

Plurilingualism and Curricula Advancement in Colleges of Education in Ghana: Softening the Boundaries between Languages

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Abstract: The study underpinned “Plurilingualism and Curricula Advancement in Colleges of Education in Ghana: Softening the Boundaries between Languages”.

The mixed research method was used in extracting data from conference papers from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and published reports on the subject matter as well as administering the battery of test (questionnaires) to 650 respondents, selected through simple random sampling from a population of 1000. The findings were analyzed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS, 22.0).

The study found that significant level of 0.65 vehemently agreed for the inclusion of plurilingual approach in the curricula advancement of teaching English Language in Ghana's Colleges of Education. Thus, besides English Language as the instructional language in schools, basic foreign languages like Chinese and German (German Deutsch) should be inculcated in the curriculum of tertiary institutions and made compulsory for all students whilst concurrently laying emphasis on minority local languages for a lasting cultural heritage. There was also significant statistical emphasis towards adoption of plurilingual approach in the teaching philosophy of Communication Skills.

The researchers believe adoption of plurilingualism in the teaching methodology of Communication Skills (English Language) leading to softening of language barriers would culminate in: making graduates internationally ready for export especially amongst teacher and nursing trainees; ensure regional integration and further enhance Ghana's cultural heritage. In tandem with the research findings, the researchers recommended adoption of plurilingualism in the teaching philosophy of Communication Skills in Ghana's tertiary institutions in the earliest possible time since globalization remains the architect of economic growth and regional integration.

Key Words: Plurilingualism, Curricula advancement, Colleges of Education etc.

I. BACKGROUND

The researchers propose an innovative plurilingual approach in the teaching of Communication Skills (English Language) that softens the boundaries between languages in Ghana's Colleges of Education (García and Otheguy, 2019). The researchers focused on how teaching English as an adopted language in Ghana has traditionally been corroborated with teaching practices that encourage the

separation of English from the other traditional languages in the learner's repertoire and also within the school curriculum. The researchers then proceed to recommend that the boundaries between languages should be softened through the adoption of plurilingualism as embodied in the framework of the Council of Europe (Garcia et al, 2019).

Due to Colonization in Africa, most African countries adopted the language of their Colonized masters and Ghana is no exception. Ghana and other allied African countries adopted English as an official language of tutelage in the educational establishment, thereby making English Language the most dominant language of international communication, the world over.

Developing countries seek to augment foreign direct investments but one major setback of attracting investors and foreign students from investing/studying in Ghana is language barrier. A host of Chinese investors in Ghana really struggle in communicating with their Ghanaian employees and foreign students in Ghana equally struggle in adjusting to the academic environment in no time. What if Ghanaian educational stakeholders include basic Chinese or German into the curriculum for teaching and learning? Would it impact positively in building fervent relationship with donor partners? Since no country is an Island and must certainly be connected to the developed and colonized masters, would it be right to ask if the time is ripped for the adoption of plurilingual approach in the teaching methodology of English Language/Communication Skills in Ghana's Colleges of Education so that trainee teachers could be exported to other countries?

The limited scope of similar studies in developing countries makes this present one worthy of consideration and publication.

II. REVIEW OF EXTANT LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Plurilingualism

Plurilingualism embodies the intrinsic capability of varied speakers to decode individually or through teaching, more than one language or the ability to purposefully communicate

in different languages and partake in intercultural activities (Garcia et al., 2019). This ability is conceptualized in a repertoire of languages a speaker can utilize.

The researchers posit that an inclusion of plurilingualism in the curriculum would serve as an educational value that serves as the Genesis of linguistic tolerance: Learners' awareness of their plurilingualism may cause them to appreciate the worth to each of the various languages they themselves and other speakers use despite non resemblance (Garcia et al., 2019).

Most developing countries such as Ghana appears to have adopted English Language as an instructional language in its educational sector hook and sinker without recourse to the inclusion of minor languages in the curriculum, and even with the few minority languages added, too much hype is given to students who can express themselves perfectly in English and those who cannot but equally good in other local/foreign dialects are regarded as having poor mental reasoning (Cenoz and Gorter, 2020).

Learning English in Europe cannot be separated from the use of other languages in education. English is most often a language directly addressed in the curriculum and accompanies other state languages or minority languages that are also given priority within the curriculum (Cenoz et al., 2020; Gorter, 2013). Same cannot nonetheless be said of developing Countries such as Ghana as emphasis is laid on too much comprehensive and linguistics competence of the "Queen's" language at the expense of other equally important languages. The focus of this article seeks to discuss hard and soft boundaries between the teaching of English and other languages in the Ghanaian context. In the preceding paragraph, the researchers consider how teaching English as a second or foreign language has traditionally been associated with teaching practices that encourage the isolation of English from other languages in the student's repertoire and in the school curriculum. Then we proceed to consider how this policy has been questioned and how the boundaries between languages ought to be made softer and more fluid for effective tutelage and robust regional and sub-regional integration.

2.1.1 Hard Boundaries: Learning English as an Isolated Language in the Curriculum

Whereas the study of plurilingual communicative practices indicates that it is common for plurilingual speakers to combine elements from different languages, the boundaries between languages are usually defined, or hard, in school settings (Cenoz et al., 2020). Thus, the English language teacher is often expected not only to use English, but also to avoid any reference to elements of the first language (L1) or other languages. These ideas are deeply rooted both in society at large and in second language and foreign language teaching. Lfudi and Py (2009) explained how the idea of monolingualism as "an original state" (p. 155) has been reinforced in Europe by the one nation-one language ideology since the 18th century and still remains prevalent in many parts of the world. Within the educational context, this

monolingual principle excludes the use of the L1 in second and foreign language classrooms; the principle, associated with the direct method, has been widely accepted for many years (Cenoz et al., 2020). The related monolingual policy in English language teaching is associated with the goal of achieving native-like command of the target language, which is an unattainable goal for most students of English as a foreign language (Cenoz et al., 2020). The monolingual ideology encourages students and teachers to act as if they were monolingual speakers of English so as to achieve the unreachable goal of speaking English as if they did not know other languages.

2.1.2 Ensuring Softer Boundaries between Languages

This section focuses on how the notion of enacting hard boundaries between languages and using the idealized native speaker as a point of contact seems to have been whittled down within the perspective of Europe. In fact, the perception of boundaries between languages is really old. Bilinguals are viewed as those with full competent speaking or hearing abilities and possess unique linguistic profiles (Cenoz et al., 2020). According to Cenoz et al., (2020), multi-competence connotes complex form of competence entirely varied from the competence of monolingual speakers of a language. It is widely accepted that plurilingual person's linguistic competence is incomparable to a monolingual speaker. The Council of Europe (2007) succinctly identifies the difference between plurilingualism as the "repertoire of various languages which is acclaimed by many individuals" to the extent that "some people may be monolingual whilst others are plurilingual" and multilingualism, which encompasses "the prevalence within a jurisdiction, far more than one 'type of language'".

2.2 Teaching methodology

The instructional method of teaching Communication Skills in Ghana may take the form of reflective action-based teaching and translinguistic conceptualization. Each is elaborated below:

2.2.1 Reflective action-based teaching

Action-based teaching reflects inextricable from learner agency within the context of socio-culturally mediated ability to act. To this end, there is the need for a teaching methodology that assist learners to use the linguistic knowledge being constructed to better assimilate their communicative objectives. To the researchers, this is only feasible by blending the communicative approach with Concept-Based Instruction (Negueruela, 2013).

2.2.2 Translinguistic conceptualization

Being focus to establish and conceptualize translinguistic exercise remains an indispensable facet of the didactic sequence. This leads to blending insights emanating from language awareness (García, 2009) and CBI, as posited by Negueruela (2008, 2013). The term 'translinguistic

conceptualization' seeks to make discursive activities comprising varied languages, quite hypostatic, through a combination of interlinguistic, i.e. transversal, reflection. Such reflection appears greater in contrastive perusal, to become a strategy whereby learners situate themselves communicatively and cognitively in the discursive activity that they partake through holistic comprehension and appropriating its fundamental concepts.

III. METHODOLOGY

The heartbeat of every lofty research is its methodology. The researchers used descriptive research and mixed research method, including secondary data extracted from reports and conference papers as well as primary data in the form of administering questionnaires to 650 respondents as sample size of the study from a population of 1000.

The study used simple random sampling techniques for convenience in selection of local and foreign students. The simple random sampling technique is profoundly known for its suitability for social research, (Katz and Kahn, 1978). A total of 750 questionnaires were administered and 650 completed the survey resulting in a response rate of 86.67% response rate.

The researchers sought to ascertain what is meant by 'language teaching'? What is the linguistic reality in our school? Which role do I think the mother tongue plays in learning foreign languages? And other languages known by the learner? Answers to the above questions were the bedrock in the analysis of this study.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As espoused in table1, language teaching is statistically significant among domestic students and relatively significant among foreign students in Ghana. Local students in Ghana's tertiary institutions yearn more for plurilingualism than their foreign counterparts (Even though Colleges of Education have very few foreign students).

Linguistic reality in Ghana's tertiary institutions is statistically insignificant reiterating that besides the linguistics departments, all other departments do not take plurilingualism seriously. This is farfetched from reality as the researchers believe plurilingual approach should be established and made compulsory for all students so as to widen their skills and make them internationally exposable. Can you imagine a Ghanaian doctor/nurse/teacher/accountant etc who can relatively express themselves in basic Chinese, German and a host of other local minority languages? Ghana could be in a position to export its graduates to countries their services are needed most and language barrier will be a thing of the past for such graduates.

There was statistical significant association between ones mother's tongue and plurilingualism or ability to learn foreign languages. This finding seems to be abnormal in Ghana where the local dialect is entirely substituted for the English

Language as an instructional language in the educational sector. Can you imagine a foreign student grasping the basics in speaking and writing "Twi", "Kusa'al" etc after their study in the tertiary in Ghana? Can you imagine using the local dialect to explain terminologies in Science, Mathematics etc? Institutions, the nation and graduates stand a better chance of opportunities if plurilingualism is inculcated in the teaching methodology of English language or Communication Skills.

In this paper and for the purposes of this study, plurilingualism is defined as "manifest competence and ability to communicate in more than one language depending on the situation and circumstance for easy understanding by the recipient"

Table 1 Selected results from the OLS regression model on plurilingualism

In the teaching philosophy of English Language

Variable indicator	Domestic R ²	Foreign R ²	
Language teaching	.033***	.027***	
Linguistic reality in schools	.022***	.023***	
Role of mother tongue in plurilingualism	.035***	.047***	

***p \ .005 (Bonferroni cutoff); **p \ .001 Controlling for student characteristics: gender, foreign/local studentship
Source: Authors' construct (2020)

V. CONCLUSION

The study vehemently hypothesizes that softer language barriers should be adopted in the curriculum of teaching Communication Skills in Colleges of Education. Notwithstanding the fact that monolingual techniques still appear pervasive and emerging field in Ghana, the linguistics units in Ghana's Colleges of Education must regard plurilingualism as a dynamic competence that integrates linguistic repertoires towards an overall development of a plurilingual technique in English as a foreign language (EFL). There are plethora of benefits culminating in plurilingual approach for linguistic tutors, lecturers and learners alike:

- Enacting sustainable objectives. This unfolds the need to clearly establish attainable goals in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. The ultimate should be to assist learners to develop their linguistic and communicative competence so as to be well positioned as plurilingual teacher trainees, capable of export into other foreign nations.
- Enhancing plurilingual competence. The position of the researchers is that Colleges of Education in Ghana stand to benefit globally if students' plurilingual competence as a tool to progress faster in learning is fully harnessed. It is envisioned that, when students' plurilingual repertoires are fully harnessed, we don't only nurture their linguistic and

discourse skills but also their meta-linguistic perceptions. When plurilingualism is taken seriously in the curricula, students can use their practical epistemological orientation when undertaking an academic exercise.

- Coordinated syllabi. It is gainsaying that the curriculum advocating for plurilingualism should create an integrated syllabi for language teachers to ensure uniformity between the teachers of English and other languages. In this case, teachers can function well in a more harmonious academic relationship in the form of: communicative exercises, or grammatical structure within several languages so as to reiterate what the students learned in each of the various languages.

It is high time stakeholders in Ghana's educational environment tried to utilize the opportunity in accelerating the learning outcomes through plurilingualism as a resource other than an obstacle through goals establishment in Ghana's Colleges of Education. The government of Ghana recently exported trained nurses and the researchers envisage it won't be long when same would be adopted for export of Ghanaian trained teachers only plurilingualism in well-articulated in the curriculum of Colleges of Education. May language barriers not be an obstacle to such lofty policies when the time is due for exporting teachers.

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