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Email: [linguisticsgh@gmail.com](mailto:linguisticsgh@gmail.com). Website: <http://www.laghana.org>

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Mailing address: Linguistics Dept., P.O. Box LG61, Legon, Accra, Ghana.

Email: linguisticsgh@gmail.com.

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## **LIVING WITH NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE STUDY OF L1 IN GHANAIAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS (SHS)**

*Charles Owu-Ewie and Dora F. Edu-Buandoh*

*Some languages ... achieved greatness naturally partly by sheer force of numbers... Some others achieved greatness through sociohistorical forces being in their favour... still others have simply had greatness thrust upon them by decrees (Adegbija 1994)*

### **Abstract**

The study and use of indigenous African languages in education have been viewed unfavourably by many, including African scholars. This has resulted in fewer educated Africans studying their indigenous languages in school. Africans who study their languages in school beyond Junior High School are seen as “academically weak”. Sometimes, a student’s poor performance in English and other subjects is attributed to his/her constant use of the indigenous language (Andoh-Kumi1997). In 1994, the study of Ghanaian languages as a core subject in the Senior High School (SHS) was abolished because it was erroneously conceived as a contributing factor to the abysmal performance of students in English, in particular, and other academic subjects, in general. Since then, the study of a Ghanaian language at the Senior High School has suffered a serious setback culminating in considerably reduced enrolment of students who study Ghanaian languages. Students offered a Ghanaian language as part of their SHS programs accept it reluctantly. It is therefore important to investigate this phenomenon in the SHS. This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews and observations as data collection strategies to investigate the negative attitude of Ghanaians towards the study of L1 in the SHS, and how SHS students studying their L1 are coping with the negative attitude. The study also examines ways that the negative attitude towards the study of L1 in SHS can be changed.

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## **Introduction**

Language attitudes cannot be ignored when talking about language planning and language policy formulation. Language attitudes play a central role in determining levels of success for the learning and acquisition of a second language. The significance or role of attitude in language education, planning and development has been clearly expounded by researchers in Africa and elsewhere in the world (Mparutsa, Thondhlana & Crawhall, 1990). It is therefore crucial for language policy makers and planners to take into consideration people's language attitudes and preferences so that the policies can reflect the needs of the people and not the interest of any particular language (Webb 1996). In places like Ghana, where the attitudes of the people have been taken for granted and ignored, the policy of using the child's L1 as medium of instruction at the lower primary school and English after primary three, which is professed to have enhanced academic performance has not yielded the desired result.

Ghana is a multilingual society. The precise number of indigenous languages that exist within the borders of Ghana is however, a subject which has not been conclusively agreed upon by linguists. The least number proffered is forty, while the largest estimate is eighty-three (Owu-Ewie 2009). In addition to these languages, English is the official language of the country. The geographical location of Ghana, bordered by French-speaking countries, has made French relevant to the Ghanaian school curriculum. One striking feature, however, of the language situation in Ghana is the widespread use of English which is endangering the indigenous languages and has resulted in the narrowing of the domains within which the local languages are used (Guerini 2008). English is used in wider and more prestigious situations than the indigenous languages. The prestigious and functional status that English has acquired has also resulted in the Ghanaian populace developing positive attitudes towards its use and study in schools, while the local languages have been accorded an unfavourable negative attitude.

Language attitude plays an important role in language choice and policy in multilingual societies (Wamalwa 2013). According to Wamalwa, people who reside in a monolingual society have only one attitude towards their language because they have no other languages to compare with theirs. On the contrary, in situations where speakers are bilingual or multilingual, there is the inclination to develop different attitudes to each of the languages used. Attitude, whether positive or negative, depends on the degree of socio-economic value attached to each language (Omoniyi

2014). A multilingual country like Ghana, which runs a bilingual policy in education, is therefore a fertile ground for language attitude manifestation. English is the official language of Ghana and highly preferred in education. English is used to determine the academic progression of a student. That is, progression from the Senior High School to the tertiary level and indeed to all other higher levels of education is determined by a credit pass in English. In education, “English has been assigned a higher prestige and is perceived as the only language worth being literate in or even the sole language worth investing ... to the detriment of local languages and vernaculars” (Guerini 2008: 2). As a result of what pertains in education in terms of language use, the study of Ghanaian language is often not favoured. The common prejudice depicts Ghanaian languages as unfit for use in formal, institutional and official domains. In the educational system in Ghana, teachers, lecturers and even professors teaching indigenous languages are looked down upon by their peers who may classify them as ‘second-rate’ colleagues; an attitude that inevitably affects students (Guerini 2008). This view is so deeply rooted in the mind-set of some parents that they are disappointed when they learn that their children are learning their own languages at school, especially in the Senior High School or the University (Andoh-Kumi 1997). In Nigeria, Bamgbose (1991) has also noted that teachers of indigenous languages are not much sought for, and quite often, students do not consider them as academically proficient.

Students who study a Ghanaian language as part of their program of study tend to be dismissed as under-achievers who turn to easier options to attain good results. This perception comes from the belief that Ghanaian languages are not valued subjects to be studied. One is supposed to learn one’s own language at home and not in school. The misconception among Ghanaians in relation to the study of Ghanaian languages is that they perceive Ghanaian language study as just learning to speak the language. It must be noted that language learning goes beyond speaking. There are so many Ghanaians who can speak their native language but cannot write in it or discuss academic matters in the language. It should be recognised that attitude plays a key role for one to be a successful language learner. It is therefore crucial to investigate how SHS students are living with these negative attitudes towards learning a Ghanaian language and also, to examine ways that these negative attitudes can be reversed. Though there have been few studies on language attitudes in Ghana (Amissah, et. al. 2001; Kwofie 2001; Edu-Buandoh 2010; Sarfo 2013), not much attention has been paid to the study of language attitudes in Senior High School students studying Ghanaian language. This paper explores this terrain to bring the issues to the fore.



## **Literature Review**

This section of the study looks at the study and use of Ghanaian languages in education, language attitudes, and attitudes towards language in education.

### **L1 Study in the Ghanaian Educational System**

Presently, Ghana has a 2-9-3-4 educational structure. There is a 2-year kindergarten (KG 1 and 2) and a basic education system made up of six years primary education and three years Junior High School (JHS) education. This is followed by three years of Senior High School education and four years University (tertiary) education. In the Ghanaian educational system, two languages (English and a Ghanaian language) are used. This implies that Ghana practices bilingual education; an early-exit transitional type of bilingual education. It is the type which begins with a Ghanaian language as medium of instruction and later English language. To ensure that order prevails in the use of language in its schools, Ghana has an explicit language policy that governs the use and study of the two languages involved. The language policy of education in Ghana indicates that indigenous language (L1) should be used as medium of instruction from KG1 to Primary three, while English is studied as a subject from P1 to P3. There is a transition from L1 use as medium of instruction to English from primary four to the tertiary level. The study of a Ghanaian language is compulsory from Primary one to the end of the Junior High School program. The Ghanaian language is an examinable subject and counts towards certification at this level. Ghanaian language study used to be a core subject until 1994, when the Senior Secondary School (now Senior High School) concept was initiated.

Currently, Ghanaian language study is an elective subject for a few students in the SHS. In the Colleges of Education, Ghanaian language study is a core subject in the first year. It then becomes an elective in the second year for only a few students. At the tertiary level, there is a Department of Ghanaian Languages at the University of Education, Winneba, but at the University of Ghana and the University of Cape Coast Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics are combined into a single department. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi has Ghanaian language studies as part of the Modern Languages Department. These universities offer Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Education (BEd), Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) programs in a Ghanaian language. University of Education, Winneba offers the BA in Fante, Nzema, Twi, Ga, Dangme, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani, Gurene, Dagaare, Ewe and recently Sisala. It also offers MPhil and MA programs in Akan (Fante and Twi), Ewe and MA/MPhil in Ghanaian Language Studies (for Ga, Dangme, Nzema, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani, Gurene, and Dagaare).

The University of Cape Coast offers BA, MA and MPhil in Akan (Fante and Twi) as well as in Ewe and Ga. KNUST offers only an undergraduate course in Akan, while University of Ghana offers BA and MPhil in Ga, Akan and Ewe. It could be seen that even the Universities that offer some degree programmes in Ghanaian languages target only few languages, considering that there are over forty Ghanaian languages.

### **Language Attitudes**

The concept 'attitude' has been defined from different perspectives resulting in semantic disagreement and differences about the generality and specificity of the term (McKenzie 2010, cited in Wamalwa 2013, Bartram 2010). According to Bartram (2010), "attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response towards all subjects and situations with which it is related". This is a mentalist perspective on the definition of attitude. From a behaviourist perspective, Fishbein & Ajzen (1975; 2000) see attitude as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object. This definition implies that attitude is learned through a socialization process. Wamalwa (2013) is of the opinion that attitudes are not fixed but are constantly fluctuating and shifting according to the social environment. In another study, Gok and Silay (2010) note that attitude is a mental concept that depicts favourable or unfavourable feeling toward an object. According to the behaviourist and mentalist approaches to studying attitude, individuals are not born with attitudes, but attitudes are learned over the period of socialization; though Bohner and Wanke (2002) say attitudes may be inherited. Fasold (1984) also holds the view that an attitude is individual, but it has origins in collective behaviour.

Attitudes, according to the social psychologists, have three main components: cognitive, affective and conative/behavioural (Edwards 1994; Baker 1992; Smit 1996). The cognitive component of attitude refers to a set of beliefs about an object, affective attitude includes feelings about an object, while conative/behavioural attitude is about the way people act towards an object (Salta & Tzougraki 2004). Attitude can be expressed towards any object where comparison with another is involved. For example, attitude can be expressed towards the use of Ghanaian language as medium of instruction against the use of English as medium of instruction and attitudes towards transitional bilingual education against monolingual education. Thus, attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour (Eagly & Chaiken 1998). From the various definitions cited, it is opportune to identify with (Massey 1986) that:

- a. Attitudes are selectively acquired and integrated through learning and experience;
- b. Attitudes are enduring dispositions indicating response consistency;
- c. Attitudes can be positive or negative in their effects on a social or psychological object

Some studies in language attitude have been strictly concentrated on language itself, but most often, the concept 'language attitudes' includes attitudes towards speakers of a particular language (Fasold 1984). The definition of language attitude is as varied as the concept of attitude itself, but there have been acceptable definitions put forward by scholars of the subject. Language attitude has been defined as the strong "positive or negative emotions experienced by people when they are faced with a choice between languages in a variety of situations or are learning a language" (Dyers 1998). Crystal (1997: 215) defines language attitude as the "feelings people have about their own language or the language of others". These two definitions do not cover other aspects of language attitude. An earlier look by Saville-Troike (1989: 181), from an ethnographic perspective explores language attitude by concentrating on interesting areas like "questions of how culture-specific criteria for 'speaking well' function in the definition of marking social roles, how attitudes towards different languages and varieties of language reflect perceptions of people in the different social categories, and how such perceptions influence interaction within and across the boundaries of a speech community...". Perhaps Richards et. al. (1992) catered for the missing elements in the first two definitions when they defined language attitude as attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. According to them, expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, and social status. The authors further state that language attitude studies could be categorised thus: (a) those that explore general attitudes toward language and language skills (b) those that explore stereotyped impressions toward language, their speakers, and their functions and (c) those that focus on applied concerns (language choice and usage, and language learning). Fasold (1987) acknowledges the deficiency in language attitude studies and recommends that language attitude can be broadened to encompass attitudes towards speakers of a particular language or dialect and attitudes toward language maintenance and planning efforts. Coronel-Molina (2009) citing Cooper and Fishman (1974) proposed two approaches that are essential to defining the concept. The first approach is concerned with defining language attitude in terms of the referent, thus looking at attitudes as towards language, language varieties,

language variants and language behaviour. The second approach is to define language attitudes in terms of their effects or consequences. Language attitudes of this kind are those which influence language behaviour and behaviour towards language. Coronel-Molina (2009: 9) in bringing the pieces together looked at key elements in the various perspectives in defining language attitude and concluded that attitude involves both beliefs and feelings, that it theoretically should influence behaviour, and that there are a range of issues about which people have language attitudes, from opinions about one's own language, to foreign speakers of one's own language, to foreign languages to official policies regarding languages. In this study, the definition by Crystal (1997: 215) that language attitude refers to the "feelings people have about their own language or the language of others" will be used as the working model, for it fits the study since the study sought to find out language attitudes towards the study and use of Ghanaian language in Senior High Schools, drawing the data from Ghanaian students and teachers.

### **Attitudes to Language in Education**

The importance of language attitudes for language-in-education policies has been stressed by several researchers, like Edwards (1994), Heugh (2000), Andoh-Kumi et al. (2001) and Sarfo (2012). There is close relationship between language attitude and education because education is generally deemed to play a crucial role in shaping language attitudes and influencing the outcomes of language maintenance and language shift processes (Baker 1992), especially for countries which have no language policy, but use that of education as the national language policy. Adegbiya (1994) points out that it is in education that the negative attitudes toward indigenous African languages are most glaringly displayed. This is so because most African countries do not have explicit language policies outside education. In most African post-Junior High schools, English is highly favoured. In Ghana, English which is a colonial language used in formal education is perceived as the only language worth being literate in or even the sole language worth investing in, to the detriment of local languages. In a multilingual situation like Ghana, language attitude in education is very essential. Learners' attitudes to language are integral part of learning and that it should be an essential component of second language learning pedagogy (Saracaloglu 2010) because language attitudes have effects on second language and foreign language learning. Siti (2008) found out that students' attitude towards a target language and its speakers correlates with their proficiency level in the language. The implication is that if students have positive attitude towards a language, they perform well in it. The effectiveness of language policies in education is determined more by the attitudes of the people towards language use than the simple demographic facts of

language distribution and use (Ferguson 1996). Though finding data about language attitude is more cumbersome than finding the basic statistics of users of a language or language distribution, it is paramount for researchers to engage in this venture. It is possible that such a venture may raise political issues which threaten the successful implementation of a language survey, but as echoed by Webb (1996), it is very important for language policy makers and planners to consider people's language attitudes and preferences so that their policies can reflect the needs of the people and not the interest of any particular language. Lewis (1981:262) had earlier summed this up by saying that:

no policy will succeed which does not do one of three things: conform to the expressed attitudes of those involved, persuade those who express negative attitudes about the rightness of the policy, or seek to remove the causes of the disagreement.

There have been few studies of language attitude towards language use and study in Ghana, especially in education. These studies have always shown that there is negative attitude towards the use of indigenous language in education as medium of instruction and subject of study. A study conducted by Kwofie (2001) to compare University of Cape Coast students' attitudes towards English, Pidgin and Ghanaian languages found that participants have positive attitudes towards English and unfavourable (negative) attitudes towards Ghanaian languages. The findings of this study make the present study relevant because it adds to finding a solution to the larger puzzle of language attitudes towards studying or using Ghanaian languages in the Ghanaian educational system. In a study about *The Implementation of Ghana's School Language Policy* initiated by Improved Education Quality (IEQ) in collaboration with American Institutes for Research, University of Pittsburgh, Amissah et al. (2001) found that parents and teachers have positive attitudes towards the use of English as medium of instruction in schools and negative attitudes towards the use of Ghanaian language as medium of instruction. The study also found that pupils prefer their teachers to use English to teach so that they will be fluent in English, though they understood courses taught in Ghanaian language better than when these courses were taught in English. In the same study, some language teachers who taught languages other than Ghanaian languages had positive attitudes towards the use of English rather than towards the Ghanaian languages. They were of the opinion that the use of Ghanaian language as medium of instruction impedes progress in English and that the use of Ghanaian language as medium of instruction retards academic excellence. This particular study was conducted in six primary schools and six Teacher Training Colleges (now Colleges of Education). The present

study is important because it provides information useful in language teaching and learning, and makes the study of language attitude in Ghana from the basic level to the tertiary level partially complete, since the study of language attitudes in the SHS has been left out in the discourse. The purpose of this study is to find out people's attitudes towards the study of L1 in the SHS in Ghana, examine how SHS students studying Ghanaian languages cope with negative attitudes towards the study of these languages, and suggest innovative ways of changing the negative attitudes of Ghanaians to the study of Ghanaian language at the SHS level.

### **Methodology**

This study has a qualitative design. The study comprised eleven Senior High Schools purposively selected from both the Central and Western Regions of Ghana. The schools were selected for proximity, and also because they offer a Ghanaian language as elective subject. The eleven (11) SHSs comprised five (5) from the Western Region and six (6) from the Central Region. The schools used in the study are made up of two (2) girls' and nine (9) co-ed schools. Seven of the schools are in the 'B Category' (less endowed schools in terms of educational resources) and four in the 'A category' (well-endowed schools in terms of educational resources). The sample size used in the study consisted of eleven (11) teachers and one hundred and ten (110) students. The teachers and students were also purposively selected because they teach and study Ghanaian language respectively. The teachers comprised seven (7) females and four (4) males while the students were made up of seventy (70) females and forty (40) males because the female students were eager and voluntarily wanted to talk about the issue. Observations and interviews were the main tools used to collect the data. The complete observation type was employed by the researchers to observe the school environment in order to identify what facilitates or impedes Ghanaian language learning in each school. The researchers also observed students in the Ghanaian language classroom to examine their attitude towards Ghanaian language studies as opposed to the study of other academic subjects. In addition to the observations, semi-structured interviews were used for the teachers and students. The students were interviewed in focus groups of 10 students each. The five teachers in the Western Region were interviewed together, the two teachers in the Cape Coast Municipality were interviewed together and the last four (outside the municipality) were also interviewed together. The focus group was used to save time and also to ensure confirmation of issues raised by others. With consent from participants, the interviews were audio recorded. The data analysis strategy used was the inductive analysis and creative synthesis approach. The responses from participants were put into categories based on the similarity of the responses. The data was also coded thematically based

on emerging themes to describe the unfolding phenomenon. The data was presented using the narrative-logic approach in order for the analysis to be done transitioning from one exemplar to another and using excerpts from the data effectively in the presentation.

This research is guided by three key research questions:

1. What are people's negative attitudes towards the study of Ghanaian Language in Senior High Schools in Ghana?
2. How are students studying L1 in the SHS coping with the negative attitudes of people towards the study of L1?
3. How can the negative attitudes of people towards the study of L1 in SHS be changed?

### **Findings and Discussion**

This section of the study answers the main research questions posed above.

*What are people's negative attitudes towards the study of Ghanaian Language in Senior High Schools in Ghana?*

This research question sought to find out from respondents the negative attitudes of non-teachers of Ghanaian language, non-Ghanaian language students, school administrators and parents towards the study of Ghanaian language in the SHS. Responses from participants generally indicated that there is negative attitude towards the study of Ghanaian language in the SHS. The following statements from participants (Ghanaian language teachers and students) interviewed depicted the negative things classmates, non-Ghanaian language teachers and parents say and do towards the study of Ghanaian language at the SHS:

*sometimes some teachers who do not teach Fante say that when we study Fante we will not get job to do and that when we study Fante it means you do not know and understand English. (2<sup>nd</sup> Year Student)*

A third year student also affirmed this when he said

*sometimes some teachers say that learning Fante is not beneficial because when we travel to another country and they do not speak Fante it will be difficult to communicate with them. They will always say if we want to talk about subject, you are talking about Fante.*

The last statement indicates that some non-Ghanaian language teachers do not regard Ghanaian language (Fante) as an academic subject which is likely to develop

students' cognitive skills. They see it as not being academically demanding or challenging.

The study also found that the actions and behaviour of non-Ghanaian language teachers discourage students from the study of Ghanaian language, as expressed in the statement by a second year student:

*sometimes when they (referring to non-Ghanaian language teachers) are teaching us Science or Mathematics and we say it is time for Fante, they will say what is Fante. They do not allow us to go to the Fante class on time but when we attend Science or Mathematics classes late because we were in Fante class, sometimes they punish us or talk harshly to us.*

This was confirmed during the observation. It was observed during the data collection process that students ended Fante classes a bit earlier; sometimes about five minutes to time to attend other classes but came to Fante classes about five to ten minutes late. For the time the researcher was in the schools for observation, this phenomenon occurred. Ironically, students attended English and other subjects' classes on time. Sometimes, Fante students were not given access to some classrooms even when such classrooms were empty, as expressed in the response of a third year student of School 6:

*When we are in other classrooms some teachers who do not teach Fante will come and sack us from the classroom. There was one time we went to have class in a Science classroom, and when we were waiting for our teacher a Science teacher came and sacked us when there was no Science class going on.*

A Fante teacher interviewed confirmed this when she said,

*What the students said is true. There was a time we did not have a classroom because of overcrowding so I had a meeting with the Assistant Headmaster (Academic) and was agreed that we can use a class assigned to Science but not used very often but anytime we went there for classes we were sacked and this did not stop even when the Assistant Headmaster intervened. Eventually, we had to abandon the class for a small one behind the Assembly Hall.*

Another Fante teacher indicated,

*We do not have a permanent classroom so when it's time for Fante, we go round looking for an empty classroom which sometimes takes most of our time. Finally, we have to use a summer hut which has now become our classroom.*



The negative attitude ascribed to the study and use of Ghanaian language has made administrators of our educational institutions to pay little or no attention to it in terms of providing the necessary logistic and human support. In addition, students are sometimes punished for speaking Fante in class. This statement from the data attests to this:

*if in English classes you speak Fante, you are punished but the teachers sometimes spoke Fante on the school compound and even in class.*

Mwinsheikhe (2009) confirms this in a study in Tanzanian Secondary School about the dilemma of using English/Kiswahili as medium of instruction, which found that teachers used punishment as a coping strategy to maximize the use of English by students.

It was also found that comments and actions from parents were negative towards the study of Ghanaian language. The data showed that some parents detest their children studying Fante because they think it is a language they already know and use in their daily communication. As a result, they provide materials for other subjects and do otherwise for Fante. The following statements from the data confirm this:

- i. Our parents think we do not know anything that is why we are studying Fante.*
- ii. Sometimes our parents are reluctant to buy books and other materials relating to the study of Fante but they do so for subjects like English, Science and Mathematics.*
- iii. My mother tells me that Fante is my own language so why should I study it in school and moreover when I study I will not get job after school.*

These statements about parents' negative attitudes towards their children studying L1 in school agree with earlier findings by Andoh-Kumi (1997) that parents are disappointed when they learn that their children are learning their L1 at school.

It was also noted from the study that school administrators portrayed negative attitude towards Ghanaian language study in Senior High School. There were signs 'planted' on school compounds which prohibited the speaking of Ghanaian language. A third year student said:

*We are not allowed to speak Fante on the compound. We speak Fante only in the Fante classes because Fante is a "local" language but in our dormitories we speak our local languages and we feel fine when we do that.*

The researcher observed the following signs on school compounds which indicate that students are not permitted to speak Fante: "SPEAK ENGLISH ONLY", "SPEAK ENGLISH", "SPEAKING GHANAIAN LANGUAGE IS PROHIBITED", and "DO

NOT SPEAK VERNACULAR”. The irony is that teachers spoke vernacular on campus. Most students interviewed indicated that they were sometimes punished for speaking Ghanaian language. We observed a student kneeling in front of the staff common room because he had spoken Fante. This finding is corroborated by earlier work by Prah (2009) narrating the experience of a colleague, Adams Bodom (a Ghanaian linguist based in Hong Kong University) for how he was punished several times for speaking Dagaare, his native language, at school.

The study also found that other students say things which are discouraging and soul dampening to those who study Ghanaian language. A second year student said,

*Some of our classmates say that when we learn Fante we will not get a good job to do so we should learn English, Science and Mathematics or Business.*

Another interviewee indicated,

*Because we study Fante, some of our classmates and some teachers say we do not know anything and therefore do not respect us. They say we are roaming in the school for nothing and that we did not come to study anything and sometimes say we should go home and sleep. Sometimes they may say this jokingly but it affects our morale of studying Fante.*

This finding corroborates earlier findings by Guerini (2008) and Bamgbose (1991) that teachers, lecturers and students looked down upon and classified students who study their L1 as academically weak.

The data showed that Ghanaian language teachers were described as not being intelligent and therefore referred to as ‘local teachers’ because they teach the language of the locality and cannot teach in other areas of the country. They were also referred to as ‘colo’ (a derogatory term used to describe old fashioned people). It was also noted from the responses that teachers who teach Ghanaian languages were perceived as people who cannot teach other subjects apart from Ghanaian language and that they know only the culture of their people and therefore, they are limited in knowledge. The data also revealed that both Ghanaian language teachers and students were seen as people who do not to speak good English. The following statements attest to this:

- i. *Our teachers are referred to as ‘colo’ which means they teach old things about our people and also dress like old people unlike the science and mathematics teachers who are young.*
- ii. *People think our teachers cannot teach subjects like English so they cannot speak English properly. These have made two of our teachers to stop teaching Ghanaian language and are now teaching English.*

iii. *They think that once we teach Fante, we cannot teach other subjects like English and Social Studies; as a result they say we cannot speak English properly.*

The last but one statement above agrees with Bamgbose's (1991) assertion that teachers of African languages often try to redeem their 'image' by making sure that they are able to teach some other subjects as well.

Again, as a result of the negative attitudes expressed towards the study of Ghanaian languages in the SHS, many acts are consciously or unconsciously perpetrated in the school which discourage students from being enthusiastic or proud of studying a Ghanaian language. Besides Ghanaian language students not being provided with good classrooms, they are also not provided with Ghanaian language textbooks in the school library like the other subjects. A first year Ghanaian language student interviewee said,

*When you go to the library you find a lot of books in science, mathematics and English but there are no Fante textbooks and in our classroom there are no fans like in other classrooms.*

The data also indicated that discussions on students' performance concentrated mostly on Science, Mathematics and English to the detriment of Fante and other subjects. A teacher from School 8 confirmed this when he said,

*Sometimes, I become very sad because at Parent Teacher Association and staff meetings they think about how to improve performances in Science, Mathematics, and English but not in Ghanaian language.*

The Ghanaian language units of the Department of Languages in most of the schools used in the study are poorly resourced. A Ghanaian language teacher from School 6 interviewed indicated, *there are many teachers in other subject areas but few in Fante*. Besides, most students involved in the study were of the opinion that the authorities of their schools sometimes discriminate against them. The discrimination according to the data spans from provision of classrooms, provision of vehicles for excursion to even in school elections. For example, a second year student from School 5 indicated,

*The authorities provide vehicles for excursion for other subject areas like Mathematics, Social Studies, Science and English but when it is the turn of Fante students they will say the school bus is busy or engaged.*

Another second year student from School 5 added,

*People will not vote for you for any school position because you are learning Fante [Ghanaian language].*

He added,

*Most teachers insult us for studying Fante; English teachers, most especially insult us that it is because we study Fante that we perform poorly in English.*

In the study, it was also found that students studying Ghanaian language were perceived by their colleagues as people who cannot read big books, that is why they opted to study Fante. A third year student from School 2 remarked,

*Our friends tell us that it is because we cannot read big books that is why we study Fante. Sometimes, our parents very often say that it is because we cannot learn other subjects and pass that is why we are learning Fante.*

Besides, some parents are disappointed when they hear that their children are studying Fante. A second year student said,

*My mother tells me that Fante is my own language so why should I study it in school and moreover when I study I will not get job after school. Sometime our parents very often say that it is because we cannot learn other subjects and pass that is why we are learning Fante; that we are afraid of studying subjects like mathematics, science and literature.*

People see Ghanaian languages to be “uncivilized” and “backward” and therefore treat them with disrespect. People accuse students studying Ghanaian languages as being “uncivilized”.

One other interesting finding from the study was that most Ghanaian language teachers do not want to pursue a graduate program in Ghanaian language. They rather preferred pursuing programs in Teaching English as a Second Language and other Education related graduate programs. When asked why they would not want to pursue post-graduate programs in the language, they indicated that they are tired of the stigma attached to the teaching of Ghanaian language. In the same way, majority of the Ghanaian language students used in the study indicated that they do not want to pursue the study of Ghanaian language in the university or teach Ghanaian language. The main reason attributed to this is that Ghanaian language teachers and students in the university are not respected. One issue that cropped up in the study was that the negative attitude towards the study of Ghanaian language in schools has affected enrolment of students offering Ghanaian languages as part of their program in the SHS. Out of the total of 18,577 students in the schools used in the study, only 2,158

(11.6%) study a Ghanaian language as part of their program. This is made up of 841 (4.5%) boys and 1317 (7.1%) girls. More female students offer Ghanaian languages as part of their program than males. There are 476 (2.6%) females more than males. It was further found that more students in Category B schools offer Ghanaian languages than in Category A schools. It was discovered from the study that five 'Category A' (three males only and two females only) in the Central Region do not offer Ghanaian language as part of their academic programs. Though these schools were not part of the study, the researcher thinks it is an interesting phenomenon to talk about. These "Category A" schools are producing students (future leaders) to detest their indigenous languages and culture. They rather offer French as part of their academic program. One of such schools even offers Latin. Table 1 illustrates the enrolment situation in SHSs used in the study.

*Research question 2: How are students studying L1 in the SHS coping with the negative attitudes of people towards the study of L1?*

This section sought to find out how SHS students studying Ghanaian language are coping with the negative attitude of people towards them. It was realized from the study that the Ghanaian language students have devised strategies to enable them to cope with the negative sentiments expressed by people. A third year Fante student has this to say as a way of encouraging his friends:

*When they say that we are studying Fante because we are not intelligent we should not struggle with them and be angry but we should have patience and explain to them to understand why we are studying Fante.*

The data also showed that some students cope with the negative attitudes towards the study of Ghanaian language by indicating that they opted out of their intrinsic motivation to study Fante. This was succinctly expressed by a second year student. He said,

*I am encouraged because I decided to do Fante and so I am determined to study and pass and even if no one encourages me, I encourage myself and this is what I most of the time tell my friends who are studying Fante.*

He continued in Fante *se obiara annhye wo dzen a, woara hye woho dzen* (literally meaning "if nobody encourages you, you should encourage yourself") so we should never give up.

Table 1: *Ghanaian language enrolment in selected SHS*

SCHOOL	NATURE OF SCHOOL	CATEGORY	TOTAL SCH. ENROLMENT	GH. LANG STUDENTS		TOTAL	PERCENTAGE GH. LANG LEARNERS	NO OF GH. LANGUAGE TEACHERS
				BOYS	GIRLS			
1	Mixed	B	1485	310	272	582	39.2	3
2	Mixed	B	1735	45	73	118	6.8	1
3	Mixed	B	1720	109	193	302	17.6	3
4	Girls	A	1995	0	54	54	2.7	2
5	Mixed	A	2210	13	62	75	3.4	2
6	Mixed	A	2058	68	98	166	8.1	2
7	Mixed	B	1248	33	73	106	8.4	2
8	Girls	B	1321	0	135	135	10.2	2
9	mixed	B	1254	75	102	177	14.1	2
10	Mixed	B	1201	90	80	170	14.1	1
11.	Mixed	A	2350	98	175	273	11.6	3
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>18577</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>1317</b>	<b>2158</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>22</b>

Others cope with the situation by studying hard to prove to people that Ghanaian language students are as intelligent as students of other subjects. A second year student said,

*I have decided to study hard and pass my final examination to prove to people that if you study Fante, it does not mean you are stupid.*

Another second year student indicated that she is coping with the situation because her performance in Core Mathematics and Science is better than those studying Mathematics and Science as elective subjects. Some of the respondents indicated in the interview that they cope with the situation by taking encouragement from their teachers, parents and other people who have made it to the top by studying Fante (Ghanaian language). The following statements from student respondents attest to this:

A first year Fante student said,

*Sometimes we take encouragement from our teachers and when we hear that people like you (referring to the researchers) studied Fante we become happy and this makes us forget the negative things people say about studying Fante.*

A third year Fante student pointed out in the interview that,

*Sometimes we are encouraged by Ghanaian language teachers who come on teaching practice. We are also encouraged by what we hear on radio stations. Lastly we are encouraged when we hear that some professors did Fante or other Ghanaian languages in school.*

A second year student who wanted to major in science but was offered General Arts with Ghanaian language option had this to say during the interview:

*I cope with the situation by taking encouragement from my mother who studied Ghanaian language –Fante at the university and became the best teacher in her district.*

*Research Question 3: How can the negative attitudes of people towards the study of L1 in SHS be changed?*

Negative attitude has been a major problem in indigenous language use and study in education in multilingual societies, especially in Ghana (Amissah et al. 2001; Owu-Ewie 2007, 2013; Prah 2009). The negative attitude toward Ghanaian language study and use in school should be a matter of concern to the Ghanaian populace or else the nation will produce graduates who cannot read or write their mother tongue. The

respondents gave responses which encompass what teachers, parents, government, school administrators, students and the general populace can do to change the negative attitudes towards Ghanaian language study. They were of the opinion that these people have major roles to play in this endeavour. Their roles include educating the populace on the importance of studying the Ghanaian languages, provision of Ghanaian language materials, using Ghanaian languages at home and making Ghanaian language a core subject in the SHS. Teachers and students interviewed were of the opinion that the government of Ghana should launch an extensive campaign to educate people on the benefits of studying Ghanaian languages to salvage the sinking image of Ghanaian language study and use in our schools and the nation as a whole. They also suggested that a body should be set up to oversee the use of Ghanaian language in education. A teacher indicated,

*Because of the negative attitudes people have towards the study of Ghanaian language in our schools, government should make it as its top priority to educate people on the need to appreciate our language and culture.*

In the interview, a first year student noted that.

*government should make arrangements and select people who understand the benefit of studying Ghanaian language/Fante to educate people on television and on radio and any public gatherings on the importance of studying Ghanaian language in school.*

Another student added that *people should go to schools and talk to teachers and students on the importance of studying Fante*. He added *everybody who wants to work in government business should make sure he or she has a pass in Ghanaian language at the SHS*.

Some teachers were also of the view that the negative attitude towards the study of Ghanaian language in the SHS can be salvaged when Ghanaian language is made a core subject in the SHS and the Colleges of Education. Students studying General Arts with Ghanaian language option believe that they have a role to play to change the negative attitudes people have towards the study of Ghanaian language in general and its study in the SHS in particular. A student has this advice for his colleagues;

*We should let students who are not studying Fante to know that there is an advantage in learning Fante because the Fante student can write and translate something from Fante to English and from English to Fante but the English and science or mathematics student cannot do that.*

Another student added,



*We those studying Ghanaian language should show positive attitude towards the language we study so that others can copy from us. We should make others have positive attitude towards the study of Ghanaian language.*

The study also identified that SHS authorities can play a major role to change the negative attitude towards the study of Ghanaian language by treating the subject like any other subject on the school's curriculum. Students and teachers interviewed were of the opinion that school authorities should avoid subject discrimination and provide materials and resources equally for all subjects. The idea that some subjects are more important than others and are therefore given more attention should give way to equal treatment of all subjects. The participants added that negative attitudes towards the study of Ghanaian language in the SHS can be improved when textbooks in the Ghanaian language are provided in the school library as is done in the case of science, mathematics, English and social studies. According to the students interviewed, school authorities should help fight against the perpetration of negative acts geared towards the study of Ghanaian language and stop any action which portrays Ghanaian language as an unwelcome subject in Senior High Schools in the country.

### **Conclusion**

The study sought to find out the negative attitudes towards the study of Ghanaian language in the Senior High School (SHS). The study purposively selected eleven (11) SHS, eleven (11) Ghanaian language teachers and 110 students. The main data collection strategies used were interview and observation. The study found that parents, school authorities, other language teachers and students, and the general populace have negative attitudes towards Ghanaian language study in the SHS. The negative attitudes are exhibited in what they say and in their actions and behaviours. The negative attitudes portrayed by these people have had negative influence on enrolment in the study of Ghanaian languages and also affected the morale of both Ghanaian language teachers and students. The study also found that students cope with the negative attitudes towards them through self-motivation, encouragement from their teachers, parents and Ghanaian language interns from the universities, and professors of Ghanaian language. It was also identified in the study that the negative attitudes towards the study of Ghanaian languages in the SHS can be changed through concerted efforts all teachers and students, parents, school administrators, the government and the general populace. Such concerted efforts, according to the study includes educating people on the benefits of studying Ghanaian language, provision of materials, and making the study of Ghanaian language a core subject in the SHS. Lastly, it was suggested that school authorities should desist from any act that prohibits the speaking of Ghanaian language on school premises.

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## **Appendix**

### **Interview Guide**

#### **a. Pupils' Interview Guide**

1. Have you wanted to study L1 in SHS?
2. If not, how did you feel when you were asked to study L1?
3. What is the attitude of people towards the study of Ghanaian language in the SHS?
4. What negative things do people say about you studying L1 at SHS? (Negative attitudes of parents, teachers, colleagues etc)
5. How do you feel studying L1?
6. What is your perception of teachers who teach Ghanaian language?
7. Will you want to pursue the study of Ghanaian Language in the university? Give reasons for your response)
8. Will you want to teach Ghanaian Language? (Give reasons for your response)
9. What things in the school discourage you from being enthusiastic/proud about studying L1
10. If you are given an option will you change your program because of the L1 component? If yes, why?
11. What can be done to change the negative attitudes towards L1 study?
12. What are you doing to cope with the negative attitudes expressed about you studying L1 at the SHS?

#### **b. Teachers' Interview Guide**

1. What is your major in college?
2. Teaching other subjects (Do you teach other subjects apart from Ghanaian language?)
3. Do you prefer to teach other subjects? If yes, why?
4. Motivation for teaching Ghanaian language (Do you have motivation for teaching indigenous language?)
5. Do you have motivation from colleagues who teach other subjects?

6. Motivation to study Ghanaian language from students/parents/school authorities, colleagues
7. Attitude from students – enthusiasm, acquisition of language materials, punctuality to class etc.
8. Attitude of non-Ghanaian language teacher (What do non-indigenous language teachers say about the teaching of the language?)
9. Further studies in Ghanaian language (Would you want to pursue your graduate course in Ghanaian Language? If yes, why? If no, why?)
10. Change of attitude (How can we change the negative attitude towards the study of Ghanaian language?)

## LINGUISTIC REALITIES IN KENYA: A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Amitabh Vikram Dwivedi

### Abstract

The present paper investigates the linguistic realities of Kenya. In this multilingual country every language is not equal in status. Broadly, there are three language groups in Kenya, namely *Bantu*, *Nilotic* and *Cushitic*, and each group includes more than five languages which makes Kenya as a multilingual country with about forty-two languages. Kiswahili, an indigenous language, is a national language of Kenya, and it is mainly used in schools and universities along with English as a medium of instruction. Under linguistic hegemony minor and lesser known languages have often been neglected inside and outside the country. However, they have been serving as a marker of identity amongst the ethnic community in the country. The linguistic diversity in Kenya is a boon for a field linguist but misinformed politicians and education policy makers are deliberately forgetting this language heritage. This paper will not only discuss the challenges that these languages are facing but also give suggestions to revive the linguistic culture in the country.

*Keywords:* linguistic realities; language groups; linguistic diversity; language heritage.

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### Introduction

The paper examines the languages and language realities of Kenya from colonialism to date. Language realities have been observed in this study from a temporal lens of past, present and future with a focus on indigenous languages that have now become less important politically, and consequently are reduced to the status of either minority or endangered languages, such as Terik, El Molo, Ogiek, Omotik, Bong'om, Sogoo, Suba and Yaaku. Some of them have become extinct due to linguistic favouritism of the dominant languages as well as socio-economic reasons.

Broadly, there are three language groups in Kenya, namely *Bantu* which includes Kiswahili, Gikuyu, EkeGusii, Luhya and Kamba; examples of *Nilotic* languages are Kalenjin, Luo, Turkana and Maasai, and *Cushitic* includes Rendile, Somali Borana

and Gabra. Each group includes more than five dialects, which makes Kenya a multilingual country with nearly forty-two languages.

Kiswahili, an indigenous language, is an endo-glossic national language of Kenya. It is mainly used for government administration and in schools and universities along with English as a medium of instruction. English, an exo-glossic language, is largely used in government and diplomacy. Under linguistic hegemony minor and lesser known languages have been often neglected inside and outside the country, however, they have been serving as markers of identity amongst the ethnic communities in the country.

The linguistic diversity in Kenya is a boon for a field linguist but misinformed politicians and education policy makers are deliberately forgetting this language heritage. This paper will not only discuss the challenges that these languages are facing but also provide suggestions to revive the linguistic culture in the country.

### **Historical Background and Discussion**

The Berlin-Congo Conference of 1884-1885 divided the African continent and birthed the geography of Kenya and other African nations. In 1920, Kenya became a colony, controlled by the then British East Africa. The new rulers employed four C's (Commerce, Conquest, Christianity and Civilization (Bos, 2002)), the English language and education policies to govern the newly established protectorate. Since then the education and language policy has been a dilemma for the ruling government. This dilemma has been largely reflected and supported by the fact that any administrator (British or Kenyan) could not stick to a uniform language policy which would rightly justify the cause for the language selection in the education system. The missionaries wanted to spread Christianity in the region (Mazrui & Mazrui 1999), and the colonizers were interested in low grade assistants and helpers who could understand and follow their commands. Hence, the European colonization and evangelism were in unison initially for English language as a medium of communication rather than any other indigenous languages for Kenya. The colonial government promoted English language which later on influenced the post-colonial language policies, and linguistic attitudes of the people from the elite backgrounds.

The earliest missionaries-cum-educationalists, e.g. Rev. Krapf, Bishop Steere, and Father Sacleux in United Missionary Conference in 1909 recommended biased bilingual education policies in the nation where English was adopted from intermediate to advance level, and the mother tongues and Kiswahili for the first



three classes and two of middle classes in the primary level respectively (Gorman 1974).

The colonial administration was reluctant to teach English to the colonized population at an early stage. Mazrui & Mazrui (1996) suggested that the colonizers never wanted the native people of Kenya to achieve proficiency and competency in English as they thought that “social distance between master and subject had to be maintained partly through linguistic distance” (Mazrui 1996: 272). It is well supported by the Critical Period Hypothesis (Jedynak 2009) that the ability to acquire language is biologically linked to age, i.e. if the speakers do not acquire English at an early age they will not be able to achieve native-like proficiency. The biased thinking of the early policy makers is also reflected in Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924, in its recommendation to drop Kiswahili in upper primary level and to make the people linguistically challenged and dependent upon a non-native tongue.

The post-World War II period again witnessed a change in the education policy of the colonizers. This time, they wanted to create a few English-speaking elites to support their hegemony. Following the reports of Beecher (1949), Binn (1952) and the Drogheda Commission (1952), the three languages formula was dropped, and consequently Kiswahili was dropped too from the curriculum; and mother tongue and English were introduced in the lower primary level in 1953-55. Chimera (1998) and Mazrui & Mazrui (1998) have pointed out that Kiswahili was dropped out from the education system because it was mobilizing people in the freedom struggle. Further, Prator-Hutasoit Commission supported only English in the country at all levels. These dividing language tendencies introduced a clear cleft between the language of the elite (using dominant English language) and the masses (using minor and indigenous native languages). The main motive of the British educationalists was to curb Kenyan nationalism. This rift initiated a serious contestation and mediation on the question of selection of a lingua franca of the nation. Within a year after independence in 1964, the colonial based structures were adopted by the indigenous educationalists in their language policies, and Kenya Education Commission took initiatives to establish a three language formula in school education. Since Kiswahili was able to serve as many of its speakers as possible, and no single ethnic group claimed its ownership, Kiswahili was included in the curriculum for the purpose of regional and national unity, and the Ominde Commission recommended English from the initial classes to the advance level. In 1981, the Mackay Commission made Kiswahili a compulsory subject at both primary and secondary level, and English became the medium of instruction. It also suggested the use of mother tongue at lower levels.

Many writers, for example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a renowned scholar from Kenya, adopted linguistic techniques, such as language switching, linguistic shifting, code-switching, code-mixing, using argots and indigenous language alike to show their support. Thiong'o also advocated the teaching of African literatures by using African languages so that children and youth would know their historical past. Though the writers like Henry Kuria, Gerishon Ngugi, etc. produced creative writings in the native languages, yet the standardization of Kiswahili proved to be a block to the growth of indigenous languages. In a multilingual nation, when some languages are supported and promoted by the ruling government, they become dominant while the future of other minor languages becomes bleak. Consequently, Kiswahili enjoyed dominance, along with English, over other minor languages.

The knowledge of a language of international currency is not a curse, and it is always required in a country of approximately forty languages to promote inter-ethnic communication. But the colonial mind-sets of the people worked against the growth of regional and indigenous languages. Many children from elite backgrounds did not get language input in their mother-tongues, as a result they picked up English first, from their parents and peers. Moreover, corporal punishment for using mother tongues in the school, and other monetary and humiliating treatments for not using English were common practices which had been filling native minds with revulsion for their own tongues (Ngugi 1978).

The situation of English, Kiswahili and other indigenous languages in Kenya is similar to English, Hindi, and other Indian languages in India. The supremacy of English has been prevailing at the cost of other languages. I remember that in my school days in India I was charged one rupee Indian currency fine for using Hindi (my mother tongue) in school, which was followed by minor punishments. But in India, English has been accepted as a *lingua franca* and its use has not become associated with anti-nationalist tendencies as in Kenya.

Kiswahili, a co-official language and a language spoken by the majority of the people, enjoys a near equal status with English. However, the emergence of language varieties like 'Sheng' has been posing a challenge for Kiswahili. Recently, English and Kiswahili have suffered a blow from this language which is used by mostly young adults and pre-adolescents as a symbol of group identity. This emerging language is a mixture of English, Kiswahili, and words from other ethnic languages that was initially used in the slum areas of Eastlands of Nairobi (Momanyi 2009).

But the real danger is for unwritten indigenous languages, for which there is no sign of standardization or respect. Their exclusion and segregation from an obtuse reason, their speakers' not being able to pronounce certain phonemes differently: [sh] and [s] or [ph] and [f] or [w] and [v] are sounded alike (Kahraman, 2012). The true imitators (their imitations have neither transformed the imitator-self nor the imitated-object) always advocate the currency of speaking properly rather than the manipulative power of the speakers. The bottom line is, if their pronunciations of English or Kiswahili are influenced by their mother tongues then they cannot be included in the elite class.

Another instance of how language marks similar identity and differentiates among ethnic groups is stated by Ogechi: "In times of crisis such as 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2007-8 during the ethnic clashes ... the Mungiki adherents stopped trucks that had ferried the KANU supporters to Nyeri and greeted them in Gikuyu – '*Thaai!*' (spiritual leader) . Those who responded were spared while those who could not were butchered (Ogechi 2003). This form of imitation might soon transform an independent nation into a dependent nation depending on the legacy of the colonized culture. Despite the fact that English is spoken by few it proudly entertains the status of prestige language of the elite class in the country. The mediation and contestation against linguistic imperialism has been often blamed by the administration and elites as a reason for the declining standards of these two official languages (Nabea 2009: 128).

Post-independence, a linguistic struggle started, and it can be said that indigenous minor languages once again demanded self-determination. New ways were adopted to promote native languages and to negate the hegemony of English. Ashcroft et al (2002) suggested that abrogation, appropriation, and patois were extensively employed by literary writers in their work. The writers started to write in their own cultures and languages. The most notable example is Gerishon Ngugi's work on Gikuyu and the Kikuyu ethnic community. But whether the popular novels and best-sellers among the peasants and clansmen are changing the mind-set of the population at large is a worthy question, when the language in dominance and power in the past, i.e. English, still opens new horizons for employment. And we should not be blinded by the fact that the popular writers writing in a vernacular have been also translating their work into other popular languages including English. The legacy of colonial control is hard to break; even though Kenya is independent and the languages of the nations may flourish evenly, yet this imbalanced promotion of languages in the nation clearly indicates that they were prevented from becoming what they might have become.

On the other side of the coin, code-mixing and code-switching have been helping the speakers to domesticate both the languages and facilitating the communication of the speakers. This also shows the resilient and transformative nature of Kenyan culture, and prevents us from focussing on mere victimization and exploitation. Nabea (2009) gives the example of Meru, a Bantu language, which has largely borrowed from English and Kiswahili to develop a mixed vocabulary. In a way, it proves that this indigenous language has a capacity to include new words in its vocabulary according to the requirements of the speakers; at the same time it also alarms us that too much contact and linguistic borrowing might make the speakers of Meru believe that it is a dialect of a standard language. Moreover, this will also result in breaking the conventional grammatical rules of the language by the speakers. Furthermore, it is believed that incorrect usage should not be ignored on its face value, and it should be treated as an example of a challenge to dominant languages (Street 1993, Pardoe 2000). This is at least not so a compromising state than if the children were no longer acquiring their mother tongues.

### **Conclusion**

Presently, language endangerment is a serious threat to many indigenous languages of Kenya. The external forces and subjugation, chiefly economic, linguistic, cultural, education, and military; internal forces and negative attitudes, unemployment, discrimination, low self-esteem, hesitation, etc. have been causing danger to the existence of many a minority language. Bilingualism, socio-economic disadvantage, prevalence of negative attitudes and non-transmission of minor languages are the indicators that language is highly endangered (Batibo 2005).

Many social scientists and scholars might raise an eyebrow concerning the importance of saving languages when other significant issues, like poverty, corruption, terrorism, racism, molestation, unemployment, diseases etc. are rampant. But language transfers culture, it establishes identity, and it socializes the human being. The engagement and sharing with the dominant colonial language has been influencing and transforming the indigenous languages at large. And when language dies; culture dies. If the last speaker of a language dies what benefit will any record, either electronic or on paper, provide to the growth of the language? So we cannot plainly rely on extensive language documentation without motivating the speakers to pass the language to the new generation.

Education institutions generally have a desire to make their citizens powerful and self-sufficient. But it should not be on the cost of minority languages. Mono-

lingualism and bi-lingualism should be replaced by an active multilingualism, because it is important for education policy and research, for teacher education, material development and syllabus design.

The continuous deliberate indecisiveness of education policy makers is bound to raise questions about their perception of the term 'education'. Their stereotyped view looks at education as the teaching of one or two languages and giving instruction in them. But in a multilingual nation like Kenya the minority language groups perceive education as a force for the development and revival of their languages. And therefore any strong propagation for the use of standard language or only one language for national integration and cohesion gets a mixed reaction of awe and contempt.

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## **READABILITY OF COMPREHENSION PASSAGES IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (JHS) ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS IN GHANA**

*Charles Owu-Ewie*

### **Abstract**

Understanding what is read is essential to academic success in general and literacy development in particular. The aim of any textbook, especially English language textbooks for second language learners is to help readers improve their English language competence. This aim is defeated when students cannot read texts intended for them. One factor which makes a reading material unreadable is the complexity of the language used in relation to the reading ability of the reader. Research has shown that most materials meant for second language learners are difficult for the intended readers. It is therefore crucial to determine the readability of comprehension passages in Junior High School (JHS) English language textbooks used in Ghana and also to examine what can be done to improve L2 text writing in Ghana to make materials readable. This paper, therefore used *The Gunning FOG Readability test*, *Flesch Reading Ease Formula*, *Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level*, *SMOG Index*, *Coleman-Liau* and *Automated Readability Index* readability formulas to determine the readability of 48 comprehension passages purposively selected from four different sets of JHS 1-3 English language textbooks. It was found that most of the passages were above the age of learners and were therefore difficult for them to read and comprehend. The study through interviews examined ways that writing of JHS English textbooks can be improved to enhance readability.

Key Words: readability formulas, comprehension passages, Junior High School, textbook

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### **Introduction**

Reading is essential to success in school and lifelong learning. It is even more crucial in second language learning where students need to read to improve their vocabulary and communication skills (Grabe & Stoller 2002). Reading is fundamental

to students in a variety of situations and professions. It is an important skill for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> global digital century. Reading development is an important element of a student's educational/academic career and a major component of high-stakes tests, which require higher order reading skills. The ability to effectively comprehend ideas and information expressed by others in writing depends on good reading skills. Reading with understanding is essential to academic success in general and second language literacy development in particular. The level of language used in teaching and in textbooks plays a major role in the academic success of learners. The aim of a textbook, especially an English language textbook for second language learners is to help readers improve their English language competence. This aim is defeated when students cannot read texts intended for them.

Since reading is crucial to academic success, textbooks, work-sheets, and/or examination papers should be readable to learners to make our intent transmittable to the intended learners. How well authors succeed will depend on the readability of the text they produce. An accomplished reader is likely to be bored by unreadable materials, while a poor reader soon becomes discouraged by texts he/she finds too difficult to read fluently. Easy reading helps learning and enjoyment, so what we write should be easy to read (Fry 2006). One factor which makes reading material unreadable is the complexity of language used in relation to the reading ability of the reader. However, research has shown that most materials meant for second language learners are difficult for the intended readers and as a result need to be simplified for easy reading and comprehension. Crossley, McCarthy and McNamara (2006, citing Young 1999) are of the opinion that second language reading texts must be simplified at the beginning and intermediate levels in order to make the text more comprehensible for second language learners and to help prepare them for more authentic texts. The simplification of second language reading texts is supported because they exclude unnecessary and distracting, idiosyncratic styles without suffering a loss of valuable communication features and concepts that are present in authentic text. Writers of second language materials cannot simplify a reading text when they are not aware of the difficulty level of the text. They should know the age of the readers and what they are capable of reading at that level. This can be achieved by using a readability formula to test the text. Teachers give students handouts and recommended textbooks but they do not consider the difficulty level of the reading text as well as the ability levels of the students. This may cause difficulty in learning. As Reece and Walker (1992) indicates, difficulties in learning may not be caused only by the way in which we teach, or lack of intelligence of the learner but may be the result of a reading problem; the difficulty of the reading material. To avert this, it is



crucial to determine the reading difficulty of the comprehension passages we provide for our learners, especially at the Junior High School level. This makes this study crucial because it expands the debate on the Ghanaian JHS learners' inability to read fluently, which has centered mostly on teacher, parent and student factors without considering the difficulty level of reading materials among others as a contributing factor.

### **Literature Review**

This section takes a critical look at the literature related to the study. It includes the concept of readability, factors affecting readability of a text and readability formulas.

#### **a. What is readability?**

The intention of any writer or author is to transmit information to the reader. Good writing should be highly readable in order to be clearly understood by a wide audience. The concept of readability has been defined in various ways. Readability involves material which is fit to read, interesting, agreeable, attractive and enjoyable (Dubay 2004). It refers to how easy a written text is to read and understand. The ability of a test to consistently measure what it is supposed to measure depends on its readability (Reece & Walker 1992). This definition is concerned with the interaction between the reader and the text. The readability of a text is a measure of how well and how easily a text conveys the intended meaning to a reader. This implies that when a text cannot be well read and not easily understood it is unreadable. However, Klare (1963) looking at readability from the writer's perspective, defines the term as the ease of understanding due to style of writing. Dubay (2004: 3) writing on *The principles of readability* noted that the definition by Klare separates writing style from issues such as content and organization of the text.

In another way, McLaughlin (1969) from the perspective of interaction between the text and the reader defines 'readability' as the degree to which a given group of readers finds certain reading materials compelling and comprehensible. Dale and Chall (1949, cited in Dubay 2004) indicate that readability is the sum of the total of all those elements which a given piece of printed material has that affect the success of a group of readers. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an optimal speed and find it interesting. The implication of the definitions above is that comprehensibility is essential in readability. Thus, good written material should be highly readable in order to be clearly understood by a wide audience.

**b. Factors affecting readability of texts**

The ability to read and understand a text depends on a range of factors including content, structure, style, layout and design. These factors can be semantic or syntactic. Semantic factors are concerned with words, while syntactic factors involve the length and structure of sentences. According to Stephens (2000), five style factors likely to affect the readability of a text are the number of pronouns, average number of words in sentences, percentage of different words and number of prepositional phrases. Essem Educational Limited (2007) has indicated a number of factors that influence the readability of a text. These include physical factors (such as typeface, font size, spacing and layout), reader factors (such as prior knowledge, reading ability, and motivation of the reader), vocabulary difficulty, text structure, text coherence and cohesion, and syntax. It must also be noted that the age of the reader is crucial to readability. Age appropriateness of academic material is crucial to effective learning. If the content of a text is above the age of the learner/reader there is bound to be difficulty in reading such a text.

Generally, a text is readable when it presents concrete issues, provides the “who”, “what”, “where”, and “when” familiar to readers, and is also age appropriate. Additionally, the text should be genre-familiar to readers and should be acceptable to the reader’s cultural background. According to Stephens (2000), the use of language that is complex, indirect, uneconomical, and unfamiliar affects readability of a text. In addition, the inclusion of needless words, the use of sentence structures that are inevident and ambiguous, and the haphazard and illogical organization of the material affect readability. A critical look at the definitions already provided above indicate that generally readability factors can be categorized into the visual layout of the test, and the ease of understanding of words and sentences in the text. In this study, the latter is the focus.

**c. Readability measuring formulas**

Authors rely on variety of approaches to assist them to simplify reading texts for language learners, particularly second language learners, to enable them to make texts more comprehensible. One such approach to evaluate the comprehensibility of texts is readability measures. According to Allen (2009), when material developers want to simplify texts to provide more comprehensible input to second language learners, they generally have two approaches: a structural and an intuitive approach. A structural approach depends on the use of structure and word lists that are predefined by levels, as found in graded reading books. Readability formulas provide an indication of text readability based on the word and sentence length as found in a text. An intuitive

approach, on the other hand, is a more subjective approach by the author's natural sense of text comprehensibility and discourse processing. Both approaches are commonly used in the development of reading materials. In this study, the six traditional readability formulas mentioned earlier in the abstract will be used to examine the readability of comprehension passages in Junior High School English textbooks in Ghana. According to Crossley, Allen, and McNamara (2011), "traditional reliability formulas are simple algorithms that measure text reliability based on sentence length and word length." (p. 87). Readability formulas were initially developed in the 1920s in the United States. The first readability study was a response to demands by Junior High School science teachers to provide them with books which would allow them to teach scientific facts and methods rather than to be tied down with teaching science vocabulary necessary to understanding the texts (Stephens 2000). Stephens' initial probing of readability began with asking students, librarians, and teachers what makes a text readable. Readability formulas are used to predict reading ease but they do not help us evaluate how well the reader will understand the ideas in the text. Traditional text readability formulas have been criticized by discourse analysts as being weak indicators of comprehensibility and as not supporting cognitive processes involved in text comprehension (McNamara & Magliano 2009). Additionally, they do not account for the characteristics of readers or text-based factors like syntactic complexity, rhetorical organization, and propositional density (Carrell 1987). From the L2 perspective, Brown (1998) has identified that traditional readability formulas are not highly predictive of L2 reading difficulty. Based on psycholinguistic and cognitive models of reading, traditional readability does not take into account comprehension factors such as coherence (Gernsbacher 1997), and meaning construction and cognitive processes such as decoding and syntactic parsing (Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill 2005). In a nutshell, readability tests are criticized as being too simplistic and fail to consider any of the many other variables which may influence reading or the comprehension of a text (Bitgood 1996; Harrison & Bakker 1998).

Though traditional readability formulas are found to have had some limitations, they are also predictive of reading difficulty and can discriminate reading difficulty reasonably well for L2 students (Greenfield 1999). In addition, traditional readability formulas obliquely account for cognitive processes such as word length and sentence length (Crossley, Allen & McNamara 2011). One crucial benefit of traditional readability formulas is that they can serve as an early warning signs to alert writers that the text being written might be too dense. Besides, studies have shown that there is positive correlation between readability scores and other measures of reading ease

and/or comprehension (Woods, Moscardo & Greenwood 1998). For example, Klare (1984 cited in Woods, Moscardo & Greenwood 1998) in a review of studies on readability formulas identified that readability test scores were related to:

- a. the probability of readers actually reading a piece of text completely;
- b. the amount of information remembered by readers;
- c. the length of time taken to read a passage;
- d. the readers' ratings of difficulty levels.

This implies that readability scores are related to some aspects of text difficulty that are recognized by, and relevant to readers. At this point, it is crucial to expatiate on the readability formulas that were used in this study for readers to understand the analysis of the data collected.

#### *The Gunning FOG Readability test:*

The Gunning FOG Readability test/index is simply referred to as FOG Index. It was developed by an American textbook publisher named Robert Gunning in 1952. He published this readability test in reaction to his observations that high school graduates were unable to read. According to him, most of this reading problem was a writing problem. He was of the opinion that published materials like newspapers were full of "fog" and unnecessary complexities. The fog index is used commonly to confirm that a text can be read easily by the intended audience. The Gunning Fog Index has a manual version but in this study the electronic version was used. The underlying principle of the Gunning Fog Index formula is that short sentences in plain English achieve better scores than long sentences written in complicated language. The ideal score for readability with the fog index is 7 or 8 and anything above 12 is too hard for most people to read. Though the fog index gives a sign of hard to read text, it has some limitations. It must be noted that not all complex words are difficult since some short words can be difficult if they are not used very often. The same can be said about sentences.

#### *The Flesch Reading Ease Formula*

The Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula is one of the oldest and most accurate. It was developed in 1948 by Rudolph Flesch who is an author and a reading consultant. It is a simple approach to assessing the grade-level of readers. This formula is best suited for school text. It is primarily used to assess the difficulty of a reading passage written in English. Rather than using grade levels, this formula uses a scale from 0 to 100, with 0 being equivalent to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Senior High School 3)

and 100 also equivalent to 4th grade (Primary 4). This implies that the higher the score the easier the passage to be read and the lower the score the more difficult the passage.

#### *Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test*

A related test which translates the Flesch Reading Ease Test scores to grade level is the Flesch-Kincaid formula. The formula was developed by Peter J. Kincaid and his team in 1975. It is extensively used in education. This formula is used to determine the readability level of various books. This implies that the formula can be used to determine the number of years of formal education generally required to understand a reading text. For example, a readability score of 9.3 means that all things being equal, a ninth grader with English as the native language would be able to read the text. The formula makes it easier for teachers, parents and librarians to select appropriate reading texts for their children/learners.

#### *SMOG Readability Formula*

SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook) is a reading readability formula which estimate the years of formal education needed to understand a piece of writing. This readability formula was propounded by G. Harry McLaughlin in 1969. The SMOG readability formula was created to address the lapses in other formulas like the FOG. This formula was developed particularly for checking health messages (Hedman, 2008) but has been applied to language learning texts. Though the SMOG formula is seen as being too simplistic, it is preferred in evaluating the difficulty of the language of consumer health related materials (Fitzsimmons, Micheal, Hulley, & Scott 2010).

#### *The Coleman-Liau Readability Index*

The Coleman-Liau index is a readability test which was designed by Meri Coleman and T. L. Liau to measure the understandability of a text. The output of this test approximates the U.S. grade level thought necessary to comprehend the text. It relies on characters instead of syllables per word. Although opinion varies on its accuracy as compared to the syllable/word and complex word indices, characters are more readily and accurately counted by computer programs than are syllables. The Coleman-Liau has a manual version but the online version was preferred in this study.

#### *Automated Readability Index (ARI)*

Automated Readability Index outputs a number which approximates the grade level needed to comprehend a given reading text. It is a test designed to assess the understandability of a text. For instance, an ARI output of 3 means students in the 3<sup>rd</sup>

grade (ages 8-9 years old) should be able to comprehend the test. ARI is derived from ratios representing word difficulty (number of letters per word) and sentence difficulty (number of words per sentence). Out of the six readability tests used in this study, four of them (Flesch-Kincaid, Coleman-Liau Index, SMOG Index and Automated Readability Index) predict the grade level of the reading text, while the remaining two (Flesch Reading Ease and Gunning Fog) predict the difficulty level of the reading text. For example, the SMOG index will indicate that the level of a reading text is *grade six* (Primary 6), while the Flesch Reading Ease will describe the same reading text as *fairly easy to read*. The six readability formulas mentioned were used to ensure credibility of the study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to identify the readability and age levels of comprehension passages from Junior High School English textbooks using readability measuring formulae like the Gunning FOG Readability Test (FOG), the Flesch Reading Ease Formula (FREF), the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (F-KGL), the SMOG Index readability tests (SMOG), the Coleman-Liau (C-Liau) and Automated Readability Index (ARI). The study also sought to examine how the writing of English textbooks meant for second language learners as in the case of Ghanaian Junior High Schools can be improved to facilitate reading with understanding based on the available literature.

### **Research Questions**

The main research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. What are the reading difficulty and age levels of comprehension passages in Ghanaian Junior High School English textbooks?
2. What are the implications for improving the writing of Junior High School English textbooks to make them readable and age appropriate?

### **Methodology**

This study used a mixed methodology; both quantitative and qualitative design approaches. The quantitative data were collected using readability formulas to test the readability of passages in JHS textbooks, while the qualitative data were collected through the use of interviews to examine how such textbooks could be written to make them readable. The purpose of the study was to investigate the readability and age levels of comprehension passages in Junior High School (hereafter JHS) English textbooks in Ghana and how they can be improved to enhance students' reading and

understanding. English books were selected because English is the language of instruction at the JHS level and all textbooks at this level are written in English with the exception of the Ghanaian languages. Besides, the final examinations of students at this level are written in English. It is also established that there is positive correlation between language performance and performance in other academic disciplines (Owu-Ewie 2012). The JHS level was selected because it is a terminal point for majority of Ghanaian students. In addition, it is assumed that this level of education should inculcate in learners their ability to read and make meaningful judgment from the texts they read. The textbooks used for the study were purposefully selected because they were produced by major publishing houses in Ghana. These major publishing houses were contracted by the Ministry of Education, Ghana to produce the books for the Junior High School. This implies that the publishing houses have the expertise or the resources to contract experts to produce quality books. The books selected are for JHS One, Two and Three. The following textbooks were selected:

*Table 1: JHS textbooks used in the study*

<b>TITLE OF BOOK</b>	<b>PUBLISHERS</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>LEVEL</b>
Junior Secondary School English	Unimax Macmillan Ltd, Accra, Ghana	2003	JHS 1, 2, 3
New Gateway to English for Junior High Schools	Sedco Publishers Limited, Accra, Ghana	2008	JHS 1, 2, 3
Easy Learning English Language	Excellent Publishing and Printing, Accra, Ghana.	2009	JHS 1, 2, 3
Complete English Course for Junior Secondary Schools	Step Publishers	2005	JHS 1, 2, 3

A book was selected because it has comprehension (reading) passages. Additionally, passages were selected because they had between 150 to 600 hundred words which is the recommended length of a text for the computerized version of the various readability tests used in this study. In all, 12 English textbooks were used; three books representing JHS1, 2, and 3 were selected from each publisher. The study used 48 passages from these textbooks. Four passages were purposefully selected from each textbook (12 passages for each year level and for each publisher) chronologically. That is passage one appears in the book before passage two. The formulas used to

determine the readability of the passages (texts) were the Gunning FOG Readability test, Flesch Reading Ease Formula, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, SMOG Index, Coleman-Liau and Automated Readability Index. These readability tests were used because they are the most commonly used formulas in determining the readability of reading texts. It is also because the researcher had access to the online versions of these readability test formulas. According to Johnson (2000), when comparing the readability of textbooks materials, it is important to use the average of more than one readability index formula. The triangulation of these six readability formulas in this study therefore enhanced credibility.

In addition, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data from JHS students, JHS teachers and English language lecturers from The Department of English Language Education of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) to ascertain how JHS English language text can be written to suit the intended readers. In all, 20 participants (10 JHS students, 7 JHS teachers and 3 lecturers) were purposively selected. The JHS teachers were selected because they have used the textbooks used in the study, while the lecturers were selected because they have taught textbook production and evaluation as a course in the university. Oral consents were sought from the teachers before the interviews were conducted and recorded.

The authors of the books were not involved in the study because the Ministry of Education, Ghana had concerted that the books are appropriate for the students. What must be noted finally is that the researcher looked at the books as documents being used in our schools and not the processes involved in the production of these books. Other researchers can investigate the processes involved in the production of these textbooks.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

This section of the study deals with answering the two main research questions posed in the study. As a recap, the following are the research questions:

1. What are the reading difficulty and age levels of comprehension passages in Ghanaian Junior High School English textbooks?
2. What are the implications for improving Junior High School English textbooks writing to make them readable and appropriate to the grade level?

The analysis in this study is done based on the assumption that the Ghanaian child commences his/her formal basic education at age six. All things being equal, the Ghanaian child will be 12 years, 13 years and 14 years in Junior High School one, two and three respectively. What must also be noted in the analysis for easy



understanding is that 3 years will be added to any reading age or grade level in the assessment. The rationale for this assumption is that the readability formulas used in this study were meant for assessing the readability of text materials meant for native speakers of English and since Ghanaians start using English (second language) as a medium of instruction from Primary 4 (10 years old) as enshrined in the language policy of education in Ghana (see Owu-Ewie, 2013), it is crucial to do the plus 3. For example, a C-Liau index measure of a material meant for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade will be 11<sup>th</sup> Grade, a SMOG grade level of 6 will be 9 and ARI measure of a reading text for 11-13 year olds will be 14-17 year olds. The plus 3 calculations will be put in parenthesis against the original measure in the analysis (see Appendix A). However, there will be a subtraction of 3 from the figures of the Flesch Reading Ease Formula (FREF) since the higher the FREF figure the easier the text.

*Research Question 1: What are the ages and reading difficulty levels of comprehension passages in Ghanaian Junior High School English textbooks?*

In response to this two-tier question, the following analyses were made (see appendix A for sample detailed analysis):

The Gunning Fox text scale and the Flesch Reading Ease Score indicate whether a reading text is difficult to read, hard to read, standard/average, or easy to read, while the Automated Readability Index gives the reading age of the learners the materials are intended for. The Text Readability Consensus column strikes an average of all the readability formulas used and it provides information on reading level and the reader's age which the researcher used to corroborate information in Gunning Fox text scale/the Flesch Reading and the Automated Readability Index. For detailed analysis see sample in appendix A.

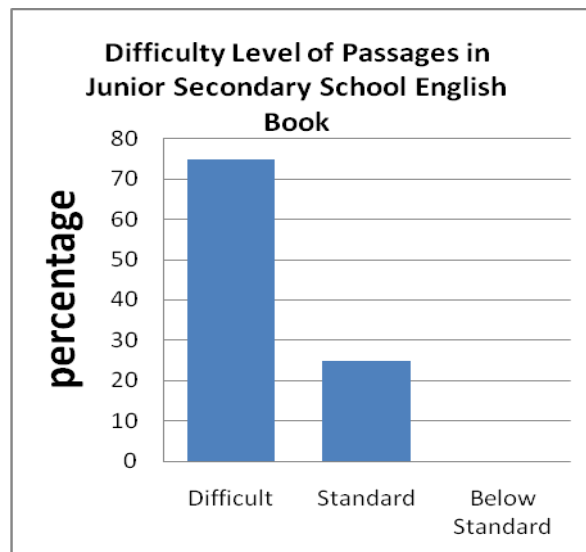
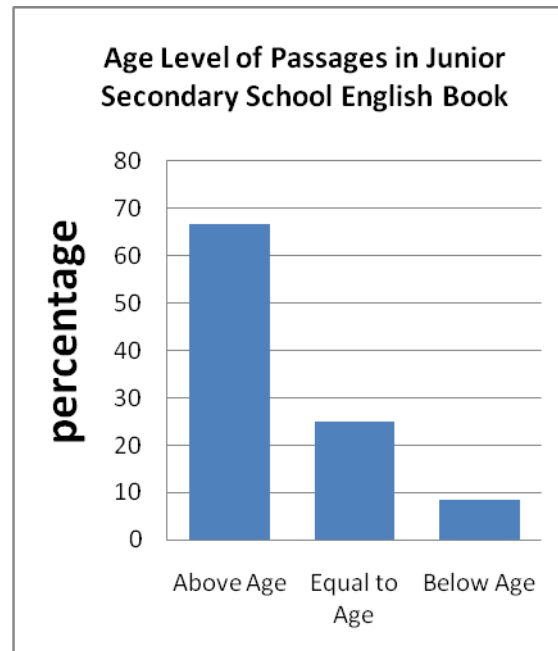
*a. Age and difficulty level of passages from individual JHS English textbooks*

The data analysis in this section about the individual textbooks showed that most of the passages (texts) were above the age level of readers and were therefore difficult to read. Age appropriate reading materials have been identified as a crucial factor essential to enhancing reading. It is believed that when we select a material which is above the age of the learner, it obstructs reading and the development of good reading skills. The following are the analysis of the passages selected from the various textbooks in relation to age and readability difficulty.

Table 2: The age and readability difficulty levels of passages in Junior Secondary School English Textbook

Junior Secondary School English	AGE LEVEL			READING DIFFICULTY LEVEL		
	Above Age	Equal to age	Below age	Difficult	Standard	Below reading level
Book 1	2 (16.7%)	2 (16.7%)	0	2 (16.7%)	2 (16.7%)	0
Book 2	3(25%)	0	1 (8.3%)	3 (25)	1 (8.3%)	0
Book 3	3(25%)	1(8.3%)	0	4 (33.3)	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8 (66.7)</b>	<b>3 (25%)</b>	<b>1 (8.3%)</b>	<b>9 (75%)</b>	<b>3 (25%)</b>	<b>0</b>

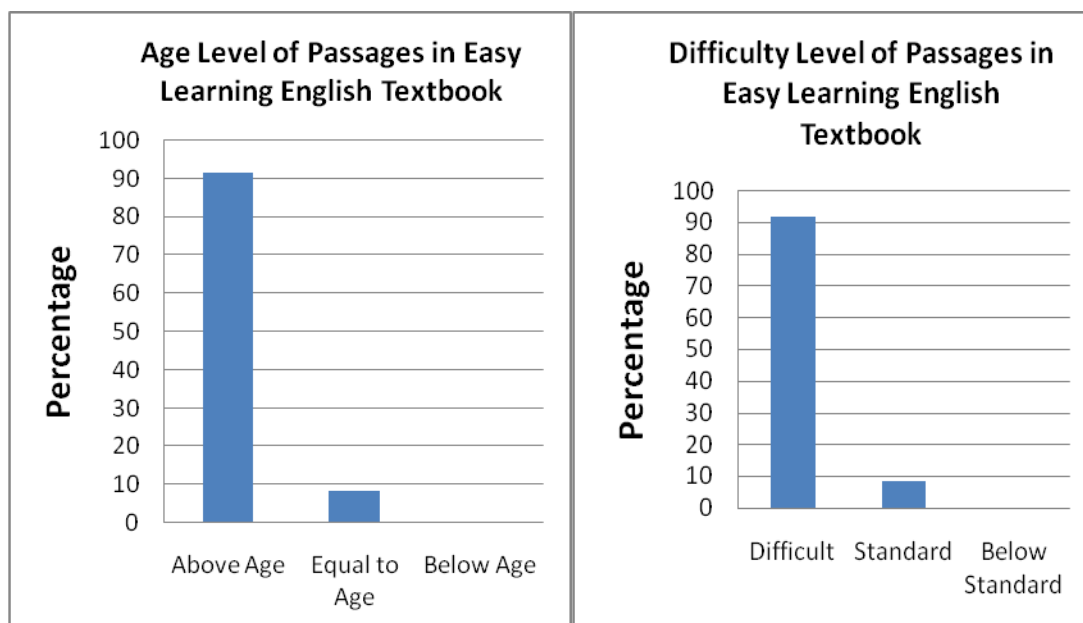
Fig. 1: Bar chart of age and readability difficulty levels of passages in Junior Secondary School English Textbook



*Table 3: The age and readability difficulty levels of passages in Easy Learning English Language Textbook*

Easy Learning English Language	AGE LEVEL			READING DIFFICULTY LEVEL		
	Above Age	Equal to age	Below age	Difficult	Standard	Below reading level
Book 1	3 (25%)	1 (8.3%)	0	3 (25%)	1(8.3%)	0
Book 2	4 (33.3%)	0	0	4 (33.3%)	0	0
Book 3	4 (33.3%)	0	0	4 (33.3%)	0	0
TOTAL	11 (91.7%)	1 (8.3%)	0	11 (91.7%)	1(8.3%)	0

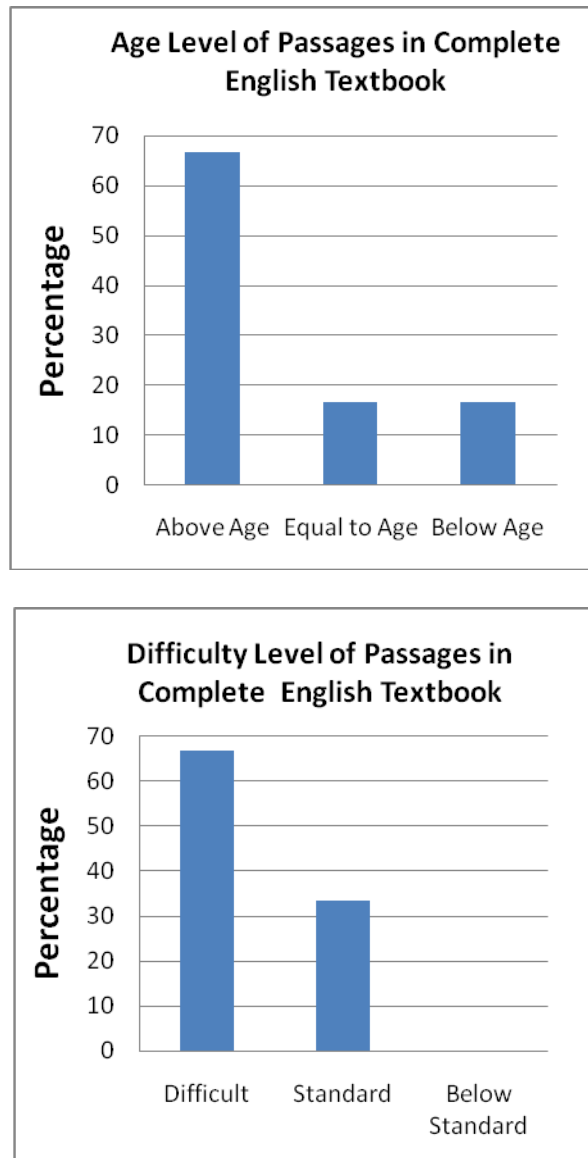
*Fig 2: Bar chart of age and readability difficulty levels of passages in Easy Learning English Language Textbook*



*Table 4: The age and readability difficulty levels of passages in Complete English Course for Junior Secondary Schools Textbook*

<b>Complete English Course for Junior Secondary Schools</b>	<b>AGE LEVEL</b>			<b>READING DIFFICULTY LEVEL</b>		
	<b>Above Age</b>	<b>Equal to age</b>	<b>Below age</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Below reading level</b>
Book 1	4 (33.3%)	0	0	4 (33.3%)	0	0
Book 2	1 (8.3%)	1 (8.3%)	2	1(8.3%)	3 (25%)	0
Book 3	3 (25%)	1 (8.3%)	0	3 (25%)	1(8.3%)	0
TOTAL	8 (66.6%)	2 (16.7%)	2 (16.7%)	8 (66.7%)	4 (33.3%)	0

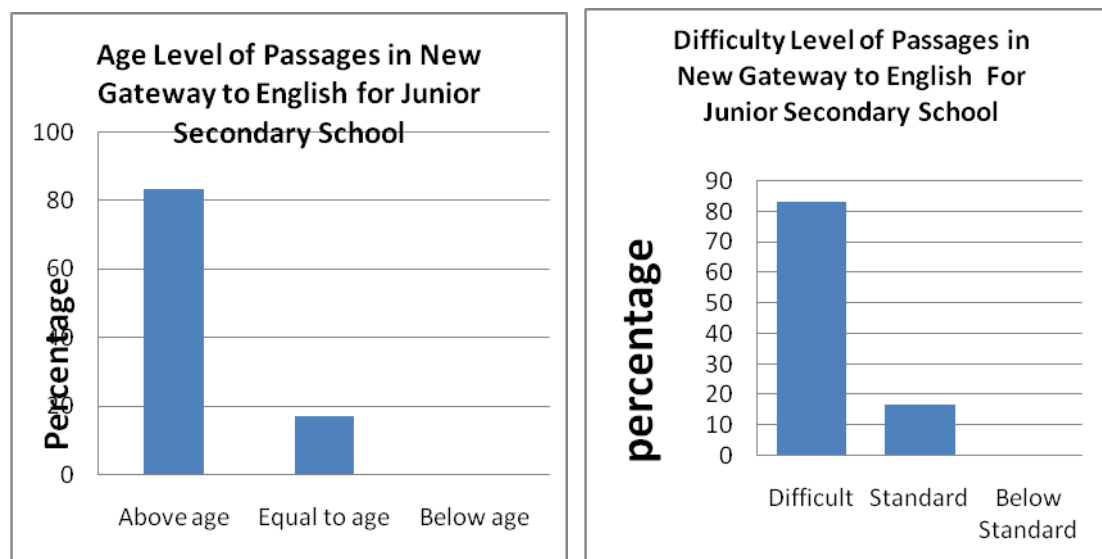
Fig 3: Bar chart age and readability difficulty levels of passages in Complete English Course for Junior Secondary Schools Textbook



*Table 5: The age and readability difficulty levels of passages in New Gateway to English for Junior High Schools Textbook*

New Gateway to English for Junior High Schools	AGE LEVEL			READING DIFFICULTY LEVEL		
	Above Age	Equal to age	Below age	Difficult	Standard	Below reading level
Book 1	3 (25%)	1 (8.3%)	0	3 (25%)	1 (8.3%)	0
Book 2	3 (25%)	1 (8.3%)	0	3 (25%)	1 (8.3%)	0
Book 3	4 (33.3%)	0	0	4 (33.3%)	0	0
TOTAL	10 (83.3%)	2 (16.7%)	0	10 (83.3%)	2 (16.7%)	0

*Fig 4: Bar chart of age and readability difficulty levels of passages in New Gateway to English for Junior High Schools Textbook*



*b. Age and difficulty level of passages from JHS English textbooks combined*

The combined data analysis of the selected passages from the textbooks indicated that most of the passages were above the age of the learners (Junior High School students). On individual school basis, the Junior Secondary School textbook has 8 (66.7%) of the passages above the age of the learners, 3 (25.0%) is equal to the age of the learners and 1 representing 8.3% below the age of the learners. The Complete English Course for Junior Secondary Schools has 8 (66.6%) passages above the age of the learners, 2 (16.7%) equal the age of the learners and 2 (16.7%) below the age level of the learners while the Easy Learning textbook had 10 of the passage representing 88.3% above the age level of the learners, 2 (16.7%) equal to the age of the learners and 0 below the age of the learners. Lastly, the New Gateway to English for Junior High Schools has 11 passage representing 91.7% above the age of the learners and 1 passage representing 8.3% was equal to the age of the learners. There was no passage below the age of the learners. This implies that the Gateway English textbooks have more passages above the age level of learners and difficult to read than the other textbooks. The Junior Secondary School textbook and Complete English Course have 1 and 2 passages respectively below the age of the learners. On the whole, 37 (77.1%) out of the 48 passages are above the age level of the learners in the Junior High School, 8 passages (16.7%) are equal to the age of the learners and 3 passages (6.2%) below the age of the learners.

To the question whether the passages were difficult, standard/average or below standard, it was found that generally 37 passages (77.1%) were difficult or hard to read, and 11 (22.9%) were standard/average. There were no passages below the reading level of the learners. The individual books have the following: the Junior Secondary School English has 9 (75%) difficult passages and 3 (25%) passage to the standard/average for the learners, the Easy Learning textbook has 10 passage (83.3%) as being difficult to read and 3 (25%) are standard or average, while the Complete English Course has 7 (58.3%) passages as difficult to be read by learners and 5 (41.7%) as standard/average. Lastly, it was realized that the Gateway English textbooks have 11 (83.3%) passages which are difficult to read and 1 passage representing 16.7% as standard/average. The table below represents the descriptive analysis made above.

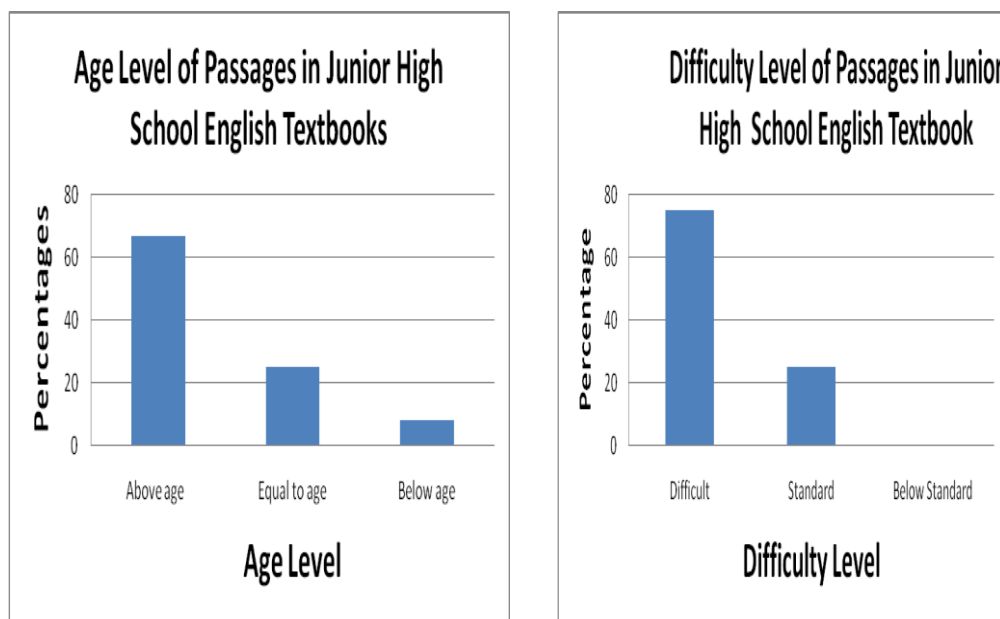


Table 6: The age and difficulty levels of passages in JHS English Textbooks

TEXTBOOK	AGE LEVEL			READING DIFFICULTY LEVEL		
	Above Age	Equal to age	Below age	Difficult	Standard	Below reading level
Junior Secondary School English	8	3	1	9	3	0
New Gateway to English for Junior High Schools	11	1	0	11	1	0
Easy Learning English Language	10	2	0	10	2	0
Complete English Course for Junior Secondary Schools	8	2	2	7	5	0
TOTAL	37	8	3	37	11	0

The table above can be represented diagrammatically as in Figure 5.

Fig.5: Bar graph of the age and difficulty levels of passages in JHS English Textbooks



One other interesting finding from the study was that the passages were not in a graded form. One would have expected that the passages will be increasing in terms of difficulty as one reads from unit one through to the last unit but this was not the case in the books used. It was found that some passages in the earlier units were more difficult than those late in the book. It was also realized that some passages in book one were found to be more difficult than those in books two and three. All the selected books were developed devoid of Krashen's (1983) *Input Hypothesis* in Second Language Acquisition. According to this hypothesis, learners improve and progress along the natural order when the input given is one step beyond the current level of linguistic competence. This implies that passages in each textbook should be in graded form; a current passage should be a step higher than the previous one.

#### **Causes of reading difficulty of passages**

The following were found to be some of the causes why the passages were difficult for students to read:

a. *Nature of sentences*

Research on readability indicates that short sentences in plain English achieve better reading scores than long sentences written in complicated language (Stephens 2000). The analysis showed that some of the sentences used in the Junior High School reading passages were found to be complex, lengthy and convoluted, while others were found to be choppy and unnatural. The nature of these sentences contributed to the difficult nature of most of the passages. Besides the length, the phrases in the sentences are strung together in such a way that they obscure meaning; they cause processing difficulty. Items which are likely to cause sentence processing difficulty are referred to as “heaviness” (Berman 1984). As Chomsky (1969: 6, as quoted in Essem Educational Limited 2007) puts it, “if two grammatical relations which hold among the words in a sentence are not expressed directly in its surface structure” they pose difficulty of interpretation. Some of the sentences were found to be ambiguous and prone to multiple interpretations. According to Berman (1984), sentence length correlates with difficulty because longer sentences are likely to contain more complex structures such as coordination and subordination. The following are examples extracted from the selected passages:

1. *Even though Ghana has adopted many strategies to eliminate poverty and to bring itself to middle-income status by the year 2020, a lot still needs to be done, especially among the rural and urban poor.*
2. *Access to education is limited and all the things necessary for people to live a happy and comfortable life are lacking: good hospitals, health care centers, good housing, and so on.*
3. *There was a wooden bench along each side of them, and a space in the middle of the floor, where travellers who had folding stools could sit on them, but although the Fourth Class was not comfortable, it was cheaper than the other three classes, so Marie was going to travel Third Class in Poland and France and Fourth Class across Germany.*
4. *The healthier alternatives is either to drink a lot of water (five pure water sachets a day) that flushes out the body as chemical toxins and rejuvenates the body cell, or lots of the natural fresh fruits juice such as pineapples, orange, or even coconut juice which are very nutritious and contain all the essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients that these soft drinks lack.*

5. *White bread is actually refined, bleached white flour that has been stripped of all its nutritional values and vitamins and to it has been added white sugar and white salt (both deadly) to produce the tea bread, sugar butter bread, etc.*
6. *The healthier alternatives is either to drink a lot of water (five pure water sachets a day) that flushes out the body's chemical toxins and rejuvenates the body cell, or lots of the natural fresh fruits juice such as pineapple, orange, or even coconut juice which are very nutritious and contain all the essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients that these soft drinks lack.*
7. *Secondly, the forest, which serves as habitat for animals and birds, will disappear if man does not check the rate at which trees are cut down.*
8. *After that, people in England had to wait for newspapers to be printed, and probably the majority of the people heard the news by word of mouth.*

A critical look at the various sentences identified in the selected passages from the various books indicated that on the average the shortest sentence had nine (9) words, while the longest had sixty-five (65) words as in sentence (4) above. On the average, the Junior Secondary School textbook and Easy Learning have 18 and 17 words per sentence respectively, while Gateway to English for Junior High School and Complete English textbooks have 17 and 16 words per sentence respectively. The lengthy nature of the sentences makes it difficult for learners to read and understand what they read.

*b. Age appropriateness*

Age appropriateness is crucial in determining the selection of many variables in learning. The age of a learner determines the method, technique and the level of language used in the classroom. Age also determines the length of a passage and structure of sentences used in the passage. It also helps to specify the font size to use for the text. From the earlier analysis, most of the passages were above the age of the learners.

*c. Unfamiliar background*

Background knowledge plays a significant role in reading and understanding of a given text/passage (Pulido 2007; Brantmeier 2005). For example, lack of cultural familiarity in L2 students' reading text has greater impact on reading comprehension (Johnson 1982). Lee (1986) in a study on the role of background knowledge and reading comprehension found that students' ability to understanding and recall are

enhanced when they are presented with background knowledge and are familiar with a text. This important assumption was deemphasized in the Junior High School English textbooks used in the study. Some passages used in the books were found to have contents which were unfamiliar to the Ghanaian JHS student. This obstructs reading and comprehension of the texts which are already beyond the reading age of learners. Some passages selected for the study did not reflect the cultural background of students. Examples of the passages include *Climbing Mount Everest*, *Scott of the Antarctic*, *Leaving for a foreign country* and *Gulliver's Travel*. For instance, the text on *Leaving for a foreign country*, which talks about a Polish girl who was travelling to France to study could have been a Ghanaian girl from the Northern Region of Ghana who travelled to stay with the aunt/elder sister in the Western Region to study in a Senior High School or better still a Ghanaian girl traveling to the United States or Britain to study at Harvard University or Cambridge University respectively.

This phenomenon of unfamiliar background experience affects readability because some teachers find it difficult to understand what they read. The picture/image the texts portray to the teachers and students are unfamiliar. Most teachers have not experienced such phenomenon (e.g. snow) before to be able to explain it to their learners. The study noted that some texts were far removed from the culture and background of learners. The implication of this was expressed by some teachers who were interviewed. One respondent indicated, *sometimes the passages are not familiar to us. We read but because it is unfamiliar to us we find it difficult to understand and create mental image of what we read. If they are difficult for us to understand, then what will happen to the students?* Another teacher indicated, *our students find it difficult to understand some of the passages they read because do not relate to the background or culture of the students.* A lecturer interviewed stated *what obstructs fluent reading and makes understanding of a text difficult is when the text is unfamiliar to learners in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure and a background which does not reflect the culture of the reader.*

All students involved in the study indicated that most of the passages in the JHS English textbooks are difficult for them to read. A second year student indicated *sometimes I find it difficult to understand what I read because they talk about things I have not seen before and also the words are difficult for me.*

### **Implications for Improving Junior High School English Textbook Writing**

This section of the research answers the second research question, “*What are the implications for improving the writing of Junior High School English textbooks to make them readable and age appropriate?*”

The implications of this study for improving the writing/production of English supplementary reading texts in general and Junior High School English textbooks in particular were found to involve lexical, sentence structure and pedagogical issues. The analysis of the data from the interview revealed the following as implications to improving readability of JHS English textbooks in Ghana:

*a. Sentence Use*

As indicated earlier in the study, most sentences found in the passages used for the study were very complex and sometimes difficult to read and understand. The sentences were indeed “heavy”. A factor which militates against making a reading material unreadable is the complexity of sentences used by the writers in relation to the reading ability of the reader. Materials meant for second language learners become readable and understandable when unnecessary and distracting information are removed. This implies that sentences used in the reading texts of second language learners, especially for beginners should be simple, precise and unambiguous. Schramm (1947) indicates shorter sentences and concrete items help learners to make sense of any written text. In addition, writers should understand possible problems that are associated with sentence structures such as sentence fragment, run-on sentences, loose sentences, choppy sentences, excessive subordination, and use of parallel structures. Most teachers interviewed had these to say in response to how readability of the JHS English textbooks can be improved in terms of their use of sentence structures:

*Most of the sentences are lengthy and sometimes difficult to understand so I think the sentences in these books should be simple and straightforward. It is better to write simple sentences which are understood by learners than to write complex and winding sentences which are difficult to read and understand.*

*In my opinion, some of the vocabulary used in the sentences are [sic] difficult to understand. Most of the time, we need to use the dictionary. I therefore think we need to use vocabulary and sentence structures which are appropriate to the age of the learners because when the words in the text are difficult to understand it makes the students read slowly and this brings about frustration.*

*The sentences should be simple but a few can also be long with appropriate conjunctions so that we can teach our students how to use conjunctions.*

*Sometimes, the sentences are so complex that they become difficult to identify the main clause or clauses and the subordinate clauses where we can use to help*

*students practice the use of these sentences in their writing so I think writers should use good sentence structures in their writings to enhance meaning. [sic]*

From the above responses, one can conclude that teachers prefer the use of meaningful simple sentences which aid readability. They are also of the opinion that in the event where compound or complex sentences are used, they should have their various clauses clearly written so that the various components can be easily identified. Respondents were also of the view that to help learners learn how to construct clear and unambiguous sentences, their textbooks could have both compound and complex sentences but must be clearly marked with conjunctions and modifiers placed at the appropriate places to aid understanding. The use of parenthesis should most of the time be avoided and where possible, they should be written as independent sentences. The “heaviness” of most sentences in Junior High School English textbooks should be made “light”. Reading materials meant for struggling readers like most Ghanaian Junior High School students should be simpler in nature to promote functional literacy and establish fundamental reading habits among learners. As noted by Stephens (2000), more readable texts result in greater and more complete learning and also increase the amount read in a given time.

*b. Text-structure*

Text structure, text coherence and cohesion, and syntax also have great effects on the readability of a text. If a reading text has poor paragraphing and lacks proper use of cohesive words to ensure cohesion, readability and understanding suffers. The participants interviewed were of the opinion that reading texts should be properly organized. The paragraphs should be well developed and clearly marked out so that students can organize their thoughts as they read. They were also of the opinion that transitional words should be properly used to ensure that there is cohesion in the text which will invariable ensure readability and comprehensibility. Both global and local coherence should be improved in reading materials. This will serve as writing model for Junior High School learners learning English as a second language. Writers should also employ the appropriate elaboration techniques in the developments of their various paragraphs.

*c. Use of familiar texts/genres*

The nature of language input affects reading performance. If the language and background of a reading text (genre) is unfamiliar to readers, it can be hypothesized that the task of comprehending the text will be difficult. This is likely to affect readability. Paltridge (1996) and Fountas and Pinell (2001) attest to this that students'

performance in reading comprehension tests could be sensitive to the different 'genres' and 'text types' used. The interactive model of reading, which is based on the schema theory of learning, holds the view that readers make connections between the new information they read and prior knowledge. This implies that if readers have prior knowledge of or are familiar with the text they are reading, comprehensibility is enhanced likewise readability. Readers need an understanding of the socio-cultural context and the setting of a given text to facilitate comprehension. This means that textbook writers should take the socio-cultural context of the readers into consideration when writing comprehension passages for Junior High School students. With the local learner in mind, the theme portrayed in a passage could be universal but should be tailored relatively to meet the Ghanaian learner.

*d. The role of textbook writers/publishers*

Textbook writers have a major role to play in enhancing readability among their readers, especially Junior High School students. In the first place, textbook writers should have training in textbook writing in general and writing for second language learners in particular. Such training should involve how to write age and context appropriate materials. Besides content knowledge in English, textbook writers should be trained in second language learning and acquisition pedagogy, especially in reading and its various components. Such writers should be second language specialists. Thus, people who are well grounded in second language teaching and learning. In addition to the above, textbook writers and publishers should be familiar with the various ways of (both theory and practical) testing the readability of the materials they write and how to enhance the readability of a text, especially those meant for second language learners.

In concluding this section, it will be appropriate to highlight the role of the classroom teacher in making a reading text with low readability more readable and comprehensible to learners. First, teachers must be conversant with the material to be read before using the reading passages. Again, teachers should have enough pre-reading activities with learners before they begin to read the text. This implies that teachers should do a lot of background research on passages to be read before the actual teaching. They can research on technical and unfamiliar topics used as reading texts to be familiar with the text prior to teaching it. In a nutshell, teachers should be resourceful so that they could be the link between making unreadable material readable.



### **Recommendation for further studies**

The study covered assessing the readability and difficulty level of reading passages in Junior High School English textbooks in Ghana. The assessment was done using readability formulas. The limitation of this study is that the readability formulas used in the study did not take into consideration other factors like background and vocabulary knowledge and how they affect readability. Further studies need to be conducted using practical ways of assessing text readability like the Cloze and Assessment Performance Unit (APU) Vocabulary test and with increased number of comprehension passages from the same textbooks. In addition, further investigations can be done to find out whether the authorities who approved these books have the requisite expertise and knowledge to make informed decision about selecting age-appropriate and readable textbooks.

### **Conclusion**

The study sought to determine the readability of comprehension passages in Junior High School (JHS) English language textbooks in Ghana and examine ways that readability can be improved in relation to writing texts for second language learners. The study used six readability formulas to analyze 48 comprehension passages selected from four English language textbooks. In addition, semi-structured interview was used to collect information for improving readability. The study found that most of the passages used were above the age of readers and were therefore difficult to read. The study also identified that the nature of sentences, unfamiliar background of passages were some contributing factors. According to the study, readability can be improved by the use of simple, precise and unambiguous sentences, well-structured text and use of familiar or cultural-friendly texts/genres. In addition, the study has indicated that people engaged in textbook writing should be provided with adequate training, especially how to write for second language learners. Most importantly, teachers have a major role to play to turn a text with low readability to one which will be easy to read and understand.

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## Appendix A: (Sample Consensus Readability Test)

### Consensus Readability Test for Passages in Complete English

BOOK		READABILITY FORMULAS						
	PASSAGES	FOG	FREF	F-KGL	SMOG	C-Liau	ARI	READABILITY CONSENSUS
BOOK 1	1	Text scale 11.8  Hard to read	Text Scale 61.9  Standard/ average	Grade Level 9.4  9 <sup>th</sup> Grade (12 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 9.2  Grade level 9 (Grade level 13)	Index 10  10 <sup>th</sup> Grade (13 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 10  9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> Graders for 14-15 yrs olds (17-18 yrs old)	9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> (12/13) Graders  Standard/ average  Reading age - 14-15yrs (17-18 yrs)
	2	Text scale 10.1  Hard to read	Text Scale 62.8  Standard / Average	Grade Level 9.3  9 <sup>th</sup> Grade (12 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 9  Grade level 9 (Grade level 12)	Index 9  9 <sup>th</sup> Grade (12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Index 8.6 8 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> Graders for 13-15 yrs olds ((16-18 yrs)	9 <sup>th</sup> Grades  Standard / average  Reading age - 13-15 yrs (16-18 yrs)
		Text scale	Text Scale	Grade	Index 7.5	Index 9	Index 7.6 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> /7 <sup>th</sup> Grades

	3	8.8 Fairly easy to read	75.8 Fairly easy to read	Level 7.6 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade (11 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Grade level 8 (Grade level 11)	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade (12 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Graders (10 <sup>th</sup> /11 <sup>th</sup> Graders)  for 12-14 yrs. olds (15-17 yrs. old)	Fairly easy to read  Reading age - 12-14 yrs. (15-17 yrs old)
	4	Text scale 12.9  Hard to read	Text Scale 59.1  Fairly difficult to read	Grade Level 9.8  10 <sup>th</sup> Grade (13 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 9.2  Grade level 9 (12)	Index 9  9 <sup>th</sup> Grade (12 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 9.7 9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> Graders  for 14-15 yrs olds (17-18 yrs)	9th/10th Grades  Fairly difficult to read  Reading age - 14-15 yrs (17-18 yrs)
BOOK 2	1	Text scale 8.6  Fairly easy to read	Text Scale 75.1  Fairly easy to read	Grade Level 6.1  6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (9 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 7.0  Grade level 7 (Grade level 10)	Index 8  8 <sup>th</sup> Grade (11 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 5.5 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> Graders  for 8-9 yrs olds (11-12 years)	6th/7th Grades  (9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> Grades)  Fairly easy to read  Reading age - 11-13 yrs (14 -16 years)
	2	Text scale 6.3  Fairly easy to read	Text Scale 81.5  Easy to read	Grade Level 4.3  4 <sup>th</sup> Grade (7 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 7 <sup>th</sup>  Grade level (Grade level 10)	Index 7  7 <sup>th</sup> Grade (10 <sup>th</sup> )	Index 3.2 3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> Graders  for 6-7 yrs olds (11-12yr)	4th/5th Grades  Easy to read  Reading age - 8-9 yrs (11-12 years)

							olds)	
	3	Text scale 7.4  Fairly easy to read	Text Scale 82  Easy to read	Grade Level 5  5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (8 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Index 5.9  Grade level 6 (Grade level 9)	Index 6  6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (9 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 3.6 4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> Graders (7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> Graders)  for 8-9 yrs olds (11-12)	4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> Graders  Easy to read  Reading age - 8- 9 yrs (11-12 yrs)
	4	Text scale 8.6  Easy to read	Text Scale 80.9  Easy to read	Grade Level 6.4  6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (9 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 5.8  Grade level 6 (Grade level 9)	Index 5  5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (8 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Index 5.8 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> Graders  for 10-11 yrs olds (13-14)	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> Grades (8 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> Graders)  Easy to read  Reading age - 10-11 yrs (13-14 yrs.)
BOOK 3	1	Text scale 7.9  Fairly easy to read	Text Scale 83  Easy to read	Grade Level 5.4  5 <sup>th</sup> Grade (8 <sup>TH</sup> )	Index 5.2  Grade level 5 (Grade level 8)	Index 6  6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (9 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Index 4.6 4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> Graders  for 8-9 yrs olds (11-12 yrs)	5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> Grades  Easy to read  Reading age - 10-11 yrs old (13- 14 yrs)
	2	Text scale 13.6  Hard to read	Text Scale 52.8  Fairly difficult	Grade Level 11  11 <sup>th</sup> Grade (14 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Index 9.9  Grade level 10 (grade level 13)	Index 10  10 <sup>th</sup> Grade (13 <sup>th</sup>	Index 11.1 10 <sup>th</sup> /11 <sup>th</sup> Graders (13 <sup>th</sup> /14 <sup>th</sup> Graders)	10 <sup>th</sup> /11 <sup>th</sup>  Fairly difficult to read  Reading age - 15-17 yrs (18-20

			to read			Grade)	for 15-17 yrs olds (18-20 yrs. old)	yrs)
	3	Text scale 10.1  Hard to read	Text Scale 62.8  Standard / Average	Grade Level 9.3  9 <sup>th</sup> Grade (12 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 9  Grade level 9 (Grade level 12)	Index 9  9 <sup>th</sup> Grade (12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Index 8.6 8 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> Graders  for 13-15 yrs olds (16-18 yrs)	9 <sup>th</sup> Grades  Standard / average  Reading age - 13-15 yrs (16-18 yrs)
	4	Text scale 13.5  hard to read	Text Scale 45.6  hard to read	Grade Level 12.5  College level	Index 11.5  Grade level 12 (Grade level 15)	Index 11  11 <sup>th</sup> Grade (14 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	Index 13.1 College level  for 18-19 yrs olds (21-22 yrs)	College level  difficult to read  Reading age - 18-19 yrs (21-22 yrs)



### **Contributors to this Issue**

**Amitabh Vikram Dwivedi**, PhD and assistant professor of linguistics at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra Jammu & Kashmir 182 320, India, and author of two books on lesser known Indian languages: *A Grammar of Hadoti* and *A Grammar of Bhadarwahi*.

E-mail: amitabhvikram@yahoo.co.in

**Dora F. Edu-Buandoh**, PhD is Associate Professor in the Department of English, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana,

E-mail: dora.edubuandoh@ucc.edu.gh

**Charles Owu-Ewie**, PhD teaches in the Faculty of Languages Education at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

E-mail: charowu12345@yahoo.com / owuewie1@gmail.com

## Format for References

References made in the notes or in the text should include author's last name, the date of publication and the relevant page number(s), e.g. (Chomsky 1972: 63-4).

There should be a separate list of references at the end of the paper, but before any appendices, in which all and only items referred to in the text and the notes are listed in alphabetical order according to the surname of the first author. When the item is a book by a single author or a collection of articles with a single editor, give full bibliographical details in this order: name of author or editor, date of publication, title of the work, place of publication and publisher. Be absolutely sure that all names and titles are correctly spelled. Examples:

Bauman, Richard, 1986. *Story, Performance and Event*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fiona McLaughlin, ed., 2009. *The Languages of Urban Africa*. London & New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

If the book has more than one author or editor, they should all be given, the first appearing as above, the others with their first name or initial placed before the surname:

Heine, Bernd and Derek Nurse, eds., 2000. *African Languages, an Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

An article appearing in an edited book should be referenced under the author's name, with the editor(s) and full details of the book and page numbers of the particular article. For example:

Bender, Lionel M., 2000. Nilo-Saharan. In Bernd Heine and Derek Nurse, eds., *African Languages, an Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 43-73.

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Bender, Lionel M., 2000. Nilo-Saharan. In Heine and Nurse, eds., *African Languages* pp. 43-73.

Or, you can mention just the editors and the publication date:

Bender, Lionel M., 2000. Nilo-Saharan. In Heine and Nurse eds., 2000: 43-73.

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PLEASE follow these guidelines closely when preparing your paper for submission. The editors reserve the right to reject inadequately prepared papers. All areas of linguistics are invited – the journal is not limited to articles on languages of or in Ghana or Africa.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS must be submitted in English, in electronic format to the current Editor-in-Chief, at [medakubu@ug.edu.gh](mailto:medakubu@ug.edu.gh) or [medakubu@gmail.com](mailto:medakubu@gmail.com). Authors should be sure to keep hard and soft copies for their own future reference. Articles should not exceed 10,000 words in length. They should be written in a text format or a recent version of Word. PDF format is not acceptable.

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**THE FIRST PAGE** should contain the title but not the author's name. It should begin with an **ABSTRACT** of the paper. Abstracts in both English and French are particularly welcome.

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