Perceptions of First Language Usage and its Effect on Student Achievement in English Language Learning

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: This paper explored the prevalence of the use of first language, the perception of students on the influence of first language on English language performance, the challenges the use of first language bring to students in the process of learning English and measures to curb the use of first language to improve the performance of English at Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School.
Methodology: In this study, the target populations were students and English teachers at the Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School. 36 students were sampled using stratified sampling and simple random sampling. Five Teachers were sampled using purposive sampling technique. The study used quantitative research approach. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students and teachers. Quantitative data was summarized using descriptive statistics and presented using tables and bar graphs.

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Results: The study assessed the prevalence of mother tongue usage among students at Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School, revealing that 28 out of 36 students (77.8%) frequently use their mother tongue during English lessons. Additionally, 28 students (77.6%) reported that their first language positively influences their English performance, while 25 students (69.4%) acknowledged that reliance on their mother tongue can lead to poor English outcomes. Challenges identified include difficulties in writing and pronunciation, with 28 students (77.8%) agreeing that their first language affects their English writing. To mitigate these challenges, 29 students (80.5%) supported the implementation of a language policy prohibiting mother tongue use, while 75% indicated they face penalties for speaking their first language. The findings suggest a critical need for balanced language policies that promote English proficiency while recognizing the role of the mother tongue in education.

Conclusion: Findings indicate that while students often use their mother tongue, this practice has mixed effects on their English skills. Teachers acknowledge the need for a language policy favoring English, yet the lack of rewards for English use highlights the need for a balanced approach. Recommendations include implementing a bilingual education model that values both languages, alongside further research across diverse educational settings to enhance understanding and practices in language acquisition.

1. INTRODUCTION

As globalization continues to reshape our societies, the demand for effective communication skills has surged, making language acquisition a vital component of personal and professional development (Ushioda, 2017). Among the myriad of languages spoken globally, English has emerged as a dominant force, serving as a lingua franca that bridges diverse populations (Salomone & Salomone, 2022). This phenomenon is not merely a reflection of historical colonialism or economic power; rather, it encapsulates the essence of human interaction in the 21st century. According to Ghaffour (2022), English is no longer just the language of native speakers; it is now a global tool for communication. English is used in many non-native contexts, emphasizing its role in international communication (Kirkpatrick, 2014). This is particularly relevant in regions like ASEAN, where English serves as the working language among diverse cultures (Jindapitak, 2019).

Traditionally, English was taught with a focus on native speakers and their cultures. However, as English is now used by millions of non-native speakers, the teaching methods have evolved. Kopchak et al. (2022) pointed out that the way English is taught should reflect its global use, focusing on communication rather than strict grammar rules.

When children learn a second language (L2), they often do so alongside their first language (L1). This interplay between L1 and L2 is significant for their overall language development. According to Nagy (2016) a strong foundation in a child's first language can enhance their ability to learn a second language. For examples, if a child is proficient in their mother tongue, they are likely to find it easier to learn English or any other language later on.

Griva and Chouvarda (2012) emphasized the importance of parents' beliefs and attitudes towards language learning. They argued that when parents support their children's bilingualism, it can lead to better educational outcomes. This support can come in many forms, such as reading books in both languages, encouraging conversations at home, or even enrolling children in bilingual education programs.

In many countries, English is the medium of instruction in schools and universities (Sultana & Fang, 2024; Wu & Tsai, 2024). In many educational institutions' students are not only learning English as a subject but are also using it to learn other subjects like math and science. Students who are not yet proficient in English may struggle to understand complex concepts taught in English (Yao et al., 2019). Therefore, educators must find ways to support these students, such as providing additional language resources or using visual aids to enhance understanding. When students learn English,

they are exposed to different cultures and perspectives. This exposure can help them develop empathy and appreciation for diversity. Honna (2012) stated that teaching English as a multicultural lingua franca can enrich students' educational experiences by promoting intercultural communication.

In Ghana, English is the official language and is primarily used as the medium of instruction in schools (Djorbua et al., 2024). This practice stems from the colonial history of the country, where English was introduced and became associated with power and prestige (Ahima et al., 2023). However, many children in Ghana come from homes where local languages are spoken. This creates a situation where students may struggle to understand lessons taught in English, especially in the early years of schooling (Djorbua et al., 2024). According to Reilly et al. (2022) when children learn in a language they do not fully understand, it can hinder their learning and academic performance.

A study by Opoku-Amankwa (2009) stated that the English-only policy can create barriers for students who are not proficient in English. This can lead to feelings of frustration and disengagement from the learning process. In contrast, when students are allowed to use their mother tongues, they tend to perform better academically and feel more confident in their abilities (Carter et al., 2020).

Many teachers and students in Ghana switch between English and local languages, a practice known as code-switching (Acquah, 2022). This approach can help bridge the gap between the language of instruction and the languages spoken at home. Research by Yevudey (2013) shows that code-switching can enhance understanding and participation in lessons, allowing students to grasp concepts more effectively. This flexibility in language use reflects the reality of many Ghanaian students who navigate multiple languages.

Susuawu and Asiegbor (2021) argued that embracing multilingualism can contribute to economic growth and social cohesion. By recognizing and valuing local languages alongside English, Ghana can foster a more inclusive educational environment. This approach can help preserve cultural identities while equipping students with the language skills needed for a globalized world.

The Ghanaian government has made efforts to promote multilingual education (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). Policies have been introduced to encourage the use of local languages in early childhood education. This is based on the understanding that children learn best in a language they understand (Appiah & Ardila, 2021). However, the implementation of these policies has faced challenges. Many teachers are not adequately trained to teach in local languages, and resources are often limited (Dankwa et al., 2023).

The language spoken at home also influences how children learn in school. For example, children who speak a local language at home may find it easier to learn in that language (Djorbua et al., 2024). However, if they are then taught in English, they may struggle to keep up. Djorbua et al. (2024) further emphasized the need for a balanced approach to language instruction in Ghanaian schools. They suggest that integrating local languages with English can create a more effective learning environment (Djorbua et al., 2024). This approach not only supports students' academic success but also promotes cultural pride and identity.

One of the main reasons' students rely on their first language is that it is the language they are most comfortable with. Andiyani et al. (2019) found that students often feel more confident expressing themselves in their L1, especially when they do not know the English vocabulary needed to communicate their thoughts. This led to a situation where students switch back to their first language during English lessons, which can hinder their progress in learning English. When students use their L1 too much, they miss out on important opportunities to practice and improve their English skills.

The influence of students' backgrounds also plays a significant role in their language learning. According to Ibrahim et al. (2018) students' attitudes towards learning English can be affected by their experiences and the support they receive at home. Students from families that value English education will be more motivated to learn and practice English. On the other hand, students who do not receive encouragement or support may struggle to see the importance of learning English, leading them to rely more on their first language.

In many classrooms, teachers encourage students to speak only in English. However, this

can create pressure for students who are not yet confident in their English skills. According to Copland et al. (2014) students feel frustrated when they are not allowed to use their L1, as it can make it difficult for them to express their ideas and participate in class discussions. This frustration can lead to a lack of engagement and motivation to learn English, further reinforcing their reliance on their first language.

Despite the recognized importance of English proficiency, there is a gap in studies regarding the specific challenges' students face when learning English. Many studies have focused on general language learning strategies (Akowuah et al., 2018; Gyasi & Owusu, 2024; Kpeglo & Mortey, 2021), but fewer have examined the unique experiences and perceptions of students who rely heavily on their first language. While some research has explored the impact of parental support on language learning (Arshad et al., 2012), there is still a need to understand how students perceive their own language abilities and the challenges they encounter in the classroom (Arshad et al., 2012).

The perceptions of students regarding their English language learning can influence their performance. For example, if students believe that they cannot succeed in learning English, they may not put in the effort needed to improve. Wang found that students' attitudes towards English can affect their motivation and willingness to engage in learning activities (Wang, 2022). This paper therefore explored the prevalence of the use of first language, the perception of students on the influence of first language on English language performance, the challenges the use of first language bring to students in the process of learning English and measures to curb the use of first language to improve the performance of English at Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School.

Research question:

This paper addressed the following questions.
1. What is the prevalence of first language usage among students at Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School during English language learning?
2. How do students perceive the influence of their first language on their performance in learning English?
3. What challenges do students face when using their first language while learning English?

4. What measures can be implemented to reduce the use of first language in order to enhance students' performance in English

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design employed in this study was a descriptive survey, aligning with Sarantakos (2013) framework that connects philosophical assumptions to data collection methods. This quantitative approach facilitated the collection of data through closed-ended questionnaires, allowing for statistical inferences regarding the influence of the Ewe language on pupils' English performance at Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School. The study targeted English teachers and students, with a sample size of 36 pupils selected using Slovin's Formula to ensure credibility and representativeness.

The sampling technique utilized was simple random sampling, enhancing the validity of the findings by ensuring that every student had an equal chance of selection. Data collection involved both primary sources, through questionnaires, and secondary sources, including literature reviews. Pre-testing of the questionnaire was conducted to refine the instrument, ensuring clarity and reliability.

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Version 26, employing descriptive statistics to summarize findings. Ethical considerations were paramount, with adherence to research ethics policy, ensuring participant confidentiality and the right to withdraw. The researchers sent an introductory letter to seek permission from the headmaster of Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School. Then after getting permission the researchers visited the school to deliver the questionnaire to teachers and pupil at an arranged time period. As the researcher deliver the questionnaires, the questionnaire was elaborated to the respondents on the aim of the research and also answer the question that respondents did not understand clearly. The data collection lasted for a period of two weeks.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

This section delves into the background of the participants in terms of gender and age of the participants. It also considers the class of the

students and the educational level of teachers and also the length of teaching experience.

Out of the 36 participants who were involved in filling in the questionnaire majority 20 (56%) were male while 16(44%) were female and therefore both genders were well represented. It was important to find out the gender of the participants for further analysis of the responses; for example, finding the number of boys or girls who felt that use of their mother tongue influences the performance of English. Besides, the school is a mixed school so it was essential to consider the fair distribution of the students' gender. According to Lado (1995) when doing a study on a language both genders have to be considered since they show different characteristics in terms of the use of language.

The age distribution of participants was considered in an effort to confirm whether the participants are of school age. Table 1 shows that a majority of the participants 30(83.30%) were in the age between 5 - 10 years while 6(17.70%) were in the age 11 years and above Class 6, Class 5 and Class 4 students were considered since they are senior members of the

students' fraternity and therefore are believed to have relevant information. The Majority 15 (41.67%%) of the respondents were in Class 4 followed by 14 (39%) in Class 6 whilst 7 (19.40%) were in Class 5. These findings show that the distribution of the students was even between Class 6, Class 5 and Class 4.

Teachers were also sampled for the study. A majority of the English teachers who participated in this study were males 3 (60%) while 2 (40%) were female. Thus, the two genders are adequately represented. There was also the breakdown of respondents according to their educational level. The results depict that 2 (40%) of the respondents were certificate holders. 2 (40%) of them were also Diploma holders whilst 1 (20%) of the respondents was a degree holder.

The teaching experience was important because the researchers sampled English teachers on the premise that they are rich in information. Table 1 shows that 2 (40%) of English teachers had taught between 1-5 years. A similar number of 2 teachers representing 40% had taught between 6-10 years and only 1 teacher (20%) had taught between 11-15 years.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Demographics of Students		
Total	*36*	*100%*
Gender		
Male	20	56%
Female	16	44%
Age of students		
5-10 years	30	83.30%
11 years and above	6	17.70%
Class		
Class Four	15	41.70%
Class Five	7	19.40%
Class Six	14	39%
Demographics of Teachers		
Total	*5*	*100%*
Gender		
Male	3	60%
Female	2	40%
Educational Level		
Teacher Training certificate holders.	2	40%
Diploma Holders	2	40%
Degree Holders	1	20%
Length of Teaching Experience		
1-5 years	2	40%
6-10 years	2	40%
11–15years	1	20%

Field Survey, 2024

3.2 Prevalence of the Use of Mother Tongue

Students' response to prevalence of use of mother tongue: Students' participants for this study were examined on the prevalence of the use of mother tongue in school. The respondents were asked the language their teachers of English use. All the 36 (100%) indicated the use of English.

Fig. 1. below presents a summary on whether teachers of English switch languages during their presentations in the class.

The findings presented in Fig. 1 indicated that majority 32(88%%) of the respondents said Yes whilst 4(12%) of the respondents said No.

Fig. 2 below presents a summary on how often teachers of English switch languages during their presentations in the class.

Out of the 32 respondents who indicated that teachers of English switch languages during their presentations in the class, majority 30(93.7%) of them indicated they switch codes very often whilst 2(6.3%) of them indicated they rarely switch codes when teaching.

Fig. 3 below presents a summary on whether students switch languages during communication in school.

Fig. 3 findings indicated that majority 34(94.4%%) of the respondents said Yes whilst 2(5.6%) of them respondents said No.
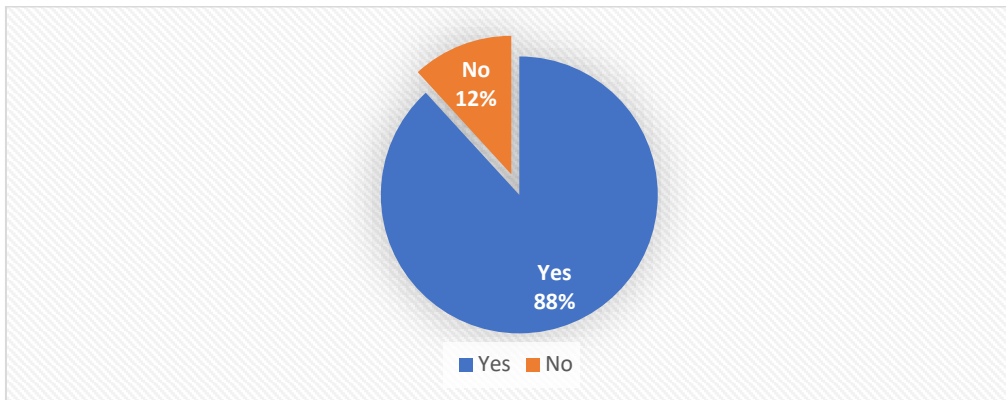

Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents on whether teachers of English switch languages during the presentations in the class
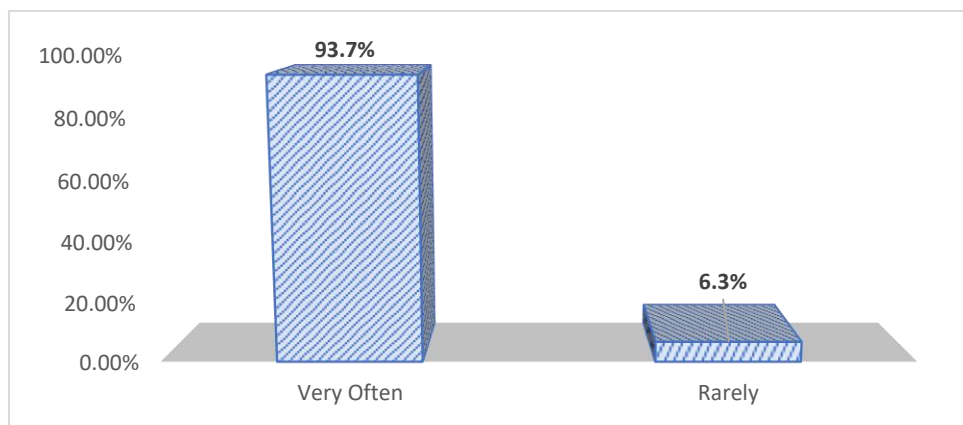*Field Survey, 2024*

Fig. 2. Distribution of respondents on how often teachers of English switch languages during their presentations in the class
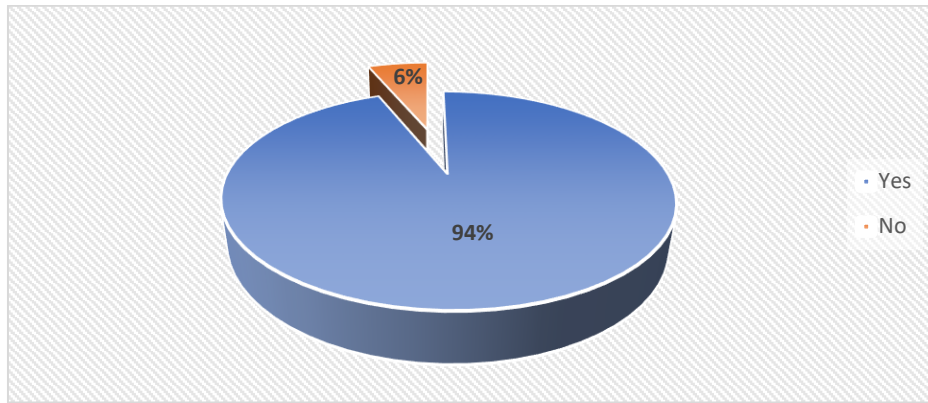*Field Survey, 2024*

Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents on whether students switch languages during communication in school
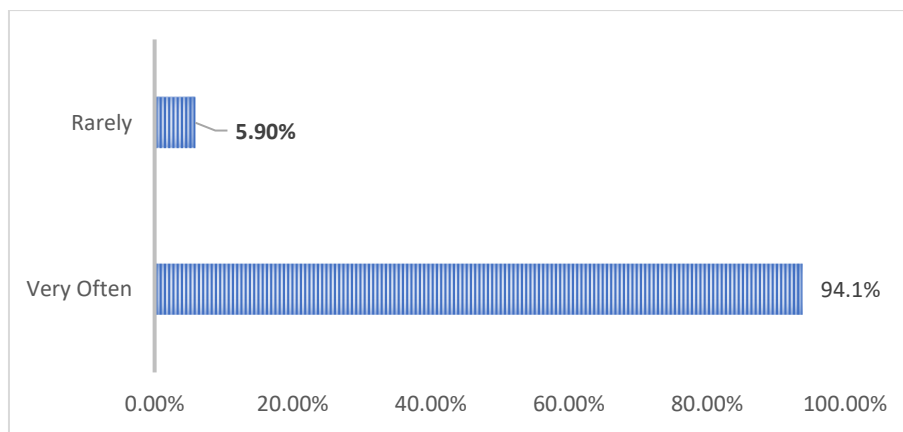*Field Survey, 2023*

Fig. 4. Distribution of respondents on how often students switch languages during communication in school
Field Survey, 2024

Fig. 4 above presents a summary on how often students switch languages during communication in school.

Out of the 34 respondents who indicated that they switch languages during communication in school, majority 32(94.1%) of them indicated

they switch codes very often whilst 2(5.9%) of them indicated they rarely switch codes when communicating in school.

Fig. 5 below presents a summary on how often students speak in their mother tongue when in school.
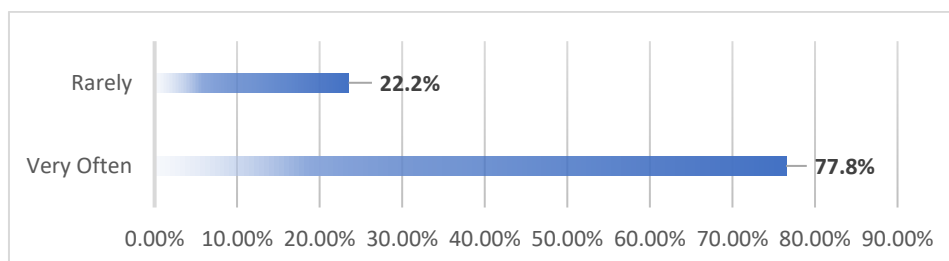

Fig. 5. Distribution of respondents on how often students speak in their mother tongue when in school
Field Survey, 2024

From the findings in Fig. 5 above, majority 28(77.8%) of the students indicated they speak in their mother tongue when in school very often whilst 8(22.2%) of them indicated they rarely speak in their mother tongue when in school.

Kootstra et al. (2012) explored the cognitive mechanisms behind code-switching and found that bilingual speakers often switch languages based on contextual cues and language proficiency. Their findings align with the current study, as the high frequency of code-switching among students may be influenced by their bilingual capabilities and the linguistic environment in which they operate.

Conversely, some studies have raised concerns about the implications of frequent code-switching. Tsoukala et al. (2021) emphasized that while code-switching can facilitate communication in bilingual contexts, it may also lead to language interference and hinder the development of proficiency in either language. This perspective suggests that while students in the current study are adept at switching languages, it could potentially impact their mastery of English if not managed appropriately.

Moreover, Ozfidan (2017) argued for the importance of mother tongue education, asserting that students should have the right to learn in their native language to enhance their understanding and expression. This aligns with the finding that a significant number of students reported using their mother tongue frequently in school. The implication here is that fostering an environment where students can use their mother tongue alongside English may enhance their overall learning experience.

The findings resonate with the views of Baker (2011), who posited that bilingual education should not only focus on the second language but also embrace the mother tongue as a vital component of the learning process. This approach can lead to a more inclusive educational environment that respects linguistic diversity and promotes cognitive development.

In contrast, Adesope et al. (2010) conducted a systematic review that highlighted the potential cognitive drawbacks of bilingualism when not properly integrated into the curriculum. They noted that while bilingualism can enhance cognitive flexibility, it may also lead to confusion if students are not adequately supported in their language development.

3.3 Teachers' Responses on Prevalence of Use of Mother Tongue

Teacher' participants for this study were examined on the prevalence of the use of mother tongue in school. Fig. 6 below presents a summary on whether teachers speak in their mother tongue in class.

Fig. 6 findings indicated that majority 3(60%%) of the respondents said No whilst 2(40%) of them respondents said Yes to speaking in their mother tongue in class. Furthermore, when those who said Yes to speaking in their mother tongue in class during teacher were asked how often they spoke in their mother tongue all of them indicated that they often spoke in mother tongue when teaching.

Fig. 7 below presents a summary on whether teachers switch languages during the teaching-learning process.
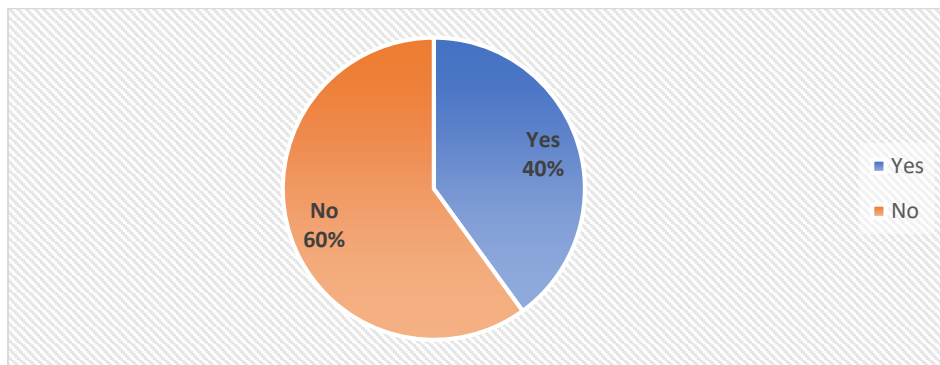

Fig. 6. Distribution of respondents on whether they speak in their mother tongue in class
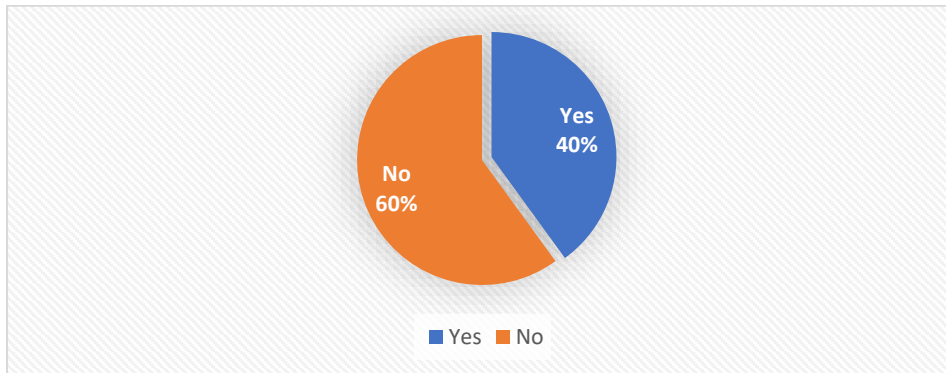*Field Survey, 2024*

Fig. 7. Distribution of respondents on whether teachers switch languages during the teaching-learning process
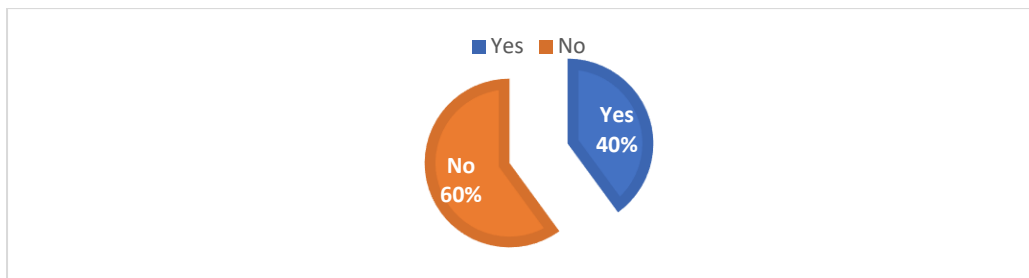*Field Survey, 2024*

Fig. 8. Distribution of respondents on whether students speak in their mother tongue in their school
Field Survey, 2024

Fig. 7 findings indicated that majority 3(60%%) of the respondents said No whilst 2(40%) of them respondents said Yes to switching languages during the teaching-learning process. Moreover, when those who said Yes to switching languages during the teaching-learning process how often they did that, they indicated that they rarely did that.

Fig. 8 above presents a summary of teachers views on whether students speak in their mother tongue in their school.

Fig. 8 findings indicated that majority 3(60%%) of the respondents said No whilst 2(40%) of them respondents said Yes to students speaking in their mother tongue in their school. Moreover, when those who said Yes to students speaking in their mother tongue in their school, they indicated that they rarely did that.

Bialystok and Barac (2012) study highlighted that bilingualism can enhance cognitive and linguistic development, particularly when children are allowed to use their mother tongue alongside a second language. Their research indicates that children who are educated in their mother tongue tend to perform better in metalinguistic tasks,

suggesting that the use of the mother tongue can facilitate learning in a second language. This supports the notion that the limited use of the mother tongue in the current study could hinder students' overall language development.

Contrastingly, Liu (2011) discussed the negative transfer of a mother tongue in foreign language learning, particularly in the context of Chinese students learning English. Liu (2011)'s findings indicate that reliance on the mother tongue can lead to errors in writing and communication in the second language, which may explain the reluctance of educators to encourage its use in classrooms. This perspective suggests that while the mother tongue is valuable, its use must be carefully managed to avoid negative impacts on language acquisition.

Jayanti and Sujarwo (2019) further argued that the global emphasis on English as a medium of instruction can marginalize students' mother tongues, leading to a loss of cultural identity and linguistic diversity. They contend that educational systems should strive for a bilingual approach that respects and incorporates students' linguistic backgrounds. This also resonate with the work of Ozfidan and Aydin (2017), who advocate for a

bilingual education curriculum that incorporates both the mother tongue and the target language. They argued that such an approach can prevent potential issues that arise from the exclusive use of a second language, which may alienate students from their cultural roots and hinder their academic performance.

3.4 Perception of Students and Teachers on the Influence of Mother Tongue on the Performance of English

This section seeks to answer research question two. Research question two sought to find out the perception of students and teachers about the influence of the mother tongue on the performance of English. The respondents were asked questions that aimed to get their perceptions on the influence of the mother tongue on the performance of English.

3.5 Perception of Students on the Influence of Mother Tongue on Performance of English

The study sought to find out from students' perception of whether the language used by teachers to converse influences their performance in English. The study also sought to find out from students' perceptions of whether the use of the mother tongue influenced performance in English. Table 2 below summarizes the findings.

Table 2. Students' perception of whether the language used by teachers to converse influences their performance in English

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Teachers' use of their mother tongue Influences students' performance in English.	28(77.6%)	2(5.6%)	0(0%)	4(11.1%)	2(5.6%)	36(100%)
Teachers who use English in conversation with students Influence students' performance in English.	26(72.2%)	4(11.1%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	36(100%)
Teachers always discourage students from conversing in their mother tongue.	28(77.6%)	4(11.1%)	0(0%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	36(100%)
Teachers' switching of languages in the classroom help in understanding concepts	28(77.6%)	4(11.1%)	0(0%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	36(100%)
Students who use mother tongue perform poorly in English.	25(69.44%)	5(14%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	36(100%)
Students who use English perform better in English.	27(75%)	3(8.3%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	36(100%)
The use of the mother tongue does not influence performance in English.	2(5.6%)	2.(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	26(72.2%)	4(11.1%)	36(100%)

Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that 28(77.6%) of students strongly agreed that teachers use of mother tongue influences their performance in English while 2(5.6%) agreed. On the other hand, 4(11.1%) strongly disagreed while 2(5.6%) disagreed that use of mother tongue by teachers influences their performance in English.

Besides, 26(72.2%) of students strongly agree and 4(11.1%) agreed that teachers use of English in conversation influences performance in English. On the other hand, 2(5.6%) strongly disagreed and 2(5.6%) disagreed that teachers use of English in conversation influences performance in English. Only 2(5.6%) of the students were undecided.

In addition, 28(77.6%) of the students strongly agree that teachers discourage them from using mother tongue in conversation while 4(11.1%) agree. On the other hand, 2(5.6%) of the students strongly disagree that teachers discourage them from conversing in mother tongue while 2(5.6%) disagree.

Moreover, 28(77.6%) of the students strongly agree that teachers switching of language help them to understand concepts while 4(11.1%) agree. However, 2(5.6%) strongly disagree that teachers switching of language help them in understanding concepts while 2(5.6%) also disagree.

Likewise, 25(69.44%) of students strongly agreed and 5(14%) agreed that use of mother tongue lead to poor performance of English. On the other hand, 2(5.6%) of the students strongly disagreed that use of mother tongue lead to poor performance in English whereas 2(5.6%) disagreed. Only 2(5.6%) of the students were undecided.

Table 2 also indicates that 27(75%) of students strongly agreed that students who use English in their conversation perform better in English while 3(8.3%) agreed. On the contrary, 2(5.6%) of the students strongly disagreed that students who use English in conversation perform better while 2(5.6%) disagreed. Only 2(5.6%) of the students were undecided.

Finally, 26(72.2%) strongly disagreed to the question that use of mother tongue does not influence performance of English while 4(11.1%) disagreed. On the contrary, 2(5.6%) strongly agreed that the use of mother tongue does not influence their performance in English while

2(5.6%) agreed. Only 2(5.6%) were undecided. Therefore, a total of 26(72.2%) of students strongly disagreed and disagreed to the question that use of mother does not influence performance of English. This implies that use of mother tongue influences performance of English in Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School.

Tale and AlQahtani (2022) highlighted that code-switching can be beneficial for learners, particularly beginners, as it aids in understanding new vocabulary and concepts. This aligns with the findings of the current study, where students indicated that teachers' language switching helps them understand lessons better. Similarly, Gámez (2023) argued that code-switching serves as a valuable learning strategy for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, reinforcing the idea that strategic language use can enhance comprehension and learning outcomes.

Conversely, some studies present a contrasting view. Kambey and Vuzo (2022) found that code-switching negatively affects language proficiency, suggesting that it may lower students' ability to master English. This perspective resonates with the findings from the current study, where a majority of students believe that reliance on the mother tongue can lead to poor performance in English. This dichotomy in findings underscores the complexity of language use in educational settings and the need for a balanced approach.

Moreover, the implications of these findings extend to pedagogical practices. As noted by Shafi et al. (2020), code-switching is not merely a deficiency in language use but a characteristic of bilingual communication that can be leveraged for effective teaching. The current study's findings suggest that teachers should strategically incorporate the mother tongue to support English learning while gradually encouraging students to use English more frequently. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Stylianou-Panayi (2015), who emphasized the importance of finding a balance between the mother tongue and the target language in the classroom.

3.6 Perception of Teachers on the influence of Mother Tongue on Performance in English

Teachers further responded to questions that required their response on perception of influence of mother tongue on performance of English. Table 3 summarizes the findings.

Table 3 shows that 2(40%) of the teachers strongly agree that students who use mother tongue perform poorly in English whereas 2(40%) agree. On the contrary, 1(20%) of the teachers disagreed that students who use mother tongue perform poorly in English. None of the teachers either strongly disagreed or was undecided. Furthermore, a majority of teachers, 3(60%) strongly agreed that students who use English in conversation perform better in English while 2(40%) agreed. Table 3 also shows that 4(80%) of teachers strongly agree that the use of mother tongue influences performance of English while 1(20%) agree. None of the teachers strongly disagreed, disagreed or was undecided.

Giang (2022)'s study specifically pointed out that learners should be immersed in an English-speaking environment to master the language effectively, which supports the current study's findings regarding the negative impact of mother tongue use. This view is further reinforced by the notion that language acquisition is significantly influenced by the amount of exposure to the target language, as noted by Tachaiyaphum and Sukying, (2017).

Conversely, some researchers argue against the absolute dismissal of the mother tongue in language learning contexts. Kustati et al. (2020) discussed the role of mother tongues in multicultural classrooms, suggesting that they can serve as a bridge to understanding and learning a foreign language, rather than a hindrance. This perspective highlights the complexity of language learning environments, where the mother tongue may play a supportive role in scaffolding students' understanding of English.

3.7 Challenges Brought About by Use of Mother Tongue

Students' responses on challenges brought about by use of mother tongue: This section seeks to answer research question three which sought to find out challenges brought about by use of mother tongue. Table 4 summarizes responses on challenges brought about by the use of mother tongue.

Table 4 showed that 28(77.8%) of the students strongly agreed that the use of mother tongue influenced the way they write in English whereas 2(5.6%) agreed. On the contrary, 4(11.1%) of the students strongly disagreed and 2(5.6%) disagreed that the use of mother tongue influenced the way they write in English. Furthermore, a majority of students 28(77.8%) strongly agreed that the use of mother tongue influenced the way they pronounce in English while 2(5.6%) agreed. On the contrary, 2(5.6%) of the students strongly disagreed and 2(5.6%) also disagreed that the use of mother tongue influenced their pronunciation. Table 4 also shows that 30(83.3%) of students strongly agreed that the language students think in influence how they write while 4(11.1%) agreed. On the contrary, 2(5.6%) of them strongly disagreed.

Table 3. Perception of Teachers on the influence of Mother Tongue on Performance in English

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Students who use their mother tongue perform poorly in English	2(40%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	5(100%)
Students who use English perform better in English.	3(60)	2(40%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(100%)
Use of mother tongue influences their performance of English.	4(80%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(100%)

Field Survey, 2024

Table 4. Students' Responses on Challenges Brought About by Use of Mother Tongue

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Use of mother tongue influences the way you write in English	28(77.8%)	2(5.6%)	0(0%)	4(11.1%)	2(5.6%)	36(100%)
Use of mother tongue influences the way you pronounce in English.	28(77.8%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	2(5.6%)	36(100%)
The language you think in influence the way you write in English.	30(83.3%)	4(11.1%)	0(0%)	2(5.6%)	0(0%)	36(100%)

Field Survey, 2024

Several studies have explored the implications of these findings. Liu (2011) discussed the negative transfer of Chinese to English writing among Chinese students, highlighting how their native language influences their writing structure and style. This aligned with the current study's findings, as it suggested that students may struggle with English writing due to the interference of their mother tongue. Yang (2023) emphasized the differences in thinking modes between Chinese and Western cultures, arguing that these differences can lead to challenges in English writing. Both studies reinforce the idea that understanding the influence of the mother tongue is important for improving L2 writing skills.

In contrast to the findings, Juan (2021) argued that while L1 can influence L2 writing, the development of logical thinking is equally important in enhancing writing skills. This perspective suggests that students can overcome the challenges posed by their mother tongue through the cultivation of critical thinking skills, which may lead to better writing outcomes. This is supported by Slim and Al-Omari (2023) research, which indicates that integrating critical thinking into English language curricula can improve students' writing abilities.

According to Moghaddam and Malekzadeh (2011), improving L2 writing ability is closely tied to the development of critical thinking skills. Therefore, incorporating activities that promote critical thinking and encourage students to articulate their thoughts in English could lead to better writing performance. This aligns with the views of Indah (2017), who posits that writing performance is closely linked to critical thinking and familiarity with the topic.

Teachers' responses on challenges brought about by use of mother tongue: This section seeks to answer research question four which sought to figure out challenges brought about by use of mother tongue. Table 5 summarizes responses of teachers on challenges brought about by the use of mother tongue.

Table 5 shows that 2(40%) of the teachers strongly agree that the use of mother tongue influenced the way they write in English whereas 2(40%) agree. On the contrary, 1(20%) of the teachers disagreed that the use of mother tongue influenced the way they write in English. Therefore, a total of 80% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed that the use of mother tongue influenced the way they write in English.

Furthermore, a majority of teachers, 3(60%) strongly agreed that the use of mother tongue influenced the way they pronounce in English while 2(40%) agreed. This shows that a total of 100% of teachers strongly agreed and agreed that the use of mother tongue influenced their pronunciation. Table 5 also shows that 3(60%) of teachers strongly agree that the language students think in influence how they write while 2(40%) agree. This shows that a total of 100% of teachers strongly agreed and agreed that the language students think in influence how they write.

Several scholars support these findings. Durukan and Kahraman (2021) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions of using the mother tongue in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. They found that teachers generally agree on the benefits of using the mother tongue for teaching vocabulary and grammar, while also recognizing that it can enhance students' understanding of complex concepts. This aligns with the current

Table 5. Teachers' Responses on Challenges Brought About by Use of Mother Tongue

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Use of mother tongue influences the way students write in English	2(40%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	5(100%)
Use of mother tongue influences the way students pronounce in English.	3(60%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(100%)
The language you think in influence the way you write in English.	3(60%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(100%)

Field Survey, 2024

study's findings, as teachers' acknowledgment of the mother tongue's influence on writing and pronunciation suggests they see it value in facilitating language learning.

In contrast, Saliu (2017), warns that relying too heavily on the mother tongue can reduce opportunities for students to practice the target language. This perspective highlights a potential downside to the findings of the current study, suggesting that while the mother tongue can aid understanding, it may also hinder the development of proficiency in English if overused.

Moreover, Pan and Pan (2010)'s research indicates that while the mother tongue can serve as a useful tool in the classroom, it should be used judiciously to avoid creating dependency. They argue that teachers should strive to balance the use of the mother tongue with opportunities for students to engage with the target language. This perspective suggests that while the current study's findings reflect a consensus among teachers about the mother tongue's influence, it is essential to consider how its use is managed in the classroom.

The findings indicated that teachers should be aware of the potential for negative transfer from the mother tongue to English writing. Liu (2011)'s study on negative transfer highlights how students' native language can interfere with their ability to write effectively in English, leading to common errors in syntax and vocabulary. Also, the unanimous agreement among teachers that the language students think in influences their writing underscores the need for educators to foster an environment that encourages thinking in English. Hidayati (2018)'s research

emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for students to express their thoughts in English, which can enhance their writing skills. This could involve incorporating more discussion-based activities in the classroom, allowing students to articulate their ideas in English before translating them into written form.

3.8 Measures to be Taken to Curb Use of Mother Tongue

This section seeks to answer research question four in which the study sought to find out the measures taken to curb the use of mother tongue in schools. Therefore, questions that were asked provided the investigation with information regarding measures taken to curb use of mother tongue. In retrospect, identification of measures taken to curb use of mother tongue confirms that use of mother tongue is a challenge in the context under study.

Students' responses on measures taken to curb use of mother tongue: Some questions that assisted the researchers to find out the measures taken to curb use of mother tongue were asked. Their responses are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that majority 27(75%) of students responded by strongly agreeing that their schools had a language policy while 5(13.5%) agreed. On the contrary, 2(5.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that their schools have rules and regulations on language. Only 2(5.5%) were undecided. Availability of a language policy is one of the measures taken by school to curb the high prevalence of use of mother tongue in Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School.

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Table 6. Students' Responses on Measures Taken to Curb Use of Mother Tongue

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
My school has rules and regulations on language.	27(75%)	5(13.5%)	2(5.5%)	2(5.5%)	0(0%)	36(100%)
The rules and regulations on language prohibits students from speaking in mother tongue.	29(80.5%)	5(13.8%)	2(5.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	36(100%)
Students who speak mother tongue punished.	27(75%)	5(13.5%)	0(0%)	2(5.5%)	2(5.5%)	36(100%)
Students who speak in English are rewarded.	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(13.5%)	28(77.8%)	3(8.3%)	36(100%)

Field Survey, 2024

The study further wanted to find out whether a Language Policy prohibits students from speaking in mother tongue. Table 6 shows that majority 29(80.5%) of the students strongly agreed that the rules and regulations on language prohibits students from speaking in mother tongue whilst 5(13.8%) agreed. Only 2(5.5%) of the respondents were undecided. This shows that a language policy plays an important role in prohibiting students from speaking in mother tongue.

Furthermore, majority 27(75%) of the students strongly agreed that they were punished whenever they used mother tongue in school while 5(13.5%) agreed. On the contrary, 2(5.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and also 2(5.5%) also disagreed. Also, Table 6 also show that majority 28(77.8%) of the students strongly disagreed that students who speak in English are rewarded whilst 3(8.3%) disagreed. Only 5(13.5%) of them were undecided. These findings indicate that students are punished often and rarely rewarded.

The data indicates that a substantial majority of students (75%) strongly agree that their school has a language policy in place, with only a small fraction (5.5%) disagreeing or remaining undecided about its existence. This suggests that the implementation of a language policy is recognized by students as a formal aspect of their educational framework, which aligns with findings from other studies that emphasize the importance of clear language policies in schools (Meneses et al., 2023).

Moreover, the study highlighted that a significant majority (80.5%) of students believe that the language policy explicitly prohibits the use of their mother tongue. This finding resonates with research conducted by Lehman and Welch (2020), which discussed how language policies in educational institutions often aim to promote a dominant language, potentially at the expense of local languages. The punitive measures reported by students where 75% indicated they were punished for using their mother tongue further illustrate the strict enforcement of these policies. This aligns with the observations made by Cushing (2021), who noted that language policies can lead to the suppression of students' native languages in favor of standardized language use.

In contrast, the study also reveals a concerning trend regarding the lack of rewards for students who use the English language, with 77.8% of students disagreeing that English speakers are rewarded. This lack of positive reinforcement may have implications for student motivation and engagement in language learning. Research by Chee et al. (2023) supports this notion, indicating that the absence of incentives can negatively impact students' language proficiency and their attitudes towards learning. The punitive nature of the language policy, coupled with the lack of rewards, may create an environment that

discourages students from engaging fully with the language learning process.

The findings suggest a need for a more balanced approach to language policy in schools. While it is essential to promote proficiency in a dominant language, it is equally important to recognize and value students' native languages. This aligns with the views expressed by (Norro, 2022), who emphasized the need for multilingual education that respects and incorporates local languages into the curriculum. The current study's results indicate that the existing language policy may inadvertently marginalize students' linguistic identities, which could have long-term consequences for their academic success and self-esteem.

Teachers' responses on measures taken to curb use of mother tongue: Moreover, teachers responded to questions that required them to bring out measures that should be taken to curb use of mother tongue. Table 7 summarizes the findings.

Table 7 shows that majority 3(60%) of teachers responded by agreeing that their schools had a language policy while 2(40%) strongly agreed. This finding indicates that availability of a language policy is one of the measures taken by school to curb the high prevalence of use of mother tongue in Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School.

The study further wanted to find out whether a Language Policy prohibits students from speaking in mother tongue. Table 7 showed that majority 3(60%) of the teachers agreed that the

rules and regulations on language prohibits students from speaking in mother tongue whilst 2(40%) strongly agreed. This shows that a language policy plays an important role in prohibiting students from speaking in mother tongue.

Furthermore, majority 3(60%) of the teachers strongly disagreed that students who speak in English are rewarded whilst 2(40%) disagreed. These findings indicate that students are rarely rewarded.

The findings of the study align with the observations made by Shvidko (2017), who noted that English-only policies can sometimes be detrimental to language acquisition, as they disregard the importance of a learner's first language in the learning process. Similarly, Meneses et al. (2023) emphasized that effective language policies should consider the linguistic backgrounds of students to enhance their literacy skills.

In contrast, Lehman and Welch (2020) argued that the implementation of language policies can be inconsistent, as teachers may not fully adhere to the policies due to personal beliefs or lack of training. This inconsistency can lead to a disconnect between policy intentions and actual classroom practices, which explains the lack of rewards for English usage observed in the study. Cushing (2021) discussed how language policies can sometimes reinforce a standard language ideology that marginalizes non-standard language varieties, potentially alienating students who are not proficient in English.

Table 7. Teachers' Responses on Measures Taken to Curb Use of Mother Tongue

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
My school has a language policy.	2(40%)	3(60%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(100%)
The language policy prohibits students from speaking in mother tongue.	2(40%)	3(60%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(100%)
Students who speak mother tongue are punished.	3(60%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	5(100%)
Students who speak in English are rewarded.	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(60%)	2(40%)	5(100%)

Field Survey, 2024

The findings raise questions about the role of teacher attitudes in the implementation of language policies. Ohanga et al. (2021) emphasize that teachers' beliefs about language instruction impact how policies are enacted in the classroom. If teachers do not believe in the efficacy of the language policy or feel unsupported in its implementation, they may be less likely to encourage English usage among students.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TION

In conclusion, the study presented the complex relationship between the use of mother tongue and English language among students and teachers. The findings reveal that while students frequently use their mother tongue in school, this practice has both positive and negative implications for their English proficiency. A significant number of students believe that their teachers' use of English enhances their understanding, yet they also feel that reliance on their mother tongue can hinder their performance in English. This duality suggests that while the mother tongue can serve as a supportive tool for comprehension, it may also create barriers to mastering English.

Teachers, on the other hand, recognize the importance of a language policy that discourages the use of mother tongue in favor of English. However, the lack of rewards for students who use English and the punitive measures for speaking their mother tongue indicate a need for a more balanced approach. The findings suggest that fostering an environment where both languages are valued could enhance students' overall learning experience.

The study underscores the necessity for educators to be aware of the cognitive implications of language use in the classroom. By strategically incorporating the mother tongue alongside English, teachers can create a more inclusive educational environment that respects linguistic diversity. This approach not only supports language acquisition but also nurtures students' cultural identities.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that educational authorities and school administrators implement a balanced bilingual education approach that incorporates both the mother tongue and English in the curriculum. This approach should aim to create an inclusive environment where students can comfortably use their mother tongue while gradually enhancing their proficiency in English. Teachers should receive training on effective strategies for code-switching and integrating mother tongue education into their lessons, as this can facilitate better comprehension and engagement among students. Also, schools should establish positive reinforcement mechanisms to reward students for using English, thereby motivating them to practice the language more frequently.

This study is limited by its focus on a single institution, Ho-Bankoe Methodist Primary School, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research should aim to explore the impact of mother tongue education across a wider range of schools and regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of its effects on English language performance. Comparative studies involving multiple institutions with diverse linguistic backgrounds would be beneficial in identifying best practices for bilingual education. Also, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term effects of mother tongue instruction on students' academic achievements and language proficiency. Investigating the perspectives of parents and community members regarding mother tongue education could also provide valuable insights into its role in cultural identity and student well-being. Lastly, research should consider the integration of technology in supporting mother tongue education, as digital tools may offer innovative ways to enhance language learning in multilingual contexts.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, participant's written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The researchers addressed ethical issues related to this study. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of the information they provided. They were also assured of anonymity if the information given was to be quoted in the study

or elsewhere. The respondents were given the opportunity to indicate their willingness to participate in the study or not. Official permission was also sought from the headmaster of the school investigated. The respondents were also encouraged to ask questions, seek clarification of questions they do not understand, and provide responses that are as honest as possible.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests or non-financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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