverse contexts and its inherent practices. Krashen and Chomsky's theories are selected because they have been widely used to understand language learning and Ausubel's and Bandura's learning theories because they are some of the notable fundamental teaching and learning theories. Aside from these theories, the sections in this chapter contain literature reviews which are significant to the Ghanaian context.

### **2.1 Stephen Krashen on Second Language Acquisition**

This study focuses on language education hence it is critical to first understand language acquisition and language learning concepts. Second Language Acquisition (SLA from here on; refer to Abbreviations) has been defined as "the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom" (Ellis 1997, p. 3). During the learning process, the second language is referred to as the TL (see Abbreviations). These concepts are the main foundation of the theory of Second Language Acquisition (refer to Abbreviations) by Stephen Krashen (1982). This theory is made up five hypotheses. These are the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and affective filter hypothesis. Krashen (1981) identifies that the input hypothesis is essential in finding out how language is acquired at all levels of teaching. However, other factors like the level of second language exposure, method of instruction and the age of the individual effects positive results for SLA. According to him, these do not really affect the achievements, and shortcomings in SLA but rather an individual's capacity to receive and comprehend the language input, and influence the affective filter (Krashen, 1981).

The acquisition-learning hypothesis states that "adults have two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language (Krashen, 1981, p.10). The first way is acquisition and the second is learning. Acquisition which can be used to describe fluency, refers to the natural way of picking up or knowing a language. It is done subconsciously without the

realization of a learner. According to Krashen (1981), with this process the acquirer is not really concerned with or aware of the errors he or she might possibly be making and the grammar rules of the language but rather he or she freely interacts in the TL. Here, one simply grasps the language. Conversely, learning is the conscious effort to acquire a language by knowing the rules, grammar, phonetics, writing, etc, normally with the help of an instructor. Here, the learner tries to understand the rules and applies them in speaking. This is comprehensive learning of the language. These two basic concepts work together as a learner then thinks of the rules and makes corrections while trying to speak fluently. According to Krashen (1981), acquisition is more important than learning. This raises a question about the purpose of language learning in the classroom. Krashen (1981), has provided an answer that language teaching offers a learner who otherwise has no chance to receive the TL inputs an opportunity to receive such inputs in the classroom. This means it provides exposure to the SL/L2 (see Appendix 1), which is needed for acquisition or fluency. For instance, in a multilingual context like Ghana, where the L1 is often used, it means that language teachers need to dedicate more time to speak the SL/FL or interact with their learners in the TL in order to ensure effective acquisition.

Once an individual acquires a language, speaking begins, which leads to fluency (Krashen, 1981). At this stage, the speaker receives corrections or modifications to the spoken language. Here, learning becomes the editor or the monitor as suggested by the monitor hypothesis. Learning becomes functional as the means of modifying or correcting errors in spoken language (Krashen, 1981).

Krashen (1981), asserts that the input hypothesis is the most critical and essential in SLA theory. It is that which ultimately provides an answer to the question, '*how do we acquire a second language?*' The input hypothesis suggests that for an acquirer or learner to move from his or her present level of competence (i) to the next level (i+1) he or she should be able to comprehend or make meaning of the inputs that contains (i+1), and not the form of the message (Krashen, 1981, p. 21). Hence, language is acquired only when inputs which are slightly higher than the current competence is understood. He explains further that this is only possible when other factors such context, knowledge of the world, and extra linguistic information (beyond linguistics) helps one to comprehend the language (TL in this case). The input hypothesis targets language meaning before language structure. It is the natural way of knowing a language as compared to learning it. The more comprehensive inputs received, the faster the acquisition.

In an online lecture, Krashen (2012), summarizes the input hypothesis by explaining that we all acquire languages in the same manner. He relates it to the biological process of digestion where there is no significant difference in each person's process of digesting food. Language is acquired when we understand it. We do not acquire language when we produce it, get our errors corrected or understand grammatical rules rather we acquire language when we understand what people say, not how they say it. Input generates language acquisition.

Krashen (1981 & 2012) explains in another hypothesis that there are emotional variables like motivation, self-esteem (confidence) and negative anxiety (the lower the anxiety, the better the language acquisition.). These factors are the attitudes and behaviors which influence SLA. These form the Affective Hypothesis. Learning a second language when one is accustomed to speaking a mother tongue requires some kind of motivation. There may be hindrances like failure, difficulties in grasping the language, weaknesses associated with tonation and grammar etc, which overly affects self-esteem and self-motivation. As highlighted by Moss & Ross Feldman (2003) studies have shown that to enhance learner motivation, certain social factors such as group interaction, family support and learning environment all affects learner behavior in the classroom as well as learning achievements (Dornyei, 2002b, as cited in Moss & Ross Feldman, 2003, p. 2). Ellis (1997) also mentions attitudes and emotional being impact the amount of efforts learners make to acquire a second language.

Again, Krashen (1981) suggests that learners with unfavourable attitudes in the classroom such as negative anxiety, low motivation and low self-confidence will not strive to look for inputs. Language anxiety can impede the acquisition and speaking of a new language and negatively impact self-confidence, and the willingness to acquire a second language (Crookall & Oxford 1991 as cited on von Worde 2003, p. 1). Moreover, anxiety may not come from learners only but instructors as well. This is because some teaching and learning methods which aim to instigate some form of predetermined or expected learner performance may be inconsistent and as such may lead to anxiety.

### 2.1.1 Immersion

Scott Thornbury (2016), who is an academic expert in English language teaching has explained how a second language is acquired by referencing some case studies or other research. He refers to these case studies as the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Hall of Fame.

Scott (2016) in his presentation on second language acquisition hall of fame, made reference to Julie's case study. Julie was a twenty-one-year-old British lady who migrated to Egypt and got married. She could not speak Arabic; neither did she take any Arabic classes. Within two and half years, she was able to speak just like native Arabic. A test was conducted in 1994 where selected judges who were Arabic and Egyptian were asked to identify if she was native speaker or not. Although some identified the chances that she was not, many of them had no doubt that she was a native speaker. Here, it can be said that Julie acquired Arabic as her second language through the immersion approach. This means Julia learned this new language naturally as she was immersed in it. She heard, spoke, experienced and learned the language in an everyday setting as she lived in Arab.

According to Krashen (1981, p. 10), "some second language theorists have assumed that children acquire while adults can only learn." Conversely, acquisition-learning hypothesis suggests that it is possible for adults to also grasp a language and that on the contrary, this ability is not lost at puberty as suggested by some scholars. This case study proved to be significant as it negated the idea of the Critical Age Hypothesis which basically suggests that a person cannot acquire a second language to near nativeness after the critical age (that is, early childhood to early teenage years). This is because after the age of about thirteen, the neural plasticity decreases functionality to stabilize what we have already learned, as such we are incapable of learning a second language to a point where we can be considered as native speakers. In view of this "the strong version of the [Critical Period Hypothesis] ...can no longer be sustained in the face of cases in which learners first exposed to L2 in adulthood become indistinguishable from native speakers [...]" (Alvarez, 2006). The revised version of this hypothesis therefore proposes that instead a sensitive period during which L2 or second language acquisition is simply more efficient. The sensitive period signifies childhood years.

Lower basic school (see appendix 2) pupils in Ghana can be considered very young learners. This is because they are commonly under the age of seven as defined by Slatterly & Willis (2001). This group of learners have been identified as being able to create their own learning paths by "actively engaging with their environment and exploring their immediate settings and constructing their knowledge through social interaction" (Piaget, 1971; Vygotsky, 1962 as cited by Uysal & Yavuz, 2015, p. 20). According to Lev Vygotsky's theory of learning and development, there exists a key idea known as Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between the level of a learner's problem-solving ability without

guidance and that of a learner when there is an intervention of adult guidance or in association with higher performing peers. “Within the ZPD children acquire knowledge through interaction with other people” (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015, p. 20).

There are discourses around the ideal age a second language can be acquired easily and effectively. Normally, these discussions border around *the younger the better idea*. As reiterated, “acquisition...Is guaranteed for children up to the age of six, is steadily compromised from then until shortly after puberty and is rare thereafter...and similar acquisition process is also valid for second or foreign languages” (Pinker 1994, p. 293 & 294, as cited by Uysal & Yavuz, 2015, p.21).

In applying this approach in a classroom setting where the L2/TL is used as the medium of instruction. Immersion is effective when the teacher is empathetic of learners by understanding that they are new speakers of the language, hence he needs to take his time and speak slowly, clearly and use clues and gestures to describe the kind of understanding he wants to communicate to the learners. This is because it accelerates language acquisition by giving intense exposure in a manner which motivates and increases learner confidence. When learners are confident, it drives them to interact effectively in the learning process. In the case of this study, it is important for learners to actively participate in the English class in order for achieve the expected learning outcomes.

### 2.1.2 Interaction

Scott (2016) makes another reference to a case study which is done in the 1970s. This was about Takahiro, a two and half-year-old Japanese boy who migrated to the United States with his parents and lived with his English speaking aunt who spoke no Japanese. Takahiro’s second language acquisition interestingly began with a silent period. Here, he refused to speak. Stephen Krashen (1981) mentions this silent period in his theory of comprehensive input, and it is where learners actually not dormant but rather are processing language, and are unprepared to speak the language yet. At this stage in the input hypothesis of the SLA theory, the learner develops competence in the SL/TL by listening and making meaning of the language heard. After this, the child willingly progresses with speaking.

In ESL classrooms, there is often no time for allowing a learner go through the silent period as the learner is required to engage or interact in the TL (in this case English) at an early stage

before they are ready to do so. In view of this, a learner depends on rules of their L1 while speaking the English language (Newmark 1966, as cited by Krashen, 1981, p. 21). The inherent merit of this is termed 'positive transfer' (Krashen, 1981). This happens when the L1 and L2/TL have similar structures or rules which help to increase the language competence of the speaker. This also helps the speaker to interact more which may mean obtaining more comprehensive inputs which makes SLA faster. Conversely, there exists a challenge where the L1 and L2/TL structures and rules are different. With this, there is the tendency for error to be produced while the learner is speaking. In this case the monitor, who can be an ESL teacher for instance, must be vigilant in identifying these inconsistencies and correcting the speaker (Krashen, 1981). This is also discussed in the sub-section titled the role of the native language in L2 acquisition.

In the case of Takahiro, it can be assumed that he experienced the silence period and had no L1 interference. When his aunt spoke English with him, he developed a strategy of retrieving a word from the stressed part of her utterance and changed the intonation. For instance, if she says it with a fallen intonation, he says it with rising intonation and vice versa. He tried to interact although he could not really understand but only relied on her gestures and clues. With his strategy he got a conversation going by retrieving words and repeating them with different intonations. Thornbury (2013) suggests that once a learner tries to interact, he or she makes progress with acquiring the language because he or she receives inputs and feedback in the context of social interaction. Krashen (1981, p. 11), emphasizes that giving feedback by way of correction of errors in formal language learning has no significant impact on the natural way of acquiring the language, although it is helpful as it aids the learner to ascertain the right the right rules or grammar use. For Takahiro, that was the only way he could communicate with his aunt. According to Thornbury (2013, previous studies suggest that a language is learnt first and then the learner has a conversation, however, this may be the reverse, which is a learner needs to have a conversation in order to learn a language. As emphasized by Hatch (1978, p. 404) "one learns how to do conversation, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed".

The main aim of any language class is to enable the learners to speak fluently in the TL and use it appropriately. This is best achieved when learners actively participate in the learning process (Nagaraj, 2008, p. 105 as cited Latha and Ramesk 2012, p.4). Latha & Ramesk (2012) have suggested certain factors that hinders learners' speaking skills or oral communication when learning an L2 or FL. To begin with, they highlight the concern that a learner may restrain

him/herself from speaking in the language class when they feel nervous about speaking up in a crowd. This normally may come from the fear of making mistakes or being criticized by their peers. Closely linked to this is anxiety. Again the learner may lack the motivation to interact in the language learning class due to the inability to understand instructions, and gestures that are used by the facilitator. Furthermore, learners often become accustomed to the use of mother tongue in interacting when they rely on translation to speak the target language (English in this case). With this acquiring ESL becomes difficult especially when it comes to fluency. Closely related to this is the linguistic makeup of the community. When English is generally not spoken in the community or at home it slows the language learning process. This is because the learner is may not have a lot of people around who can speak the language, hence will lack adequate practice and guidance in speaking English. Teachers are also instrumental in the acquisition of a L2 or FL, hence they need to be proficient in that language to be able to teach. Finally, teaching and learning materials need to be adequate to speed up the learning process and make language learning more effective.

Interaction is essential in second language acquisition. It allows for the communication and negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 1999). Studies in interactive hypothesis show that dialogue “facilitates acquisition because it connects inputs; internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention; and the output in productive ways” (Long, 1996, cited by Moss and Ross-Feldman, p.2). Here the way or manner in which interaction changes and progresses helps learners to easily identify how to speak the language correctly (Schmidt & Frota, 1986 as cited in Moss and Ross Feldman, 2003, p. 2). Interaction offers the chance to gain comprehensible inputs and feedback which helps learners to modify their own ways of speaking and writing. Again, for most ESL learners, social interaction in the target language is essential. Some Ghanaian schools have the *No Speaking of Vernacular policy*, which ensures this in the school environment. Learners who interact in English during play hours, class breaks and classroom sessions seem to have an improvement in their English language proficiency and even their self-confidence when they speak the language. Interaction in any target language helps to reduce anxiety as well.

Although none of these cases was studied in the classroom, they offer significant insight into how second languages can be acquired naturally and their strategies can be imported into the classroom regardless of the fact that their findings cannot be generalized. Likewise, this



research also investigates the teaching experiences of the participants and how they perceive the learners' interaction, their motivation to learn and the use of L1 in their ESL classroom.

## **2.2 Communicative Language Theory**

### **2.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching**

Communicative language teaching can be described as laid down guidelines for the goals of language teaching, assumptions about learning a language and the kinds of activities that improves learning and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2017). It also describes the means of acquiring a second language through interaction, negotiation and collaborative creation of meaning, learning through feedback and corrections and also paying attention and taking note of what is heard and incorporate new forms into one developing communicative competence. Scott Thornbury (2016), who is an academic expert in English language teaching, explains that language learning has strong and weak aspects. Learning a language in order to speak it has been considered ineffective and speaking a language in order to learn it as emphasized by Krashen (1981) is believed to be effective language learning. This means that teachers should involve learners in a lot of speaking, reading and discussion tasks and facilitate these activities or provide instructions when need be.

## **2.3 Ausubel's and Bandura's Learning Theories**

In Ausubel's 1968 work *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View*. In the epigraph of this book he states that "The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly". Ausubel's learning theory has been used to comprehend diverse teaching and learning phenomena, and second acquisition is no exception. The theory rests on the foundation of meaningful learning and rote learning. Meaningful learning describes where new information acquired is truly understood and can be linked to other existing knowledge for improved comprehension. Consequently, the availability of existing knowledge augments new learning. Ausubel was of the view that ideas are best understood through logical reasoning. He holds that new knowledge should be acquired on the basis of what is already known. In other words, "effective teaching takes students from where they are and leads them to a higher level of understanding (Krashen, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978 as cited by Gupta, 2019, p. 51). According to Ausubel, "meaningful learning is the nonarbitrary,

nonverbatim, and substantive incorporation of new ideas into a learner's framework of knowledge or cognitive structure" (as cited by Mintzes & Wandersee, 2005, p. 39). Meaningful learning is possible when the content being studied is reasonable, learner has prior ideas which can support the new knowledge and possess the willingness to absorb it. When these are lacking, then rote learning develops (Mintzes & Wandersee, 2005). Rote learning is the use of repetition to help learners recollect new knowledge.

An application of this theory in the learning of a L2/FL can be in the situation where the L1 or mother tongue is used as the foundation for acquiring the new language. For this to be effective, the L1 should be similar to the L2/FL in terms of linguistic make up or structure. For example, the Akan or Twi language in the case of Ghana is alphabetical just like the English language and quite a number of vocabularies have been formed from English words. This makes it easier to import or relate phonological aspects of the L1 to those of the L2.

It has been suggested that learning can be defined as "a persisting change in human performance or performance as a result of the learner's interaction and the environment" (Driscoll, 1994, p.8-9 as cited by Nabavi, 2012, p. 4). Learning has also been explained by Weistein & Meyer (1986) as "the relatively permanent change in a person's knowledge or behaviour due to experience" (p. 1040 as cited by Nabavi, 2012, p. 4). The environment is influential in development. Behaviourism, social learning theory and social cognitive learning theory are all forms of learning theories founded by Albert Bandura.

The central idea of the social learning theory is that learning occurs through interaction. It has three general principles which suggest that people learn through observation, imitation and modelling of one another. These principles cannot do away with cognition. Through observation new knowledge, behaviour and ideas are acquired. For instance, when a learner watches someone read or sees a pictorial representation of action words they then gain some form of understanding and knowledge. Observational learning is based on elements such as "attention, retention, reciprocity and motivation" (Nabari, 2012, p.6). Through observational learning imitation and modelling of others occur. The modelling process begins with attention. Attention is achieved when something attracts the learner's interest. After this, the learner tries to memorize what he or she has observed and this is known as the retention stage. Next, the learner tries to reproduce what has been committed to memory and this cannot be possible without motivation or the willingness to reproduce what has been learned. (Nabari, 2012, p. 10).

To sum up the afore discussed theories, Gupta (2019, p. 50) points out a conceptual framework that has emerged from studies on second language learning. With this, he points out seven principles essential for ESL teaching. These are;

- o Know your student and motivation to learn the second language
- o Create a welcoming classroom environment
- o Build Background Knowledge
- o Provide Comprehensible Input by building vocabulary
- o Include frequent opportunities for Interaction and Discussion
- o Use Multiple Modalities during instruction
- o Conduct ongoing review and assessment

It can be seen that the elements or factors in this framework adopts the ideas of the SLA theory, concept of communicative language teaching, Ausubel's learning theory and Banduras' learning theory. This helps to easily understand how the findings from this study connects with each of these theories and concepts and also show the inherent linkages of the goals of each theory.

#### **2.4 The Role of Native Language or L1 in Second Language Acquisition**

Studies have investigated the purpose of first language in the learning of a SL/FL. These have revealed the merits and demerits of the use of L1 in learning a new language. Foreign language (FL) educator Humes-Bartlo (1989) observed that FL learners who did not do well exhibited slight shortfalls in proficiency in their mother tongue in comparison to good learners (as cited in Ganchow, Sparks & Javorsky 1998, p.250). Again, Shekan (1986) discloses that "children who make rapid progress in their first language tend to do better in foreign language learning at school" (p. 196 as cited in Ganschow et al, 1998, p. 250). This means that if a learner did not develop sufficient language learning skills from the first language or mother tongue they are most likely to find learning a second language difficult. This challenge can even worsen when there are lack of tools and learning materials as well as proficient teachers to which are necessary for learning a language were non-existent in learning the first language. This is because a second language can be acquired naturally as the first, hence similar language

learning skills. For instance, in Ghana, the Akan language makes use of similar alphabets like those of the English language which makes it easier to learn ESL and vice versa as learners are already familiar with this structure.

A study conducted by Sparks, Ganschow, Artzer, Siebenhar & Plageman (1997) found that “students with lower levels of anxiety about FL learning, stronger native language skills, and greater FL aptitude scored significantly higher on measure of FL proficiency than students with higher levels of anxiety about FL learning, lower native language skills and less FL aptitude” (Ganschow et al 1998, p. 252). Regardless of this, the first language, when used as the medium of instruction presents its own limitations. Krashen (1981, p. 65) puts forward the influence L1 in second language acquisition. He identifies that in the cases of verbatim translation and complex word structure, the L1 interference seems to be intense. Also, the impact of the first language was quite apparent in “acquisition poor environment”. For instance, the frequent use of L1 translation in the study of a second language means less to the TL which reduces the rate of acquisition. This is normally common in bilingual education where learners are not adequately immersed in the TL/L2 due to the reception of L1 translation as inputs from the teacher. To eliminate this and also improve proficiency, Krashen (1981) suggests that learning the second language should be done naturally. This means that the use of the L1 should be minimum in order to reduce its influence.

The most commonly identified is the obtrusion of the mother tongue with new language acquisition where there is the tendency for changes to be made to the second language in terms of expression, diction, etc. This has been referred to as “the influence that the learner’s L1 (first language) exerts over the acquisition of an L2 (second language) (Ellis 1997, p. 51). Again, in multicultural setting, the culture and linguistic context creates a strive between the use of English and the native language of the learner in and outside of the classroom. For instance, in Ghana, personal relationships are cultivated with interactions in the Ghanaian language. This also helps children to fully get integrated into the society and it is also essential that children are made to speak the English language from early childhood in order to attain an appreciable level of competence successfully (Amua-Sekyi, 2015).

The next section discusses some concerns about the use of indigenous or native languages in multilingual settings.

## **2.5 Multilingual Education in Africa: Pros and Cons**

Exploring the limitations and advantages of multilingual education is essential for the study of ESL in Ghana, especially since its language policy has been formulated to suit its multilingual context. Ouane & Glanz (2010) have tried to address certain concerns about the use of L1 or mother tongue language in education. According to them, there is the apprehension that African languages are outmoded, and are not valuable for informal education. Albeit at some point there would be the need to incorporate them in academia, it may not be feasible as this would be expensive to achieve. It may take a lot of time to put the academic resources in place and also train teachers for the task. Regardless of this, most African countries are trying to find means and ways to protect the significant parts of their linguistic culture by passing them on to the next generations. Presently, about 200 African languages are taught in lower primary or basic schools in the continent, with a few being taught in high school and tertiary levels (Ouane & Glanz, 2010, p. 21).

Many researchers support the fact that these (African languages) are beneficial, and they possess the ability to serve as MoI in schools and develop the creation of academic resources. It has been found that any unchanging language of education policy and the perception that African languages can be used in all areas of life have a positive impact on the education system or are necessary for educational success (Griefenow-Mewis, 2004, as cited by Ouane & Glanz, 2010, p. 23). Moreover, there has been a concern that in a multilingual society, the official language should be used in education. This concern is attributed to the fear of losing the official language altogether when it is eradicated from schools where it is supposed to be acquired while local languages are embraced. To address this, Ouane & Glanz (2010) have suggested that more research needs to be conducted to understand in actual fact the usefulness of multilingualism. For instance, multilingualism has been suggested to have tendency of improving social cohesion as individuals are able to participate, and communicate successfully in the community, and also get acquainted with languages and diverse cultures in the society.

There have been queries about the benefits of the mother tongue or native language in education and how it impacts learners' performance. It can be surmised that total immersion in the target language (TL) makes acquisition of the new language easier and faster. This helps to increase the rate of exposure learners have to the language. It is perceived that exposing a child learner to English as a second or foreign language makes him or her acquire the language faster. In this case, learning is done through immersion. This idea is the basis by which some schools tend to

stick to the English-only medium of instruction in schools. However, it is mostly practised in international schools or private schools whose learner base is from elite backgrounds (Ouane & Glanz 2010).

Ouane and Glanz (2010), have however given a contradictory opinion that “education is for all...” (p. 27) therefore, the exclusive immersion approach, that is using the target language (or the second or foreign language being studied) as the medium of instruction cannot be adopted as the approach for mainstream language education. They made reference to the case of Ethiopia where a comparison of learners’ performances showed that students who received teaching instructions native language for the first eight years performed better in all subjects including English as compared to those who were taught solely in the English language (Heugh et al, 2007 as cited by Ouane & Glanz 2010, p. 27). An essential aspect of education that needs to be considered is the idea that new things are best learned and understood when they are linked to what is already known by the learner (Ausubel, 1968). In this regard, some instructors of a foreign or second language cannot do away with interaction or instruction in the mother tongue or L1 of the learner as that is the prior or first knowledge. Learning the new language is therefore connected to the L1 by considering or utilizing the similar structures, concepts, alphabets or the learning skills and expertise learners have from the L1.

In cases where teachers are not proficient in the L1 of learners, there exists a communication problem. Moreover, teachers may not be able to choose the second/foreign language as the medium of instruction as it is new, and learners may struggle to understand what is being taught. As reiterated by Ouane & Glanz (2010), “in most African countries teachers are expected to teach learners to read and write in a language which is (a)unfamiliar to the student and (b) in which they have little competence themselves to teach” (p. 28). This creates a communication barrier in the classroom. For instance, I have observed in my education in Ghana that due to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of learners, teachers resort to speaking only English which makes it difficult for learners to understand. Also, choosing one Ghanaian language over the other may mean that some learners will be left out in the learning process or slowly have to catch up with what is being taught. In my own experience, I relied on my fellow colleagues who spoke my L1 (Akan language) to help me with L1 translations as a non-native of the Greater Accra region where the Ga language was widely spoken by the indigenes. This study will investigate if this situation still exists in teaching ESL for these participants and how they have coped with it.

The next section, and the subsequent one discusses the use of English in Ghana, how Ghanaians perceive the language and the overview of the language of instruction policy.

## **2.6 The Use of English in Ghana**

Ghana is a multicultural country with about “50 non-mutually intelligible languages” (Anyidoho & Kropp-Dakubu, 2008, p. 142 as cited by Dako & Quarcoo, 2017, p. 20). This has resulted in a lack of consensus on which local dialect can be accepted as a national language. Notwithstanding the country has been able to adopt the English language as its official language to ensure commonality in instances where there exists a language barrier. English has gained prominence in Ghana’s education system as it is the accepted medium of instruction and one of the subjects that determine whether or not an individual attains higher levels in education. In addition to this instrumental function, textbooks and other materials used to facilitate teaching and learning in schools are printed in English and this is seen as the standard in Ghana’s education system. This in the long run helps learners to become accustomed to others or have access to other materials or educational opportunities that are available only in English.

In Ghana, the British Standard English (BSE) is the chosen form of English to be taught in school and also to be utilized as the language of instruction for all subjects taught in school from primary four with the exception of Ghanaian languages (Dako & Quarcoo, 2017). However, BSE accent is not familiar in Ghana, but rather a localized accent. This localized accent was created as a result of contact with the Ghanaian languages and also changes in the structure of the standard British English. This accent has birthed a new English variety known as Ghanaian English and its distinct features are “lexis, pragmatic peculiarity and idiomatic usage” (Dako & Qurcoo, 2017, p. 21).

Ghanaians are mostly known to be bilinguals who speak their mother tongue as their first language and English as their second language. It is also perceived that Akan is the most spoken language in Ghana. This comprises Twi, Fanti, Akuapem, and Asante. In contemporary times where English is fast becoming a global language, monolingualism is being encouraged in Ghanaian society as parents now bring up English speaking children with the perception of giving these children the best chance at higher education (Dako & Qurcoo, 2017). This shows that Ghanaians are striving to become attune to global education standards by ensuring that their children have access English language education to assimilate them into a global society.

### 2.6.1 How Ghanaians Perceive English Language

Just like India, Ghana represents a nonnative context of language learning since they each have their own nonnative varieties. Here these are Ghanaian English and Indian English. These can be termed institutionalized varieties of English. The attitudes of the speakers form part of the sociolinguistic features of a language. This is known to affect the nativization of the language in a nonnative context. The proficiency level and the development of competencies of learners during a teaching context are impacted by attitudes (Berns, 1990).

The knowledge and acquisition of English have been described as a double-edged sword. Dako & Quarcoo (2014, p. 20) have reiterated this assertion by juxtaposing it to this familiar Akan proverb: “asatrofie anomaa, wofa no a, woafa mmusuo, wogyae no a, wogyae siadee. (if you catch a beautiful nightjar, you inflict on yourself a curse, but if you let it go, you have lost something of great value).” Attitudes are formed through experiences and they can as well be learned. They are related to “habits, values, opinions, beliefs as well as social stereotypes and ideologies” (Garret, 2010, p. 31).

The prevalence of western education in societies is one of the significant determinants of social class. In view of this, English has become associated with prestige and a language for the high class in society. Berns (1990, p.51) asserts that when speaking English is associated with elitism and prestige, it is usual for individuals to hide their incompetence in it. This notion is existence in a multicultural setting like Ghana where speaking a local dialect may seem like a sign of illiteracy. Moreover, during the colonial times and post-independence, English had become absolutely necessary for education as it was a by which to gain western knowledge (Berns, 1990).

Policies associated with the teaching and learning of a language must take into consideration the attitudes of those who are likely to be affected (Baker & Prys-Jones 1998, as cited by Dako & Quarcoo 2017, p.22). Although there is a written down language policy in Ghana, it is quite unclear if it exists in practice. In Ghanaian society, it seems that an English medium school is the preference of teachers, parents, learners and the entire society. The language is seen to carry prestige as suggested by Berns (1990), and those who speak it feel very confident in society.

Again, English is considered a lingua franca and as such much effort is being made to ensure that learners become competent speakers at an early age. In view of this, the National Literacy Acceleration Program (NALAP), which is a language policy was introduced in 2006. This



policy suggests that a child of school-going age is to be taught in his or her L1 which is the first language or the dominant language of the community during the early years of primary education (that is first three years) with a gradual introduction of English language through moderate interaction and then writing. However, from upper primary, teaching will be done solely in English and the local language can be taught as a subject. Those exempted from this policy are International schools whose students are mainly emigrants from other countries. The main aim of NALAP as cited in Anyidoho (2018, p. 233) is “to equip the majority of children leaving the basic education system with skills of literacy that would improve their learning abilities and serve as a springboard for further academic pursuit. This means that by P3, pupils would be functionally literate and would achieve reading fluency in their local language (L1) and in English (L2).” (GES report, 2010, p.1). Following this program, teaching was meant to be 80% Ghanaian language from Kindergarten to P1 and slowly decreases to 50% use of L1 and 50% use of English by primary 3.

Awedoba (2001) reports that in a community in Northern Ghana, the study of English language at an early age will enhance fluency. The ability to speak the language was considered a proof of formal education and a key to acquiring a white color job (p. 2). His report further shows that teachers were mostly not trained to use the Ghanaian language to teach or lack the needed level proficiency. Regardless, teachers who attended training schools or colleges were given the needed language teaching training. However, some teachers did not receive this training (that is teaching in Ghanaian language) because the training schools they attended did not use their L1 to train them as language teachers.

Awedoba (2001) also echoed the need to use English as MoI at an early age as children could acquire it better this way. In view of this, he concluded that Ghana’s official language policy was not given the needed support. Children who participated in this case study were pupils of the lower primary. They shared their views which mostly favored the use of English as MoI to the neglect of their mother tongue. The study made use of class observations and examined learners in an English language class to know if the use of L1 or the target language had any impact on learner performance. According to Awedoba (2001), it was observed that “pupils’ participation was not as rich as could have been expected. Teachers did most of the talking...Pupils rarely volunteered comments or asked questions although some of them did not understand what was being taught, and could not provide the correct answers when called upon to answer questions” (p. 11). Although learners bemoaned their lack of understanding of English language, the major concern for instructors was that the L1 which was Kasem was not

understood or spoken by all pupils, hence the resort to only English as MoI. Overall, there were misgivings on the side of language teachers and parents towards the use of L1 as the dominant MoI as suggested by the official language policy although its benefits of helping learners to understand what is being taught and interact well in class were acknowledged. In view of this the policy has been neglected and English is now used as MoI in the schools in the community.

Amua-Sekyi (2005) bemoans the failing standards in English language proficiency, and its overall impact on learners' academic performance. One study she mentions was conducted in Central and Western regions of Ghana by the Centre for Research on Improving the Quality of Primary Education in Ghana (CRIQPEC) of the University of Cape Coast which showed that a large number of learners were not competent in the use of English language. Most of these learners could barely express themselves in English language. "About 53.6% of the 261 pupils in primary two could not express themselves in English and could not write their own names. 60% of 259 pupils in primary three could not express themselves in English and 40.5% could not write their own names. 71% of 254 primary five pupils could express themselves in English and 49% could not write 1-15 words and 4% could not write any word at all" (as cited by Amua-Sekyi 2005, p. 25).

The research however revealed that pupils performed better in reading and writing as compared to speaking the English language. It is worth noting that as at the time this study was conducted the L1 or mother tongue was used as MoI in the learning of English language. This only reveals that Ghana's language of instruction policy "does not prepare the child adequately for the task ahead" (Amua-Sekyi 2005, p. 25). The policy suggests that from primary four, English should be used as the MoI, hence this means that children "are expected to have attained proficiency in the language to be able to communicate effectively and use English to learn other subjects in the school curriculum" (Amua-Sekyi 2005, p. 25). It is quite alarming that most teachers prefer to teach in the Ghanaian languages, hence Ghana's language policy may have to be reviewed if children are to attain fluency in the language.

## 2.6.2 Linguistic Prospects of Ghana and How its Language of Instruction Policy Has Evolved Overtime

Ghana has been unsettled with its language of instruction policy since the attainment of independence. From 1957 to 66 the country opted to use English as a Medium of Instruction (MoI from here on) from the first year of primary education. However, this changed in 1966

when it made a switch to use the mother tongue as MoI from primary 1 to 3 and English from the upper primary. Later this policy was reviewed again in 2014 where there was a recommendation to return to the use of the English language as the MoI from primary one. Subsequently, this was also reviewed by the Anamuah-Mensah Reform Review Committee in 2004 where it was recommended that the L1 is to be used as the MoI for the first five years of Basic Education (that is from Kindergarten or KG to primary 3) (Owu-Ewie, 2017).

Anyidoho (2018) makes reference to the new policy draft published in a government white paper after the committee's review. According to her it in the draft that "Government accepts the recommendation that the children's home language and Ghana's official language, English, should be used as the medium of instruction at the kindergarten and primary level" (White Paper on the Report of the Education Review Committee, 2004, p. 27 as cited in Anyidoho, 2018, p. 229). There was however a clause in the draft which appears to accentuate the first language.

"...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 (White Paper on the Report of the Education Review Committee, 2004, p. 27 & 28 as cited in Anyidoho, 2018, p. 229)

The official language policy states: "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, Ghana, 2004, pp. 27-28). The word 'dominant' in the policy statement suggests that Ghana's language of instruction policy can be considered bilingual, but should give priority to the L1 as MoI while slowly introducing the English language. Ghana's language policy aims to teach children from KG to primary 3 how to read and write in their native language while gradually introducing the English Language. Here, the mother tongue provides a linkage to easy learning of English as a second language. In addition to this, the policy also serves as a means to protect Ghanaian languages and culture.

Considering the numerous Ghanaian Languages present in the country, there has been an agreement to settle on eleven indigenous languages that can be used as languages of instruction in schools. These are Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi, Fanti, Nzema, Dagaare, Dangbane, Ewe, Ga, Dangme, Gonja and Kasem (Anyidoho, 2018). Efforts have been made to provide teaching materials in these 11 languages in hopes to fulfil an essential requirement of the mother tongue

instruction policy (Owu-Ewie, 2017). “However, these materials are only available for the language and literacy class and are not provided for other subjects” (USAID, 2020 p. 6). The study of English is part of the language and literacy curriculum hence it can be safely concluded that, the criteria for using a native language as MoI has been met in that regard.

The National Syllabus for Ghanaian Languages and Culture states: [t]he instruction in the school system from Kindergarten to Primary 3 is conducted essentially in the local language of the pupil (L1). In the five years of bilingual education (KG-P3), instruction in all subjects should be carried out in the Ghanaian language: Mathematics, Natural Science and all other subjects studied from KG to Primary 3 should be taught using the Ghanaian language, the L1 of the pupil using textbooks already written in English. This means that the teacher is required to translate the text in all subjects into the Ghanaian language of the class for their understanding in the course of instruction. (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2012, p. xi).

A number of studies have revealed that the application of the Ghana’s language of instruction policy has been quite low (Adika, 2012; Awedoba, 2009; Davies & Agbenyega, 2012 as cited by USAID, 2020, p.6). Some major reasons that have accounted for this is the “lack of textbooks and inadequate to resort to the use of English as MoI” (Owu-Ewie 2017, p. 153) and the fact that most children’s L1 may not be used as the language of instruction if it is not selected by their school or it is not part of the eleven languages selected by the Ministry of Education.

### 2.6.3 Linguistic Human Right (LHR) in Ghana

There exists a right that safeguards the use of an individual’s L1 or mother tongue in education. This is known as Linguistic Human Right (LHR). This was formulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDRH). This right seeks to protect the existence of less spoken languages in society. The right advocates for the use of a child’s L1 or mother tongue as the medium of instruction in which the child acquires academic knowledge. UNESCO has shown support for this by attesting that the L1 of the child must be used as the medium of instruction in schools, especially at the basic level (UNESCO, 1953). The LHR has proved to be beneficial in protecting the identity of citizens and also improving learner achievements. Countries that adhere to this right are deemed to have successful education systems and outcomes which have positively impacted their economies. Regardless of these, statistics have shown that only 13 percent of children in Africa are taught in schools using their L1 or mother tongue (Skutnabb-Kangas 2008 as cited by Owu-Ewie 2017, p. 158).

Even so, a country like Ghana in theory has acknowledged the use of the child's L1 as medium of instruction in the lower basic education (that is from Kindergarten to basic 3, which constitutes the first five years of education). However, ensuring that the policy is practiced effectively has been a major challenge. Bamgbose (2000) has pointed out that technicalities create loopholes in policies that render them difficult to adhere to (as cited in Owu-Ewie, 2017). For instance, with Ghana's language policy two major criteria need to be met in order for the policy to be effectively utilized.

- a) Where teachers and learning materials are available
- b) Linguistic composition of the class is fairly uniform.

These criteria posit that schools in Ghana may do away with the language policy if they observe that they do not meet these criteria, which may lead to the infringement of the child's LHR.

## **2.7 The Teaching of English in Ghana**

From Kindergarten, which is the early years of education up to primary 3, it is a requirement for every Ghanaian child to learn ESL. English is taught using a Ghanaian language, preferably the L1 of a child as MoI as stipulated by Ghana's language of Instruction policy. As reiterated in the English language curriculum for primary schools (Basic 1-3), language is essential for communication and the transmission of knowledge and culture from one generation to another. Learning English as L2 allows learners to appreciate the cultural diversity expressed through the language. Again it affords the Ghanaian learner the opportunity to engage with global development and the international community. In view of these, it has become imperative for learners to acquire this language at an early age however, not without having a strong background in their mother tongue as it will make easy the acquisition of English as a second language as suggested by some theorists and researchers (Ministry of Education, 2019). This is one of the bases of implementing the mother tongue language policy in Ghana.

The Ministry of Education (MoE; see Abbreviations) has developed a language and literacy learning curriculum which is based on the developmental theory and the social constructivism ideas. The curriculum is inclined to these theories because it believes that children progress with learning at their own pace through social interaction. In view of this, children who dwell in favorable social environment learn languages better and faster than those who find themselves in less interactive situations (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The social constructivist theory based on the idea that learning language and literacy rests on “meaning-making” or the ability of a learner to comprehend what is read or heard (Ministry of Education, 2019). Ausubel’s and Bandura’s learning theories are both modelled in ESL teaching in Ghana. In relating Ausubel’s learning theory to the teaching practices in Ghana, it can be noted that learning ESL is mostly from the familiar to the unfamiliar as teaching is done using the learners’ L1 which is considered the first language-based knowledge. Ghana’s official language policy mandates the use of the mother-tongue as the dominant MoI in lower basic education. This is to facilitate the comprehension, interaction and the creation of meaning in the classroom as learners imports the meaning of concepts from their L1 to the English language which helps them retain the new language faster. The L1 translation, helps improve learner engagement in the classroom, which helps the facilitator to deliver lessons in a way which better satisfies learners’ needs. Considering the Bandura’s social learning theory which supports learning through interaction, it means that for interaction to be effective there needs to be an existence of shared meaning between teachers and learners. It is perceived that the mother tongue language of instruction policy in Ghana with its associated bilingualism form of interaction in the language learning class, helps learners and instructors to create meaning as compared to the use of only the TL (English in this case). The teacher’s ability to interpret English for the learners in the Ghanaian language helps engage them in the language class and keep the communication flow going thereby arousing the learners' interest in the language class. This leads to attentiveness, observation and easy retention of ideas, language concepts, and vocabulary and motivates the learners to reproduce what they have learned especially when they are encouraged to do so in English and also the L1 without any restriction or fear of being reprimanded. Here, the language of instruction used is the driving force in the process of constructing meaning. The language of instruction should be understood by all in the teaching and learning of any new language in order to realize the benefit or confirm the Bandura social learning theory if it is to be applied in language learning class or in second language acquisition.

Ghana’s English language curriculum aims to develop four main language skills which include: listening, reading, writing and speaking. The knowledge of grammar has however been “integrated into the listening, speaking and writing aspects of the lessons” (Ministry of Education 2019, p. xx). The teacher needs to ensure that there is a balance in each aspect during the teaching process and most importantly encourage the learners to speak English as much as possible in order to attain fluency in the language.

### 2.7.1 The Ghanaian ESL Teacher

Teachers in the lower basic school are considered ESL teachers. This is because they are responsible for teaching all the subjects in their class including the English language. At that stage, classrooms do not have individual subject teachers at least not until upper primary or the sixth year of basic school. As such class teachers are charged with the task of ensuring that learners attain language and literacy skills at that early stage of education. This means class teachers are required to introduce ESL to their pupils.

***Table 1. The Role of the ESL Teacher as Ascribed by the Ministry of Education (2019, p. vii)***

1. guide and facilitate learning by generating discourse among learners and challenging them to accept and share responsibility for their own learning, based on their unique individual differences;
2. select English Language content, adapt and plan lessons to meet the interests, knowledge, understanding, abilities and experiences of learners;
3. work together as colleagues within and across disciplines and grade levels to develop communities of English Language learners who exhibit good communication skills and positive attitudes towards the learning of English Language.
4. use multiple methods to systematically gather data about learners' understanding and ability in order to guide the teaching and learning of English Language, and also to provide feedback to both learners and parents;
5. design and manage learning environments that provide learners with the time, space and resources needed for learning English Language

According to the National Teachers' Standard of Ghana, the teacher needs to have Professional Values and Attitudes (which entails professional development and community of practice); Professional Knowledge (this entails knowledge of the educational framework and curriculum and knowledge of students) and, Professional Practice (which entails managing the teaching and learning as well as the environment they take place in).

**Table 2. National Teachers' Standard of Ghana ((National Teaching council, 2017, p .13-15)**

***Knowledge of educational frameworks and curriculum***

The Teacher:

- a) Demonstrates familiarity with the education system and key policies guiding it.
- b) Has comprehensive knowledge of the official school curriculum, including learning outcomes.
- c) Has secure content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge for the school and grade they teach in.
- d) At pre-primary and primary the teacher knows the curriculum for the years appropriate to multigrade classes; has good knowledge of how to teach beginning reading and numeracy and speaking, listening, reading and writing, and to use at least one Ghanaian language as a medium of instruction.

***Knowledge of students***

The Teacher:

- e) Understands how children develop and learn in diverse contexts and applies this in his or her teaching.
- f) Takes accounts of and respects learners' cultural, linguistic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds in planning

***Teaching and Learning***

The Teacher:

- a) Employs a variety of instructional strategies that encourages student participation and critical thinking.
- b) Pays attention to all learners, especially girls and students with Special Educational Needs, ensuring their progress.



- c) Employs instructional strategies appropriate for mixed ability, multilingual and multi-age classes.
- d) Sets meaningful tasks that encourages learner collaboration and leads to purposeful learning.
- e) Explains concepts clearly using examples familiar to students.
- f) Produces and uses a variety of teaching and learning resources including ICT, to enhance learning.

In preparing an ESL teacher, training colleges in Ghana have included an English language syllabus in the training content. Anku & Klu (2017) have briefly outlined what the English syllabus in Ghanaian colleges of education looks like. To commence with, there is a three-year post-secondary certificate 'A' in education, after which one can graduate with a three-year diploma certificate during which there is first two years of school work and a final year of teaching practice in the field. Teacher education is done mainly in English language with about nine courses in each semester which lasts for about four months. There are two semesters in a year. Teacher trainees are trained as ESL/EFL (see appendix 2) teachers in the second year (precisely from semester one). Here they take English language courses "with the aim of developing and sharpening students' skills in the teaching of English as a foreign language (UCC, 2005 as cited by Anku & Klu 2017, p. 261). Some of the courses include "curriculum studies, theories of language acquisition and approaches to second language teaching, and the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) (Anku & Klu 2017, p. 261). These are somewhat repeated or delved deeper into in the second semester.

It is apparent that courses on linguistic education and theory are missing in the syllabus outline here. The study of linguistics will help teachers to understand the scientific study of structure and the development of English as a language. This entails aspects of phonetics, phonology, syntax, morphology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, educational linguistics, etc. Notwithstanding, arguments have been made in favor for the exclusion linguistics in language teaching. Klu (2004) have pointed these to be the following: a) there have not been any significant merits of linguistics study towards the eradication or improvement of language teaching problems. Again, linguistics has proved too technical and difficult to study, and that it

could be simplified for teachers who need to teach these languages as practical as possible for the learners to understand (as cited by Anku & Klu 2017, p. 261).

The next section is on methodology which discusses the research process in details. Specifically, how participants were selected, data was collected and managed.

### **3 Methodology**

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in the study. This entails a description of research participants and research context, the method of data collection, and analysis.

#### **3.1 Epistemology and Ontology**

This study has an interpretivism framework or idea. As explained by Schwandt (1994, p. 224) interpretivism is when specific actors, in specific places, make meaning of situations or phenomena through continuous socialization involving language, action, and history. It is also associated with a constructivist paradigm as the participant constructs understanding based on experiences. The ontological underpinning is that there is no one real-life experience, instead, the reality is formed by a group of individuals (Crotty, 1988). Epistemology proposes that to appreciate the real meaning of phenomena or events there is the need to rely on the interpretation of reality formed by people (Crotty, 1988). This study examines the real-life situation of language teachers, and their students, with the aim of knowing how they understand and perceive the use of TL (Target Language) and L1 (native language) as a medium of instruction in teaching the English language.

#### **3.2 Phenomenography**

It is practical to use a qualitative approach to find out the participants' interpretation of their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The study is purposely to investigate the effectiveness of using TL and, or L1 in a language class by analyzing learners' behaviors through classroom observations, coupled with teachers' experiences and perceptions. The research questions explore teachers' perceptions on the use of TL or L1, and the role of Ghana's language policy in teaching the English Language. The questions make use of HOW, so as to obtain a deeper understanding of a real-life language classroom situation. In this study, participants' perceptions and real-life experiences (that is teaching and learning) are examined to find out the preferred medium of instruction in an English Language class in the Ghanaian context. This study makes use of purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis which are essential elements of a qualitative study. Purposive sampling, "also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses (Tongco, 2007, p. 147). This method of data collection is systematic and organized in a way

that the participants are chosen on the discretion of the researcher based on their capacity and willingness “to provide information by virtue of their knowledge or experience” (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard, 2006 as cited by Tongco, 2007, p. 147).

The study uses phenomenography to delve into this study, to try to understand the perceived effectiveness of the use of the English Language as a medium of instruction for the learning of the language, as compared to using the learners’ first language in teaching English and vice versa. The aim is to “... find and systemize forms of thoughts in which people interpret aspects of reality...” (Marton, 1981). Also to understand and fully appreciate the perspectives presented in a phenomenographic study, the researcher must take an active part, to be able to understand the relationship between the subjects of interest and the phenomenon that is the focus of interest. Unlike pure sciences, it is not built on an objective world that is outside of the independence of individuals. Phenomenography studies the relationship between people and the world and then proceeds to draw conclusions, based on how the subjects “conceive of various aspects of their reality (Marton, 1986). In other words, phenomenography does not study the phenomena in themselves, but how people experience these and perceive them after the experience. In view of this, I do not aim to generalize your findings to Ghana but use them to study how the participants interviewed conceive the world or the phenomena under study (L1 and L2, ESL teaching, use of English and Ghanaian languages).

### **3.3 Research Participants**

The participants’ schools were selected in the Ga-North district in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The region has a diverse linguistic makeup but majority are said to be Akan speakers. These six schools were chosen due to proximity so as to make it convenient to reach out to research participants without any difficulty.

Ghanaian English language teachers have been selected and interviewed to investigate their perceptions of the role of Ghana’s language in the teaching of the English language taking into account learners’ behaviours in relation to their classroom practices. Ghanaian English teachers may have different opinions of the language policy in the language class as compared to math or science teachers who may not have had training in language teaching. Again, Ghanaian English teachers share diverse opinions on ESL learning as compared to their fellow Togolese or Nigerian ESL teachers due to differences in the language of instruction policies and cultural

context. In view of these, the choice to focus on the perceptions of Ghanaian teachers only will provide a more valid view of the Ghanaian context.

In total, ten teachers participated in the study. There were six from three public schools (that is two teachers each) and four teachers from two private schools. The study was short of two respondents from one private school because they did not make time for the interview session and had to withdraw from the study at the last minute, due to an impromptu school activity. Although the efforts were made to get them to respond to some questionnaires, they failed to submit them and retrieving them has proved futile.

Ten teachers were available for the interviews and only one out of these requested to speak in Twi as that will make her feel more comfortable. The participants were solely English language teachers from lower basic schools (that is from Kindergarten to primary three). This is because the research targets early childhood ESL learning and also due to the fact that a significant part of Ghana's language of instruction policy emphasizes lower basic school education.

The initial plan was to conduct this research through observation of practical classroom teaching sessions where teachers will teach and observe teaching by their colleagues in the presence of the researcher. However, this plan was not realized since it was inconvenient for participants to move from their schools to observe the teaching sessions. This is because these English language teachers double as class teachers. In view of this, the research was based on teaching experiences and prior observation of the participant in their everyday English language classrooms.

Five introductory questions were asked to find out the background of the teachers. These questions were on years of teaching experience, the kind of schools they currently teach in, whether or not they are trained, how long they have taught English in the basic school, Ghanaian language proficiency, the class they correctly teach and the MoI used in a normal classroom setting. These provided more information as to who the participants were and confirmed that they serve the purpose of the research. six of the respondents have more than four years of teaching experience while three have less than four years of teaching experience. six were lower primary English teachers while four taught in kindergarten. It is significant to note that eight were trained teachers as against two who were not trained but had up to diploma and senior high school certificates. Almost all of the respondents use the bilingual MoI in everyday classroom teaching, with the exception of one who used only English. In all the government schools, bilingual was the internal language policy and in the private schools half used English

only while the other half also used the bilingual as their internal language policy. Although the research was conducted in the Greater Accra region, it is interesting to know that almost all of teachers use the Twi language as the L1 in teaching as that was identified as the most spoken Ghanaian language. The next section discusses in detail the ethical considerations and its followed by the data collection process.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

Some of the ethical considerations are that the researcher has taught in one of the case schools an English Language teacher. In view of this, some teachers knew me personally, and that might have affected their interview responses. Again, I interrupted the ideal mode of teaching in these classrooms as on a normal day, these teachers might have preferred to use the suitable or prescribed language in the classroom. For instance, requiring them to use L1 language (Twi) instead of Target Language (English) to teach their students. The teachers were informed about the study and its purpose and were subsequently given consent forms to fill (see Appendix 3). I hoped that it controlled the above situation. The forms were signed and returned to the researcher before the start of the project.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were used as interview guide and obtaining responses from each participant lasted for about 25-35 minutes. Semi-structured interviews help to specify the areas or topics that a researcher wants to inquire about (Rabionet, 2011). A semi-structured interview aims to focus on an already constructed thematic framework (George, 2022). This helps to give respondents the opportunity to give responses that fits the same theoretical framework which enables for easy thematic analysis which otherwise may be difficult to achieved when a completely unstructured interview method is used. This is because data obtained will most likely be further from the themes and research questions of the study. In using a semi-structured interview, “there are some specific topics I would like to cover, but at the same time I want to hear their stories” (Rabionet, 2011, p. 564).

The interview guide (see Appendix 4) used had two main categories. These were:

- a. Language used in school and language policy
- b. Teacher perception

The first theme, (“Language used in school and language policy”) consists of ten questions aimed to find out the everyday medium of instruction in the schools, also the general knowledge of teacher about Ghana’s language of instruction policy and the challenges associated with the policy per the teachers’ experiences and observation. The second theme, (“Teacher perception”) also were ten questions bordering on teachers’ options and perceptions about teaching English using the L1, bilingual medium or the use of the target language considering learner behaviors in the classroom.

The questions were generally crafted to be mostly open ended to suits the phenomenographic methodology of the research which aims to accentuate diverse opinions and ideas as much as possible. Piloting was done on the 9th of February, 2022. Four respondents did the test of which two were recorded, as the other two answered only 4 questions and were quite busy in the class overseeing some other tasks. The two who answered all questions were one Mathematics teacher and one Junior High School English teacher. All the questions were asked and the respondents believed some were not clear enough for them to answer, hence needed to be rephrased. Together we concluded on some changes.

“*Dominant language*” was not easily understood, hence it was changed to “*most spoken local language*”. The first question on Teacher Perception, about how effective is the use of Twi to teach English was perceived too broad. It has therefore been changed to cover only the advantages and challenges of the use of Twi to teach English and repeated for the use of English to teach as well. Again wherever Twi was mentioned, I had to change that to “*local language*” as the respondents who were not natives of Akan perceived the language was being made superior to other local languages and for them that seemed biased. Also “social handicap” was seen as offensive so I had to delete it from the question “do you perceive it as an asset or social handicap? Finally, I had to remind my respondents about what the language policy of Ghana says as they had forgotten what it meant or what it was all about when I asked my final question concerning Ghana’s language policy.

Data was collected on two separate date. I firs collected the data in the public schools and the next day collected from the private school teachers. Data was recorded and stored in an audio recording device for onward transcription and review. Interviews lasted between 25-35 minute per respondent. In the net section I have described how the data was analyzed.

### **3.6 Method of Analysis**

Audio recording from each respondent is about 25-35 minute in length, and sound quality was fairly audible as a result of the noise in the environment which was the classrooms. Raw data from audio recorded interviews are transcribed to provide the “graphical representation of selected aspects of behavior of individuals...” (Kowal & O’Connell, 2004, p. 243). When transcribed, data from each respondent was equivalent to about five pages. The words spoken by the respondents are written down (Kowal & O’Connell, 2004). It was easier to represent the data using standard orthography which makes use of correct written language. Here pauses, sounds, colloquial language are mostly omitted from the transcription. These were left out because they did not have any impact on the comprehension of the overall data and also it helped to shorten the data content. Again, the data was not in any way refined to lose its actual content or meaning.

For this research, the data was analyzed using the Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis framework. This involves six steps, which are; 1) familiarization 2) coding the data 3) generating initial themes 4) reviewing the themes 5) naming and defining the themes 6) writing the report. The familiarization stage is where the researcher becomes conversant with the data by reading the transcripts, listening or watching the recordings severally in order to fully understand and to help make effective analysis. After this, distinct features are identified and notes are made for them. This process is referred to as coding. This ought to be systematically and detailed as possible to no stone from the data set has been left unturned. Codes can concise summary of data extracts or a description of data contents or may be an interpretation of the data from the researcher (Braun & Clarke 2012, p. 62). The next step is identifying initial patterns or themes in the data. It should be noted that themes are not merely discovered but rather they are created (Braun & Clarke, 2012). These themes are reviewed to ensure that they are relevant and adequate for the research objectives. After the necessary changes to the themes are made, they are then distinctly organized with names and defined in order not to confuse the researcher. At this stage also, the codes are organized into the thematic framework. Finally, the analyzed report is presented.

After transcription, I used the thematic analysis method to examine the data to determine the results. Thematic Analysis (TA) is a “method for systematically identifying, organizing and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (Braun & Clarke 2012, p. 58). This uses the method of coding and structured data analysis which make connections to



theoretical concepts associated with the matter under study (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This study uses predominantly the deductive approach to thematic analysis. Here, “series of concepts, ideas or topics are used to code and interpret the data” (Braun & Clarke 2012, p. 59). I had already sets a frame of themes in my interview guide which helped me to specify which data extracts will fit each theme. The codes and themes which are analyzed are directly linked to specific theories, concepts or ideas that I had already identified. As suggested by Braun & Clarke (2012), “the researcher emphasizes researcher or theory-based meaning” (p. 59). Regardless of this, it is perceived that no thematic analysis is exclusively inductive or deductive in nature. This is because a researcher codes directly from the responses, experiences, and perceptions of the participants (inductive), while relying on theories or models to provide more meaning (deductive) (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Next I will use an extract from the data set to describe how codes were derived and generated into themes.

*yes. As I said because they are always speaking the local language they adapt fast or pick up fast when you use the local language before the English language. Just as I said if you mention the thing in the local language and then you tell them how it is mentioned in English. With that they will be able to learn English. And they will be eager to know what it is in English and it will stick in their minds.*

This teacher was sharing his/her thoughts on whether or not it is beneficial to use a learners’ L1 as MoI. Three distinct codes can be identified as follows:

- a) *“As I said because they are always speaking the local language they adapt fast or pick up fast when you use the local language before the English language”* = prior knowledge in L1 quickens L2 acquisition. This code becomes part of the theme, appreciation of learners’ own language (L1)
- b) *Just as I said if you mention the thing in the local language and then you tell them how it is mentioned in English. With that they will be able to learn English. And they will be eager to know what it is in English* = Translation to L1 helps L2 acquisition. This code becomes part of the theme, learner motivation to acquire English language (L2)
- c) *it will stick in their minds*= Translation in L1 helps easy retention of L2. This code becomes part of the theme, appreciation of learners’ own language (L1)

There were two rounds of coding. In the first round I identified certain labels in each of the responses and grouped similar labels under one category. This helped me to understand the data better. In the second round I double-checked in these labels made sense to me and were fit for each category, and were subsequently deleted if they did not. I then grouped each category in my thematic frame with all the labels present. Finally, similar labels were deleted leaving only one which I represented to stand as a code in each of the themes. Some of the codes in the themes linked to others in other themes. For instance, this code Translation to L1 helps L2 acquisition is part of the theme Learner Motivation and can also be linked to the theme Appreciation of L1. Sub-themes were generated where positive and negative sides of each language use were mentioned, and these fell under the themes Appreciation of L1 and Appreciation of L2 respectively.

Data transcripts from a total of 10 participants were analyzed using thematic analysis as aforementioned. The themes derived were already inherent in the interview questions making this analysis more deductive in approach. In all, four main themes were generated from the analysis. These are:

- 1) appreciation of learners' own language
- 2) appreciation of English as a target language (TL) or L2.
- 3) learner motivation to acquire English
- 4) appreciation of bilingual education (interpretation of Ghana's language policy)

The themes, appreciation of learners own language and appreciation of English as a target language (TL) or L2 had two sub themes each. There are advantages and disadvantages of using the mother tongue as MoI and advantages and disadvantages of using English as MoI respectively.

**Table 2. Themes and Their Corresponding Codes (Color Scheme Depicts the Linkages in the Themes)**

<b>APPRECIATION OF LEARNERS OWN LANGUAGE (L1)</b>	<b>LEARNER MOTIVATION OF ENGLISH</b>	<b>APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH (L2)</b>	<b>APPRECIATION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION (INTERPRETION OF GHANA'S LANGUAGE POICY</b>
<u>SUBTHEME: Merits</u>	Fear of ridicule mitigated by encouraging and correcting	Practice improves acquisition	Easy understanding
Translating to L1 helps easy understanding	Learners engage when L1 is used	Early exposure to L2 helps with acquisition	Easier to explain with L1
Translating to L1 enables with retention of English	Learners engage as long as they understand, regardless of language	Foundational knowledge of L2 is important	Preserves linguistic identity
Learner must be familiar with L1 for effective use as MoI	Learners withdraw when L2 is used as MoI		Bilingual slows pace of acquisition of L2
L1 offers a common language where there is diversity in level of English competence of learners	Bilingual education		Diversity of learners' background languages

L1 serves as knowledge base	<u>SUBTHEME: de-merits</u>	TLMs must be made available for effective teaching
<u>SUBTHEME: de-merits</u>	It takes long to acquire L2	Lessons must be learnt from past effectiveness and inconsistencies
TLMs only available in English	L2 cannot be used solely to teach because of diverse learner background	Easier, since exams and TLMs are in English
L1 slows acquisition of L2	Learners struggle to grasp L2	
L1 use at home impedes acquisition of L2		

As illustrated with table 1 above, this theme has eight codes. This theme describes teachers' perceptions of the use of Ghanaian language as MoI in an English language learning class. The Ghanaian language generally represents the first language (L1) of the learner. It may be a language they are native to and nurtured with or a language they acquired they have acquired from childhood due to their place of inhabitant. These perceptions mostly featured the advantages and disadvantages of using the L1 in an English language class. Five advantages were discovered in the data and three disadvantages were apparent as well. The following codes are classified under merits; a) L1 translation helps understanding (b) L1 translation enables retention of English language (c) familiarization in L1 is essential for use as MoI (d)L1 offers a common language (e) L1 serves as a base knowledge. The codes classified under demerits are; (a) Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs from here on) are not available in L1. (b) L1 slows the acquisition of L2. (c) L1 use at home impedes the acquisition of L2.

The next chapter discusses the findings of the study.

## 4 Results

This discusses the findings of the data. It connects the codes and themes generated to samples or extractions of the data transcripts which helps to understand the teachers' experiences and their perceptions.

### 4.1 Appreciation of Learners' Own Language (L1)

Majority of the teachers are of the view that instruction in the mother tongue helps learners to comprehend what was being taught in the English language class. This is because L1 translation gives understanding to the new language that is being acquired by in the classroom. Once learners are able to understand what is being taught then they are able to interact well with the teacher. One respondent emphasizes that *"...if there is no translation, there is no understanding."* Another also supports this by suggesting that *"yes it is beneficial. To get the understanding of what is being taught we have to use the local language."*

Some teachers also perceived that L1 translation helps in the retention of the target language. For these teachers, learners easily recollect the new language when they could relate to it in the L1, by way of translation. *"...English may not be understood but when you translate, next time they will remember what you taught."* Another teacher also shares a similar opinion by stating that *"Just as I said, if you mention the thing in the local language and then you tell them how it is mentioned in English...and it will stick in their minds."*

Most of the teachers were of the view that in order for them to use the L1 translation, it is essential that learners to be familiar with the chosen Ghanaian language. For instance, if a learner does not understand the Twi language and it is being used as MoI, he/she will not understand anything being taught. This is supported by the claim of one kindergarten teacher that *"if the child is not familiar with the local language it is difficult for them to understand what you are teaching. The child should understand from their background first before they can understand the L2."* Another primary one teacher also perceives *"we believe that if the child is able to understand what you mean in their own language then they can learn further or take it on and learn another language."* Closely linked to the above perceptions is the recognition that L1 serves as a base knowledge in acquiring second language (in this case English). The study reveals that L1 is used as a means to build on already existing linguistic knowledge for

second language learners. This helps the learners to understand the new language faster, and also actively engage with it in the language class.

One kindergarten teacher from a government school opines on the benefit of using L1 that “*the children get the concept. For example, when teaching about cleanliness, they already do that in the house so you build on what they know.*” A fellow also from a private school shares an opinion which aligns with this assertion. “*For instance, if I want to teach them colors like red, they know that in Twi it is called ‘kokoo’, and white is ‘fitaaa’ so when I want to teach them red, I have to build on what they already know. So I will start by asking them what color is this? Some of them will say ‘madam kokooo, kokooo.’ Then I will then say ‘you are not wrong but kokooo is Red in the English language.’*” This perception dominates the responses as it is inherent in the reason why L1 translation is used. Learners already have some preconceived ideas in their native language which serve as a foundation for learning a new language or English in the Ghanaian context, and that is why translation is used in the English language class.

A major concern for the use of L1 is that it slows the acquisition of L2. It is perceived that the use of L1 translation as a base for learning English means that learners will spend more time in acquiring the new language. This the L1 is used more frequently with the aim of helping the learners understand the new language. One private school teacher makes a statement in relation to the challenge of using L1 that “*Yes it has its own challenges. This is because once Twi is used frequently the learners become so used to it and breaking away from it to use English becomes difficult and can make them confused.*” Another teacher also responds by saying that “*...because the Twi is more or mostly spoken they are not able to express themselves well in the English language.*” Closely related to this is also the concern the use of L1 at home impedes the acquisition of the target language. As explained by one government school teacher, “*...they speak the local language in the house so grasping it while at home will be impossible for them...*” In support of this, another private school teacher perceives that acquisition of English is faster when communication at home is also in English. “*Well they can grasp it faster when the parents are also using it to communicate with the children.*” Another also emphasizes that grasping English “*depends on the language they speak when they go home. The kind of environment has an impact here. If the child comes from an environment where both parents communicates with him or her in English, then the child can grasp it faster and will be very fluent. For example: there is a girl in my class who speaks Twi throughout at home with her parents so when she comes to school, she wants to communicate in that. It is not as if she does*

*not understand what is being thought in English but then she is comfortable using the local language to express herself.”*

#### **4.2 Appreciation of English Language (TL/L2)**

The second theme is appreciation of English language (L2). This is also broken down to subthemes, advantages and disadvantages of L2. The study reveals that the merit of English as MoI mainly points at fluency. These patterns were discovered when teachers spoke of how they perceived the use of the target language in second language learning. To start with, most teachers are of the view that practice improves acquisition of a new language. One government school teacher explains *“Okay, the more you repeat, they can grasp it very well, because whenever the teacher uses or speaks English we say something like practice makes man perfect. The more and more they speak they will be able to grasp it very quickly.”* Another teacher also adds more weight to this thought by adding that *“Well it’s a very tough question. How quickly can they grasp English if it is the only language used? I think it should be something that should be done every day of their schooling to make them conversant with it. It should be consistent, once you break away they will forget.”*

This raises the concern of exposure to the target language. In the Ghanaian context the school is often solely burdened with the task of helping young learners to acquire English, which is considered a second language in Ghana due to its official language status. However, another factor which seems to be pushed to the background is the home or outside-classroom interaction. What is the role of home interaction in the acquisition of a second language? Does it offer an opportunity to practice to practice a new language? And how does this impact the rate of attaining fluency in English for the Ghanaian child learner? Most participants of the study shared their opinions which seem to provide some answers to these questions.

The teachers revealed that learners’ early exposure to English aids acquisition, hence the language should be solely used as MoI. One government school teacher says, *“...the English language is not our local language so we are learning. In this regard I think from infancy or kindergarten the child should be exposed to English language because with the Twi, coming from their environment they speak it more often so I think the English should be a starter from KG.”* Again using the English as MoI from the onset of schooling leads faster acquisition of the language. One government school teacher believes that *“Immediately they start schooling and it is used as the medium of instruction they will be able to grasp it quickly. This is*

*because...English is used to teach frequently, as well as in all other school communication and interactions the child will be able to.*” It can then be said that foundational knowledge of the L2 from the home is essential as it also provides early exposure to the language which makes it easier when teachers are to build on it when teaching English in the classroom.

Conversely, the teachers perceived that using L2 in this case only English as MoI can be quite challenging for learners as they may struggle to understand and grasp the L2 which means it will take a longer period of time to acquire the new language. Some teachers express their worries if they are to use only English as MoI as follows: Private Teacher 2: *“...they do not get the clear understanding of what you are teaching. That is the when you are using the English throughout.”* Government Teacher 1: *“I have tried to use English only to teach since I started teaching in the lower primary but I realized that they find it difficult to understand as I said earlier. You teaching with English throughout makes them very difficult. They’ll just be staring at you without getting any understanding so that is a challenge.”*

### **4.3 Learner Motivation to Acquire English**

The next theme generated is learner motivation to acquire English. This theme explores learner engagement, language learning anxiety and learner behavior in the English language classroom when either the L1 or the target language is used as MoI. Most of the teachers who participated in the study generally acknowledged that learners are more willing to participate and show excitement when the L1 is used as MoI as compared to the target language which is English. Learners are perceived to be more engaged in the English language class when the mother tongue was used a means of interaction among themselves and with the teacher. However, they tend to withdraw from the learning process once English was introduced. Most of the participants share their experiences of these events. Government Teacher 2: *“Well compared, they are more engaged when I used Twi than English.... with Twi they are more free with it.”*

Another government school teacher also describes learners to be eager in class when the L1 is used as compared to when English is used, where there is non-participation by the learners. Government Teacher 2: *“Yes, when you are teaching in Twi they are very anxious compared to the English. Example when you ask a question in English and you tell them to speak English, you will see them just sitting and staring at you, not that they do not know but how to come out with the answer. But with Twi when you say you want an answer in Twi, you see that their hands are up ready to provide the answer.”* This view is shared by another private school teacher who



specifically states: *“They are always cheerful and happy when the local language is used...When I use the local language they are enthused that is the word.”* *“...Gone are the days when our teachers were teaching in English throughout, you will not understand anything. You will be sleeping throughout and even wish that the bell has been rang for break time....”*

Teachers observed learners who normally nonchalant in the language class tend to be attentive and show willingness to participate in the class activities when L1 is used as MoI. One of the participants affirms this by stating that *“when you use the Ghanaian language you will find children who do not normally participate when you teach in English showing eagerness to communicate and participate in class...they were attentive and participating as we observed yesterday. With the Ghanaian language I really loved it. But once I started teaching in English some even asked to be excused to use the washroom or even slept off.”* Learners were willing to participate in class when L1 is used since English is unfamiliar and learners lack understanding of the new language. Another teacher explains *“To bring out even those that you are not thinking they will bring out but with the foreign language it seems different for them in terms of understanding...”*

Another interesting trend was that the fear of ridicule was mitigated by encouraging and correcting learners. Most learners who shied away from speaking English were perceived to be afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at by their colleagues. They therefore appeared to be timid. Teachers therefore resort to the use of encouragement, support and assure these learners that they are free to make mistakes which will be corrected. One government school teacher explains that *“they may be shy because their peers will laugh at them but to motivate them I just tell them we are all not perfect, and we are all learning so whatever they say will be accepted and corrected.”* Another shares that *“...what I encourage my children with is that when I am teaching in English I let know that we all do not understand English because it's not our language so they should come out and I will help them by making corrections to their mistakes.”*

Moreover, another opinion which stood out was that understanding or comprehension is a motivation factor in learning a second language like English. Learners are willing to show interest in learning English once they understand what the lesson is about irrespective of the language of instruction being used. One government school teacher perceives that *“...so far as they understand what you teach them they want to learn more...”* Another private school teacher also adds *“...but then once they understand they show willingness to participate*

*irrespective of the language used.*” Closely linked to this is the perception that bilingual education can serve as motivation for learning the target language. It compels the learners to show interest in the new language. One teacher emphasizes that *“Yes, bilingual is valuable and that is what will make them learn the English language.”*

#### **4.4 Appreciation of Bilingual Education**

The final theme generated is appreciation of bilingual education. This refers to how teacher-participants generally interpret Ghana’s language of instruction policy which they consider as bilingual in nature. Their perceptions ranges from advantages, disadvantages, and suggestion on how the language policy can be improved. 90% of the participants agreed the policy must be maintained while 10% were not certain if it was a good policy or not. Ghana’s official language policy which opts for the mother tongue as the dominant MoI is upheld by the respondents mainly because it offers learners the needed understanding in the English language classroom. One government school teacher explains, *“So I think it should be bilingual or more of the local dialect...when you start with the local dialect with the learner from the early childhood they are able to understand.”* Another private school teacher also adds that, *“It should be kept as it is. It helps the children to get the clear understanding of what you are teaching.”* Another emphatically states that, *“...if there is no translation, there is no understanding.”*

The diverse linguistic backgrounds of learners make teachers to choose bilingual education. Quite a number of respondents shared this opinion. Government teacher B shares that *“...for instance when you take a class of about 100 people you will have like 20 whose parents are educated so with the rest of the 80 if you say that you are using only English to teach throughout, it becomes a problem as they will not get to practice speaking at home with their parents who are not able to speak the English language.”* Private teacher A also adds that *“...However, there are different children with different backgrounds in the classroom. Some are from elite backgrounds, whereas others are not. Considering this we cannot just focus on the children who are already communicating in English and speak English throughout to the neglect of children who are not familiar with the language...”*

Furthermore, other respondents are of the opinion that Ghana’s language policy preserves our linguistic identity, and this also helps the learner to maintain interest in learning and engaging with the L1. It is believed that resorting to the use of English will lead learners to disregard the

Ghanaian languages thereby cutting ties with an essential part of their culture which is their mother tongue. One respondent from a government school bemoans *“Why should we throw our language away? English is a borrowed language. And once it dominates then it means we are going back to the colonial era. Even now they do not show interests in learning the Ghanaian language, they undermine it. They have the interest and preference for English and the bilingual mode helps protect our language.”* Another teacher from a private school also shares that *“mmm... using only English has advantages and disadvantages too. For the disadvantage, the child may forget the local language. They may struggle with it even when they go home...In view of this we have to combine a little with the local language so they do not forget that as well.”*

Discourses on Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) all boils down to the fact that it is essential and needs to be considered for the sake of comprehension. All the respondents attested to this in the study. *“I do not know of the LHR but it does matter, because it will help the child understand better. Because we believe that if the child is able to understand what you mean in their own language then they can learn further or take it on and learn another language. We must consider this right of the child.”* – Government teacher D. Another private school teacher also points out, *“No, I haven’t heard of it but it is important. This is because the English language which is new may not be understood by all so as a teacher I have to do translation into the local language to make such children understand what is being taught.”* It is essential to note that half of the respondents are not aware of the LHR although they believed it was essential and needs to be considered when teaching a second or foreign language. Half of the trained teachers had not heard of this right as at the time the study was being conducted.

More so, some were of the view that it is impossible to teach only in English as it is the only way to avoid communication barrier. In the Ghanaian context, the local languages are considered familiar as most children are nurtured in their mother tongue. One government school teacher explains that *“...I don’t think that you will just teach in the local dialect without adding maybe an English language or word to it. That is why it needs to be bilingual...”* Another from a private school also shares that *“Oh no no no, I will not say it is best learned. Example in case I go to a place and I cannot speak the local language, I can only learn it when it is translated for me. In order to help unless we use bilingual. With only English, that will really be difficult.”*

Notwithstanding, some respondents identified that bilingual education slows the pace of L2 acquisition. This is because of the interference of the L1 which makes it difficult for learners to become fluent in the target language. One private school teacher expresses disagreement with the mother tongue policy by stating that *“Well I do not think it will help as it will be difficult for them to pick the English language from basic 4 onwards since they are now used to the local language and bilingual education. Generally, I think we can maintain bilingualism but I am still not really convinced. Well with the policy I do not really have a stand concerning the policy cos I think the 5 years of local language is too much and not that beneficial.”* *“At times...there is the need for me to translate to Twi. Yes, it has its own challenges. This is because once Twi is used frequently the learners become so used to it and breaking away from it to use English becomes difficult and can make them confused.”* Another government school teacher adds *“the challenges that we are facing with the Twi is that because the Twi is more or mostly spoken they are not able to express themselves well in the English.”*

Finally, it was suggested that there needs to be adequate TLMs to make bilingual education effective. It is believed that once TMLs are available it will speed up the learning process and learners will acquire the new language faster as they engage with the language using these materials. *“I think it should be maintained and they should make available more things that will make the learning more engaging for them so that their learning will move faster. Because teaching in the local language sometimes slows the syllabus.”*- Government Teacher C. Another teacher also adds that *“...there should be enough TLMS to demonstrate to them so they know what you are teaching.”* TLMs are mostly offered in English and the language tests are also offered in English. Bilingual education helps the situation to ensure that learners gain a better understanding of what is taught and are prepared to reproduce what has been learned during exams.

## **5 Discussion**

This sections discusses the findings of the study by relating the four themes to the literature review, and how the perceptions of the participants fit into Stephen Krashen's SLA theory (1981), Ausubel's learning theory, Bandura's learning theory as well as other ideas which were mentioned in the literature review. Finally, the trustworthiness, limitations and conclusion of the study will be discussed.

### **5.1 Implication of the Findings**

This study seeks to answer three research questions. The goal of the researcher was to understand participants' views, experiences and perceptions about the most suitable MoI in ESL learning in lower basic schools. This is to realize the main aim of the study which is to investigate the effectiveness of using TL and, or L1 in a language class by analyzing learners' behaviors through classroom observations, coupled with teachers' experiences and perceptions.

#### **5.1.1 Limitation in Early Childhood ESL Acquisition in Ghana**

The finding of the study showed some perceived challenges in teaching ESL. Teachers were of the view that TLMs are only available in English language and not the L1 which makes them inadequate for teaching ESL in the lower primary due to the use of the L1 translation. Also, L1 translation slows the acquisition of L2/TL as it interfered with the English language which sometimes made the learners confused. Conversely, using only English as MoI was perceived as not ideal due to the diverse linguistic background of learners in the classroom as most learners often misunderstood what was being taught. In view of this, the teachers revealed that they fall on bilingual education to mitigate the difficulties in the ESL classroom, and to achieve the main purpose of the language class which is to enable the learners speak fluently in the TL, and use it appropriately.

Ghana's language policy, which suggests the use of the learners' L1 as the dominant MoI in lower basic ESL learning has various downsides. These are highlighted in the results section of the study. These ranged from the tendency of L1 interference, slower acquisition of the Target Language (TL)/L2 and the unavailability of materials. Conversely, using only English as MoI also has its fair share of limitations. Bilingualism, has become the preference for these teachers as perceive that it incite learner participation in the language class since L1 translation is

perceived to be the only way learners of an unfamiliar language will be able to interact with the teacher in the classroom. It provides a common language as revealed in the findings.

For the participants of this study, learners disengage or withdraw from lessons when only English was used as MoI. The teachers perceived learners to be shy, timid, and nervous when English was used, or when called upon to contribute to the lessons by speaking English. This led to non-participation on the part of the learners. According to the teachers, the best way to get learners actively participate in English language lessons is to allow them speak in their native language while guiding and correcting them in English. This is to help them understand and actively engage with the English language.

Factors which inhibits fluency in L2/FL learning which were opined by Latha & Ramesk (2012) were apparent in the findings of the study. The perceived nervousness exhibited by learners when called upon to answer questions in English language was due to the fear of making mistakes or being criticized by their peers was evident in most of the given responses in the study. At times, learners may show unwillingness to contribute to the lesson because they do not understand the lesson. Nagaraj (2008, p.105) is however of the view that learners who actively participate in the learning process can easily attain fluency in the target language (as cited by Latha & Ramesk, 2012, p. 4). This directly has a bearing on learner motivation in the language class. A learner may lack the motivation to interact in a L2/FL class due to the inability to understand instructions and gestures that are used by the facilitator (Latha & Ramesk, 2012).

The study revealed the concern of the mother tongue interference in the learning of English. This can be referred to as “the influence that the learner’s L1 (first language exerts over the L2 (second language) (Ellis 1997, p. 51). Some teachers perceived that they experienced some difficulties in using the L1 translation. This points to the fact that they sometimes could not correctly translate certain concepts in the English language to the native language. The participants of this study shared their concern that, learners become used to the L1 translation method such that it is difficult for them to breakaway and speak English fluently. According to some of the teachers, this situation is worsened when learners do not get to practice speaking English at home but rather speak in their L1. With these, there is a strive between the use of English and the native language of the learner in and outside of the classroom.

Finally, inadequate TLMs may pose as a limitation in ESL learning in Ghana. Teachers made mention of the need to improve the availability of TMLs in both L1/L2 to make learning more effective.

### 5.1.2 Motivation and Anxiety

The findings of this study reveals that the negative anxiety in the language class came about mainly when English was used as the language of instruction and interaction. The fear of being ridiculed discouraged learners from interacting in English. Teachers did their best to vanquish this fear, shyness or ill-feeling by supporting these learners with words of encouragement and assuring them that they are free to err which will be corrected. Again, the use of the L1 translation makes learners feel comfortable and arouses their interest in learning English language as they tend to understand and perform instructions better thereby improving acquisition of the language.

Stephen Krashen (2012) has pointed out that the lower the anxiety (in this case negative anxiety such as nervousness, timidity, panic, shyness, etc) the better the acquisition. When a learner has a negative anxiety, it becomes unfavorable for motivation and makes the learner unwilling to acquire a second language (Crookall & Oxford, 1991 as cited on von Worde, 1998). Krashen suggests that anxiety “inhibits the learner’s ability to process to process incoming language and short-circuits the process of acquisition” (1985a, 1985b, as cited in von Worde, 1998, p. 31).

### 5.1.3 Mother Tongue

The theme, Appreciation of Learners’ Own Language (L1) revealed how teachers perceived the mother tongue MoI. The findings showed that the pros of using the L1 in the English language class outweighed the cons. The advantages discovered were mainly central to the idea that the use of the L1 was purposely to facilitate learners’ understanding of the new language. In ESL learning in Ghana, respondents were mostly of the view that they used the L1 mainly to interact with young learners in order to help them get the understanding of the new language. This is similar to the findings of Awedoba (2001), whose study revealed that learners were less interactive when English was used as MoI. The L1 translation serves as a knowledge base for learning English in Ghana. The approach for learning this language was from known to the unknown or familiar to unfamiliar. L1 provides the learner with fundamental principles of language. However, “this knowledge might interfere with the learning of L2 where learners

may make incorrect guesses on how L2 and its system differ from L1, a phenomenon called interlanguage” (Nor & Ab Rashid, 2018, p.163). A number of the Ghanaian languages have almost similar alphabet structure as the English alphabets which makes it easy for learners to build on that in the development of English sounds and vocabulary. This makes it easier to learn English as a learner can relate to the similar language structure. Conversely, ESL learners “whose first language do not make use of alphabets, hence did not learn their first language in an alphabetical manner will have particular difficulty in learning English (Granschow et al, 1998, Holm & Dodd, 1996; Krug et al, 2002 as cited in Wold, 2006).

Building on what the learner already knows corresponds to Ausubel’s learning theory, which explains that new knowledge should be acquired on the basis of what is already known. Relating this to the context of this study, the use of the L1 translation helps learners to relate to English language concepts which makes the learning more meaningful and enhance retention of new information or vocabulary. Also in view of the fact that most learners show interest when the L1 is used in the class, it is essential to take advantage of this interest and build on that when teaching ESL. This will keep learner-teacher interaction going and maintain their interest and attention for effective language learning.

#### 5.1.4 Interaction and Immersion

It can be deduced from the findings of this study that, interaction with young learners in the English language class is more effective when the L1 is used. It boosts their interest and makes them more enthusiastic towards the learning of the new language. Learners are perceived to be more willing to interact, follow the lesson and answer questions in the class when the L1 is used as compared to when the target language is used. For these teachers, aside arousing the interest of the learner, the desired results are achieved as learners can easily remember what is thought when they can relate with or explore the English language in their own way or from their own knowledge base.

The study revealed that it becomes difficult for the children to speak English fluently which was otherwise possible or effective when the immersion approach to learning was used in the classroom. Teachers were of the view that L1 usage in the class reduces the exposure to the target language. With L1 as MoI, learners’ fluency in English is curtailed as learners are not fully immersed in the new language. Conversely, constant use of English as MoI means adequate exposure which improves fluency. However, evidence from the study shows that



teachers seem to have abandoned the immersion approach with the view that some learners especially those who are not from the elite background may be left out as these may not yet be familiar with the new language, hence the L1 translation is used to ensure that all learners benefit equally from the learning process to uphold the education rights of the child.

Interaction is essential in second or foreign language acquisition as it allows for communication and negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 1999). Here, the choice of the language of instruction makes it possible for mutual intelligibility, and recognition of learners' communicative competence (Berns, 1990, p. 29). In Ghana, it can be surmised that L1 translation offers young learners the opportunity to develop the ability to communicate effectively in the English language class. L1 translation in this case drives a critical part of communicative language teaching as it constitutes the process of acquiring a second language through interaction, negotiation, and collaborative creation of meaning, learning through feedback and correction. Once learners are communicating in the L1, and the teacher is correcting and guiding the interaction process with translation to the L2 and vice versa, they jointly create and share meaning which quickens the acquisition of the new language.

Interaction rests on Bandura's Social Learning theory as learning is an interaction-based phenomenon which involves observation, imitation and modelling of individuals as suggested by the theory. For learning to be effective, interaction with learners should aim at drawing their attention by inciting their interest. Once learners become interested, they try to retain their observed knowledge and reproduce the new information (Nabari, 2012).

## **5.2 Conclusion- Revisiting The Research Questions**

I have tried to answer the set research questions through a critical reflection of the findings. The findings have been obtained from the responses given to the interview questions which were carefully asked with the research question in mind. It was apparent from the findings that the teachers who participated in this study clearly identified the merits and demerits of the L1 MoI and English MoI. Their opinions of teaching ESL were mainly based on their observed learner behavior in the classroom based on the nature of classroom interaction in each case. They took into account several factors such as linguistic composition of their classrooms, learning materials, and their own language and teaching competencies before adopting the most suitable communicative teaching approach which seemed to deliver the most desired teaching and learning outcomes. Generally, the outcome of the study showed that teachers are comfortable

with the language of instruction policy and perceived it to be suitable for the educational context in Ghana. It was apparent that bilingual education is expedient in teaching ESL in considering the its numerous advantages the teachers could identify despite the challenges. Most importantly, teaching and learning was comfortable, acceptable, interesting, engaging and effective for the learners and the teachers.

In reflecting on the findings as a researcher, I can see that relying solely on English or the L1 as MoI in an ESL class may be ineffective due to merits and challenges identified by the teachers in each case. The learning context as well as the learners' and teachers' linguistic backgrounds play vital roles in a teacher's decision to adopt a language as MoI. The findings revealed that the teachers mostly based their choice on what will be acceptable and comfortable for the learners with the aim achieving the best outcomes. Although they were mostly aware of the language policy, they resort to bilingual education and did not necessarily give priority to the L1 or English language but used each as and when they see fit. The ESL teachers perceived that Ghana's language policy has made teaching effective hence needs to be maintained. They also suggested that TLMs should be improved in other to make teaching and, learning more effective. Finally, bilingual education was perceived to be the most effective medium of classroom interaction in the ESL classroom. Although, this slowed L2 learning, it also prevented linguistic imperialism and helped in the preservation of linguistic identity and culture. This was an unexpected outcome of the study.

### **5.3 Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Transferability**

Lincoln & Guba's principles for evaluating trustworthiness in qualitative research have been adopted to assess this part of the study. The credibility of the study can be compared to internal validity in a quantitative study. Credibility is concerned with "representing those multiple realities revealed by informants as adequately as possible" and testing those realities against various groups of people so as to draw out common themes, actions and issues (Kefting, 1991, p. 215 as cited by Johnson & Rasulova, 2017, p. 15). Considering the systematic thematic analysis of this study, I can safely conclude that the study is credible. As a researcher, I have made my own reflections on the study by considering the "behaviour of other subjects of the research" while maintaining some objectivity (Sandelowski 1986, cited by Johnson & Rasulova, 2017, p. 15). Credibility has been achieved considering these factors:

a. The research used the purposeful sampling technique which provided a range of experiences and perspectives. Here, the sample included ESL teachers from kindergarten and lower primary from both public and private basic schools in Ghana to ensure a wider group of ESL teachers have been presented in the data analysis

b. I have written description on the systematic steps in which data was analyzed, codes and the themes were generated and also juxtaposition of the analysis with the precise responses of participants.

c. I have included a discussion section for the findings which compared them the theoretical framework

Finally, the findings of this study can be transferred to other schools within Ghana with similar multilingual contexts where there is the study of ESL. The findings of this study cannot be generalized as data were subjective to the opinions of the participants.

#### **5.4 Limitation and Recommendation**

One of the main challenges of this study was missing data from some of the respondents. The nature of the interview guide contributed to this. Some of the questions combined two in one which made them complex and made some responses to be one-sided or scanty. Again, having that set frame for the interview questions limited the answers provided and made it less likely to derive or explore other opinions from the respondents. Also, there was limited time for respondents to answer interview questions as the study was conducted during school hours. I would say that this also contributed to scanty information. On the whole, the limitation of this phenomenographic approach is that the outcome cannot be generalized or does not represent the true reflection of all Ghanaian ESL teachers as responses or data were subjective to the opinions of the participants.

Furthermore, this research is not a complete case study. It would be interesting to explore other areas such as parents' perceptions, the views of head teachers, and learners' opinions of ESL in Ghana to help adequately evaluate the effectiveness of Ghana's language of instruction policy in relation to the study of English in the Ghanaian context. In view of this, future research can be conducted with an in-depth case study where teachers can observe and evaluate the true outcomes of using the L1 or TL in some ESL classrooms. This will provide multiple perspectives to the phenomenon.

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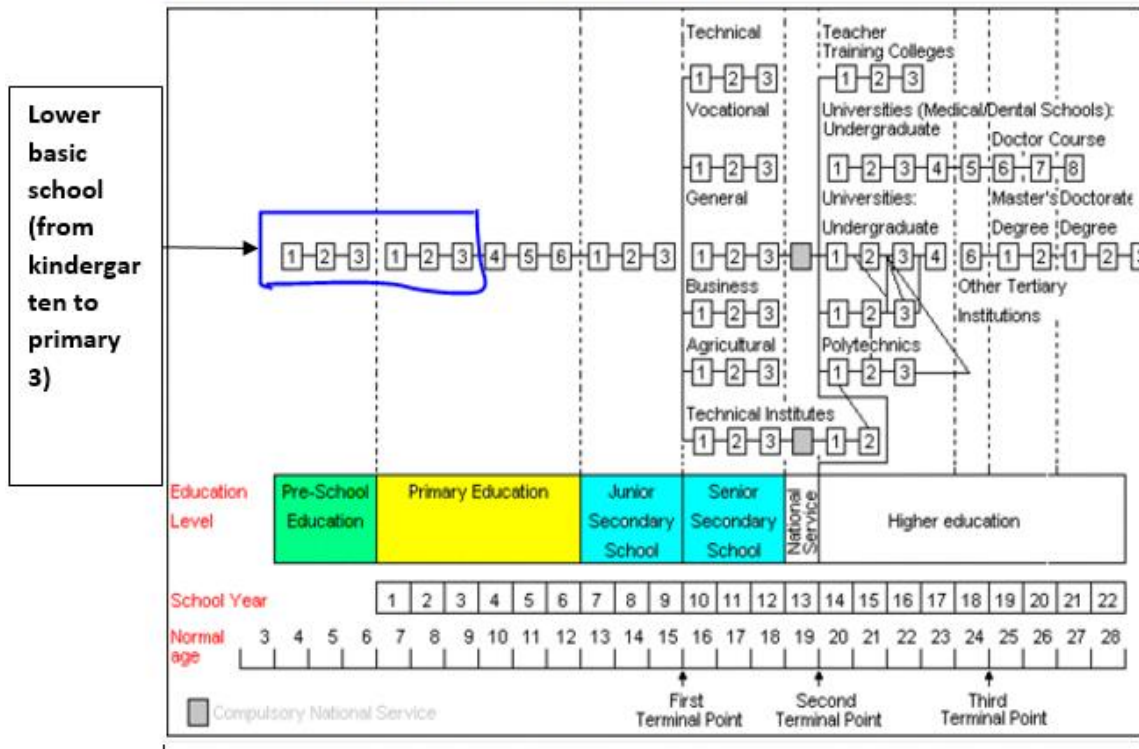


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# Appendix 1

## Structure of Education in Ghana



Retrieved from: <http://ghanalearn.blogspot.com/p/education-structure-of-ghana.html>

## **Appendix 2- Research Consent Form**

### **Informed consent for participating in research**

This informed consent form provides you as a research participant general information about the research, its purpose and your rights as a participant.

#### **General information**

I am a master's student in the Master's Degree in Education, at the Faculty of Education, University of Oulu. As a part of my studies, I am conducting a research in the Mode of instruction in learning English as a second language in Ghanaian Basic Schools. The purpose of my research is to ascertain if the mode of instruction in a foreign or second language class has an impact on learners' performance. I kindly request your consent for collecting information from you for the research purpose by engaging you in classroom observations, and an interview, thereafter.

All information will be used anonymously, respecting your dignity. No personal details that enable identifying you will be included in the analyses and reporting. Systematic care in handling and storing the information will be ensured to avoid any kind of harm to you. After all the information leading to identification of a person has been removed, the information will be destroyed after the thesis has been assessed and approved by the Faculty of Education and published,

#### **Voluntary participation**

Your participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences (e.g. withdrawal does not affect your studies or grading). Observe that information collected before your withdrawal may be used. You have the right to get information about the research and may contact me/us, if you have questions.

#### **Confirming informed consent (USE BOXES THAT ARE RELEVANT, DELETE OTHERS)**

- I am willing to participate in the research.
- I allow the use of (my audio recorded interview and/or my class to be observed) for research purposes.

I allow the information that I have provided to be stored and archived for further research use.

I do not allow the information that I have provided to be stored and archived for further research use.

Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/20\_\_\_

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Signature and name (in capital letters)

**Researcher**

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Signature

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**This thesis research is supervised by:**

Professor, Elina Lehtomäki, Faculty of Education, Research unit: Values, ideologies and social contexts of education (VISE)

University of Oulu

**More information about research ethics and informed consent:**

Finnish Board on Research Integrity : <http://www.tenk.fi/en/ethical-review-in-human-sciences>

Social Sciences Data Archive : <http://www.fsd.uta.fi/aineistohallinta/en/informing-research-participants.htm#partIV-examples-of-informing-research-participants>

<http://www.fsd.uta.fi/aineistohallinta/en/anonymisation-and-identifiers.html>

### Appendix 3 – Interview guide

#### LANGUAGE USED IN SCHOOL AND LANGUAGE POLICY

1. What is the most spoken local language in your class?
2. Can you speak this language?
3. Can you use it when teaching English?
4. What is the internal language policy of your school? Is it a speak English only policy or no vernacular policy? Is it bilingual?
5. Are teachers and learners supposed to obey this policy? Kindly explain your answer.
6. Are you aware of the Language of Instruction Policy as formally stated by the Ministry of Education in Ghana? The policy states: “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, Ghana, 2004, pp. 27-28).
7. I can identify two major conditions that need to be met in order to use L1 as a mode of instruction. These are: (a) availability of teachers and learning materials (b)generally even linguistic makeup of students. Do you consider your class meets this criteria? Kindly explain your answer.
8. Again, as a Language teacher are you aware that The National Syllabus for Ghanaian Languages and Culture states: [t]he instruction in the school system from Kindergarten to Primary 3 is conducted essentially in the local language of the pupil (L1). In the five years of bilingual education (KG-P3), instruction in all subjects should be carried out in the Ghanaian language: Mathematics, Natural Science and all other subjects studied from KG to Primary 3 should be taught using the Ghanaian language, the L1 of the pupil using textbooks already written in English. This means that the teacher is required to translate the text in all subjects into the Ghanaian language of the class for their understanding in the course of instruction. (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2012, p. xi)

Are you able to follow this policy? If yes, how have the challenges been? If No, what makes it impossible for you to do so?

9. There is an argument that not using a child's first language (L1) in teaching them violates their linguistic human rights (LHR). Are you aware of this and do you think this policy matters in second/foreign language learning?

10. Can you specify if you are comfortable with bilingual education or you prefer to use either English or Twi as the medium of instruction in teaching English?

#### TEACHER PERCEPTION

1. Based on your observation and overall teaching experience, what are the advantages and challenges or disadvantages of using a learner's local language to teach English Language at the lower primary level?

2. Based on your observation and overall teaching experience, what are the advantages and challenges or disadvantages of using English to teach English Language at the lower primary level? You can touch on both learner and teacher attitudes (example: how easy were both teacher and learner able to create meaning? learner-teacher engagement etc)

3. In your opinion, did you perceive or notice learners to be more anxious in the Twi instructed class as compared to the English and vice versa?

4. If Yes, was the anxiety lower when the target language(English) was used to teach as compared to the native language mode of instruction class and vice versa. How will you generally compare?

5. What are your thoughts on learner motivation considering each language? Do you think the language of instruction per each class session had an impact on their willingness to engage in the learning process?

6. How quickly do you think children can grasp English Language if it is used as a medium of instruction?

7. In your opinion, is it beneficial to use a local language as a medium of instruction in early childhood English language learning as suggested by some language learning theories and our language policy? If yes, what are the benefits? If no, what are the factors that make it less beneficial?

8. As an ESL teacher, what are your thoughts on another theory which says that a 2nd language (target language in this case English) is best learned when it is used as the medium of teaching or interaction?
9. What are your thoughts or views on bilingual medium of instruction? Do you consider it as an asset? Kindly explain your answer.
10. From this study what are your final thoughts on Ghana's language policy? Is there a need for change or should it be kept as it is? Why do you think so?