



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION COUNTRY PROFILE

Ghana

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCRD	Curriculum Research and Development Division
EGR	Early Grade Reading
GES	Ghana Education Service
GILLBT	Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
L1	First Language
L2	Second (or additional) Language
LOI	Language of Instruction
LOI1	Language of Instruction Spoken at Home
LOI2	Subsequent Language of Instruction
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NTC	National Teaching Council
PE	Physical Education
PTPDM	Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management
REEP-A	Research for Effective Education Programming–Africa
SBA	School Based Assessment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing reading skills in the early primary grades is a key education priority for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Despite some improvements in access and learning in sub-Saharan Africa, literacy levels in the early grades remain low and progress has been slow. As such, efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early grades have led to an increased focus on the role of the language of instruction (LOI). Recent research has demonstrated that mismatches between the LOI and the language that students and teachers speak and understand best can hamper effective teaching and learning (University Research Co., 2019). Thus, it is critical to understand the LOI policy and linguistic context of a country when trying to improve learning outcomes in the early grades, as this can be a potential barrier to gains in literacy and learning outcomes.

Currently, USAID supports **Early Grade Reading (EGR) initiatives in 19 countries across sub-Saharan Africa**. Many policies in these countries have recently shifted toward adopting the LOI spoken at home (LOI1) as the language for initial literacy acquisition, and then transitioning to a second or additional language, such as a regional, national, or international language, as the subsequent language of instruction (LOI2).

Government policies and strategies related to teachers and LOI reflect country priorities, approaches, and objectives for early grade literacy, and thus are crucial to the design of programs that are effectively aligned with country literacy aims and approaches. During the design phase of donor-funded reading programs, decisions are made regarding the manner and extent to which national policies are incorporated into project design, and when alternative approaches or additional elements need to be considered. However, government policies on LOI, and other information relevant for informing design, are often difficult to find and are not easily accessible.



The LOI country profiles aim to address this need. The profiles will allow the USAID Africa Bureau, USAID Missions, and partner organizations to quickly understand the country's linguistic and policy context in order to design an approach that most effectively helps improve EGR outcomes. These profiles, designed for 18 of the countries with current or upcoming USAID EGR initiatives, aim to clearly and succinctly describe and illustrate the country's linguistic landscape and official LOI policy. This country profile in particular provides information on language policy and practice in Ghana.

LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

According to Ethnologue: Languages of the World, published by SIL International, there are 81 languages in Ghana, all of which are living. Of these, 73 are indigenous and eight are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 13 of the languages are institutional, 46 are developing, 14 are vigorous, six are in trouble, and two are dying.

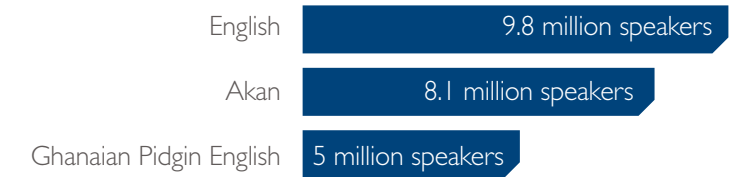
The national language and lingua franca of Ghana is English, which has 9.8 million second language (L2) speakers (out of a total population of 27.67 million). Ghanaian Pidgin English is also widely spoken, with 5 million first language (L1) speakers. Akan is the most widespread indigenous language in Ghana, with 8.1 million L1 speakers. Other widely spoken indigenous languages include Éwé (3.32 million speakers), Dagbani (1.16 million speakers), Dangme (1.02 million speakers), and Dagare (924,000 speakers) (Eberhard, Simons, Fennig, 2020). See Figure 2 for detailed information on languages and populations that speak them.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION POLICY

Ghana's current language policy mandates the use of the child's L1 as the language of instruction from kindergarten through Grade 3, with English as the L1 thereafter. English is taught as a subject in the lower primary grades, while Ghanaian languages become a subject of study from Grade 4 through Grade 9. The language policy states:

Where teachers and learning materials are available and linguistic composition of classes is fairly uniform, the children's first language must be used as the dominant medium of instruction in kindergarten and lower primary school (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2004, pp. 27-28).

Top Widely-Spoken Languages in Ghana

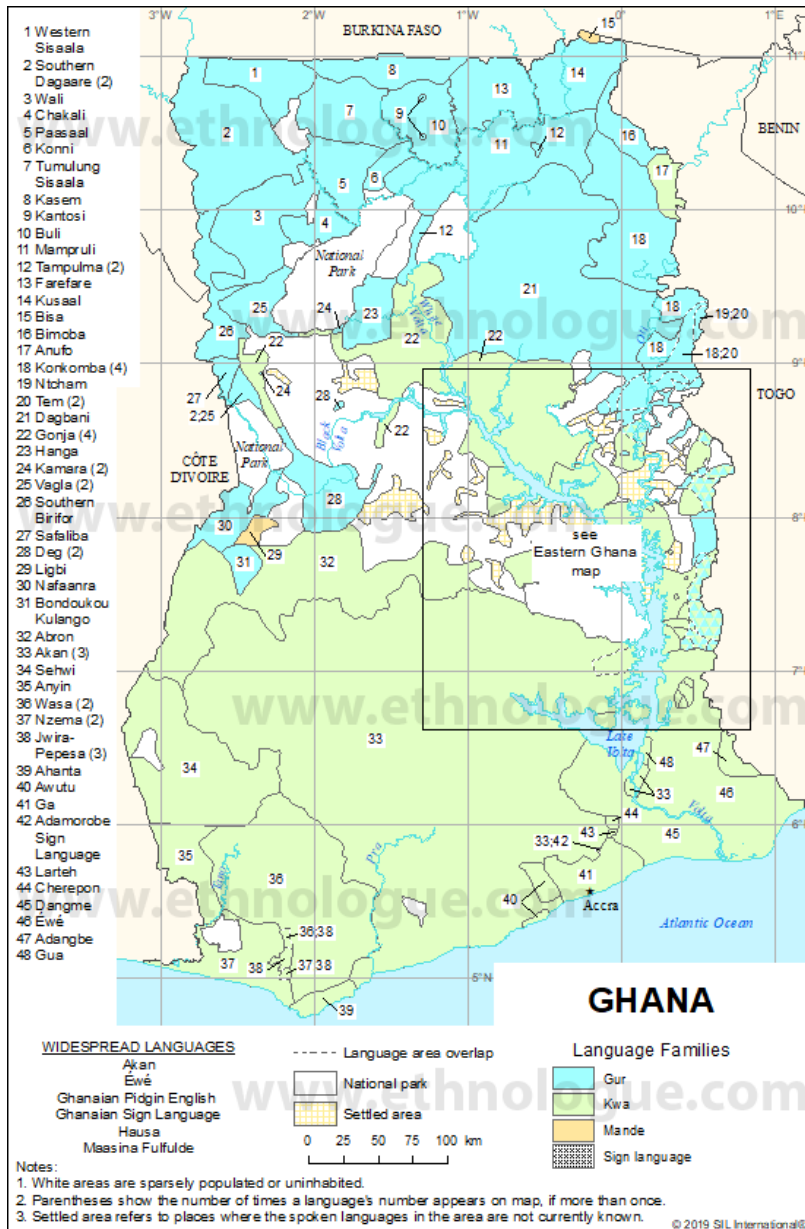


Source: Eberhard, Simons, Fennig, 2020.

Figure 1. Map of Ghana



Figure 2. Linguistic Mapping of Ghana



Source: Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

Instruction in the indigenous languages is limited to the 11 government-sponsored languages: Akuapem Twi, Asanti Twi, Fanti, Nzema (Akan ethnic languages), Dagaare and Dagbane (Mole-Dagbani ethnic languages), Ewe, Dangme, Ga, Gonja, and Kasem.

Materials have been produced in the 11 Ghanaian languages to support the implementation of the mother tongue instruction policy. However, these materials are only available for the literacy and language class and are not provided for other subjects. Official curricular guidance stipulates that instructors teach the other subjects in the Ghanaian languages up to Grade 3, using English materials. The National Syllabus for Ghanaian Languages and Culture states:

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

Research has shown that, overall, implementation of the mother tongue policy is relatively low (Adika, 2012; Awedoba, 2009; Davis & Agbenyega, 2012). Critics have argued that the policy is often not adhered to because the L1 of most Ghanaian children is not one of the 11 Ghanaian languages selected by the government to be used as the LOI. Another reason cited for low adherence to the policy is the “lack of textbooks and inadequate teachers to resort to the use of English as medium of instruction” (Owu-Ewie, 2017, p. 153).

CLASS TIME

In Grades 1 and 2, the majority of class time is spent teaching literacy and numeracy skills. In bilingual classrooms, oral language development is done in the L1 while reading and writing is developed in the L2.

Official instruction time is 25 hours per week in Grades 1 through 3. The suggested time allocation per subject is illustrated in Table 1.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR LITERACY

According to the 2015 Education Sector Performance Report, 62% of kindergarten teachers and 75% of primary school teachers in Ghana are trained, meaning they have at least a three-year College of Education qualification (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2015). To earn this qualification from a College of Education, teachers undertake two years of academic work and spend the third year in teaching practice.

The pre-service curriculum focuses on developing knowledge of the various subjects taught in lower primary and places little emphasis on preparing teachers with the pedagogical skills to teach reading and writing. For instance, only one of the four academic semesters is devoted to teaching methods as opposed to content knowledge (Akyeampong, Lussier, Pryor, & Westbrook, 2013). The curricula for training teachers for lower primary include the following components:

- Foundation academic studies consisting of the subjects taught at the first cycle level
- Specialized personal development studies covering communication and study skills as well as socio-economic issues that underlie national development
- Educational studies focusing on the learner in the context of the school situation and linked with the teaching–learning process and assessment
- Curriculum studies and methodology dealing with the study of the content of basic school subjects
- Practical training made up of school visits, school attachments, on-campus practice teaching, design and production of teaching and learning materials, and external school-based practice teaching lasting one academic year (Asare & Nti, 2014, p. 4)

Table 1. Weekly Class Time Allocation for Lower Primary School

Subject		Time per week
1	Language and Literacy 1 (L1)	5 hours (plus 1 hour library work)
2	Language and Literacy 2 (L2)	3 hours
3	Mathematics	4 hours
4	Science	3 hours
5	Creative Arts	3 hours
6	ICT	2 hours
7	Religious and Moral Education	2 hours
8	School Based Assessment (SBA)	1 hour
10	Physical Education (PE)	1 hour
Total		25 hours

Source: Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2012.

TEACHER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY/LANGUAGE SPECIFIC TRAINING

One of the greatest challenges to implementing the mother tongue language policy in Ghana is the lack of teacher proficiency in the local languages of instruction. Teachers are not prepared with local language skills, and thus are often not equipped to teach in those languages. Many teachers feel prepared to teach literacy only in English, as was the case with 79% of teachers surveyed (n=1079), who expressed confidence in teaching reading in English only (Akyeampong et al., 2013). In an earlier study, a Ghanaian language literacy test was administered to 2,418 teachers (Seidu, Ayoke, & Tamanja, 2008), finding that 18% of the teachers were not literate in any Ghanaian language, 63% were partially literate, and only 19% were literate in a Ghanaian language. A more recent and larger scale study, sampling 7,105 schools, found that only 57% of the schools employed teachers for Grades K-3 that spoke the designated LOI (FHI360, 2018).

TEACHER IN-SERVICE

The New Education Act (Act 778), passed in 2008, emphasizes the need for In-Service Education and Training (INSET). The act established the National Teaching Council (NTC), with the responsibility for setting and ensuring professional standards and a code of practice for professional development, registration, and licensing of teachers (Asare, Mereku, Anamuah-Mensah, & Oduro, 2012).

The Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM) policy, released in 2011, presents a framework for developing the skills and competencies of in-service teachers. As such, the policy stipulates that all teacher professional development programs adopt a competency-based approach to objectives and assessment. The policy also outlines a career promotion scheme dependent on both years of teaching experience and continuing professional development (Asare et al.,

2012, p. 8). To track the progression of teachers, the policy requires the NTC to establish an electronic register of all accredited INSET providers, programs, and activities as well as the continued professional development and additional qualifications earned by teachers. The PTPDM cites the following programs/activities to be provided for teacher professional development:

- Induction programs for beginning teachers
- School-based programs
- Cluster-based programs
- District-based programs
- National programs such as national curriculum orientation
- Programs leading to higher qualifications such as those offered by teaching universities
- Programs offered by international development partners (Asare et al., 2012, p. 9)

Further, the policy notes that the induction programs should occur in the first two years of the teachers' career and be organized by the district INSET unit and/or school headteacher and staff. The PTPDM indicates that the areas to be covered by the teacher induction programs should include:

- Professional code of practice
- Classroom management practices
- Professional standards in teaching
- School-community relations
- Assessment regulations and practices
- ICT enacted pedagogy
- Developing teaching and learning materials (Asare et al., 2012, pp. 9-10)

USAID READING PROGRAM APPROACH AND ONGOING PROGRAMS

The USAID *Partnership for Education: Learning (Learning)* is a five-year (2014-2019), \$71 million Activity that supports the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) to improve performance in reading for pupils in Kindergarten 2 (KG2) and Grades 1 and 2. *Learning* is implemented by FHI360 in partnership with the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) and the Olinga Foundation for Human Development. *Learning* works with MOE/GES staff in all 10 regions of the country and aims to improve reading performance in 100 districts, reaching approximately 1.1 million primary school students.

Learning prototyped pupil books and teacher guides in the Dagbani language in Grade 1 classrooms across 20 schools in the Yendi Municipal District of northern Ghana, starting in January 2017. Teachers, Head Teachers, Curriculum Leads and Circuit Supervisors were trained in the use of the materials, and books were produced and distributed to pupils on a one-to-one ratio for use in the classrooms. The prototype schools were monitored and teachers were supported to implement the program with fidelity. After measuring results, *Learning* has been scaled up from the 20 schools in one district to 7,404 schools in 100 districts. An estimated 1.1 million pupils and 30,000 teachers, Head Teachers and Curriculum Leads will receive over 3 million teaching and learning materials.

Learning employs a phonics-based approach and uses the 11 approved Ghanaian languages as the medium of instruction in KG2 through Grade 2. English materials are introduced in Grade 2 to facilitate the transition to reading and writing in English in Grade 3. Teachers in KG2 and Grades 1 and 2 receive teacher guides with scripted

lessons for three school terms, as well as alphabet strips for their classroom and a set of flashcards. The teacher guides include guidance on using supplementary reading materials as well as guidance on how to conduct assessment and review. Every pupil receives a pupil book for each term in Grade 1 and 2.

Learning's training approach is a cascade model. 120 National Core Trainers and 1000 District Teacher Support Team members are trained in *Learning's* reading methodology and in the use of the teaching and learning materials. The National Core Trainers train the District Teacher Support Teams, who in turn, train teachers, Head Teachers, and Curriculum Leads. Training includes face-to-face workshops and video-conferenced workshops conducted remotely from Accra with 20 e-Learning In-service Training Centers based in Colleges of Education across the 10 regions. Training also includes an e-course to complement and reinforce the face-to-face workshops.

Learning also supports capacity building at the district level by providing technical support for the development of a District Reading Action Plan. Within these plans, district level education staff set reading goals, monitor and support the implementation of the *Learning* Early Grade Reading Program, and promote a culture of reading in the communities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN USAID PROJECTS

The District Reading Action Plans, supported through *Learning*, are a vehicle to spur local initiatives that develop a culture of reading through activities, such as reading clubs, reading festivals, spelling bees, book kiosks and mobile libraries. *Learning* also supports districts in engaging private sector partners and the media to facilitate these activities.

OTHER DONOR FUNDED READING PROGRAMS

Alongside USAID, other organizations are involved in implementing projects to address literacy and language issues, which are detailed below, across Ghana.

World Vision's Literacy Boost Program

World Vision, with \$1.3 million funding from the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), is implementing the Literacy Boost early grade reading program in over 100 communities in the Fanteakwa district of Ghana. Literacy Boost is a literacy program created and owned by Save the Children that supports the development of reading skills in young children. There are three main components of the Literacy Boost program:

- Baseline and endline reading assessments to measure children's reading levels, evaluate their literacy learning needs, and help schools and ministries of education track student progress
- Training teachers to incorporate the five core reading skills into their regularly scheduled curricula in order to ensure that children are learning to read and remain motivated to learn while in the classroom
- Mobilizing parents and communities to support children as they learn to read through fun out-of-school literacy activities and through the creation of locally relevant reading materials (Save the Children, 2012)

Another key component of the Literacy Boost program are reading camps, which have been established to help children break through barriers to literacy at an early grade. The reading camps are a place where children can go after school and on weekends to build on the literacy skills they learn at school. They are facilitated by trained community volunteers who lead children through activities to build reading skills, including songs, games, story reading, and arts and crafts.

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