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LINGUISTIC INSECURITY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN GHANA: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The current study attempted to build an empirical model that examines how particular linguistic factors and practices—specifically, language attitude, parental coercion, and student victimisation—explain high school students' linguistic insecurity related to using their native language. The analysis of data obtained from 560 students in four Category A schools in the Cape Coast metropolis revealed language attitude (β = -0.240), parental coercion (β = 0.303), and student victimisation (β = 0.479) as significant predictors of students' sense of linguistic insecurity. The R^2 value of 0.322 indicates that the three predictors account for 33.2% of the variations in linguistic insecurity. Per the results of the proposed model, the study recommends that policymakers consider prohibiting certain school-related practices (particularly student victimisation) because it appears harmful to the maintenance of children's inherited language.

Keywords: Linguistic insecurity; Ghanaian language; English; language attitude; parental coercion

INTRODUCTION

Like many other African countries, Ghana is highly multilingual with 45 to 80 indigenous languages (Bodomo et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2009). To ensure the development and maintenance of these languages, the language in education policy (LEP) of Ghana outlines that in a linguistically homogenous basic school classroom, the native language of children should be adopted as the language of instruction for the first three years of education (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Nyamekye & Baffour-Koduah, 2021). Apart from their recognition as official languages of instruction at the basic level of education, the 11 government-sponsored local languages, namely Ga, Ewe, Dagaare, Kasem, Gonja, Nzema, Dangme, Twi, Mfantse, Gurune, and Dagbani, are offered as compulsory subjects throughout basic education and as elective subjects at the senior high school and tertiary levels of education in Ghana. Apart from their recognition in education, some indigenous languages, especially Akan, Ga, and Ewe, are used in national ceremonial functions and in the media (Agyekum, 2018). Moreover, scholars assert that the Ghanaian populace uses local

languages to mark their Ghanaian identity (Edu-Buandoh, 2016; Nyamekye et al., 2023). Despite these recognised roles of local languages in Ghanaian social life, the prestige attached to local languages is minimal compared to English, a foreign yet official language of the nation.

Ghanaian educational policies and school-related practices typically reflect Ghanaians' attitudes towards their local languages, which pose a threat to the development of these languages. Given the overwhelming importance placed on English, especially within educational domains, the younger generation is led to believe that there is no worth in gaining proficiency in their indigenous languages. An observation, especially among the educated class in Ghana, is that most Ghanaians consciously nurture their wards to grow up speaking English with an adequate level of proficiency (Agyekum, 2018). Usually, such practice is grounded in the conception that early exposure of the African child to English is the starting point of quality education and exposure to globalisation. Thus, denying the child early exposure to English is usually equated with an attempt to undermine the child's education. Consequently, some parents pay significant amounts to send their children to schools that enforce early immersion in English. The evolution of the LEP of Ghana is sufficient evidence of Ghanaians' contempt for local language usage in education. To wit, the LEP of Governor Gordon Guggisberg (in 1925) demanded the use of a child's native language for the first three years of education, but was vehemently opposed by concerned educational stakeholders, especially parents, because they misconstrued such a policy as an attempt by the British to give Ghanaians a substandard education. In 2002, the New Patriotic Party initiated a renewed LEP, which abolished the early exit transitional bilingual education model, which assumed that the primary cause of pupils' low academic standards was using the local language as the medium of instruction (Owu-Ewie, 2006; Fredua-Kwarteng & Ahia, 2015). Despite the continued emphasis of the current policy on using local languages for the first three years of education, the effort to implement it among various teachers seems remiss. Multilingualism and a lack of teaching resources have always been the unconvincing justification for the lack of policy implementation (Ansah, 2014; Anyidoho, 2018).

Evidently, within the educational terrain, Ghanaians are deliberately eradicating their indigenous languages. Nyamekye and Nketsiah (2024) note the lack of effective implementation of the language policy, one purpose of which is to ensure the maintenance and growth of the indigenous languages of Ghana. Nevertheless, the victimisation of students who speak their inherited languages on school premises is a common practice among almost all schools and teachers in Ghana and most African countries (Nyamekye & Nketsiah, 2024). In addition, pupils and teachers who pursue local languages as a course of study face stimatisation, both at the secondary and tertiary levels of education in Ghana. In this study, the researchers assumed that these ideologies associated with the local language were more likely to perpetuate linguistic insecurity among pupils, since they grow up believing that their local language has no academic worth. Although Owu-Ewie and Edu-Buandoh (2014) and Agyekum (2018) have claimed that such ideologies and practices tend to make children linguistically insecure, there has been little attempt to validate such

claims empirically. Hence, the current study sought to expand this scholarly discourse by testing these qualitative assumptions quantitatively, using partial least squares structural equation modelling analysis (PLS-SEM). In particular, by building an empirical model that examines how language attitudes, parental coercion, and, importantly, the victimisation of local language-speaking in schools contribute to learners' linguistic insecurity.

Section 2.1 provides a meticulous discussion of linguistic insecurity, and Section 2.2 describes the conceptualisation and development of statistical hypotheses for the proposed empirical model. Thereafter, Section 3.0 presents the research methodology, results, discussions, implications of the study, limitations, and suggestions for further studies.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 On Linguistic Insecurity

Scholars typically employ the term linguistic insecurity to describe a situation where speakers are emotionally concerned about the mismatch between a standard language and their actual competence. The root of linguistic insecurity is the belief that the dialect of a socially subordinated group of people is inappropriate for use (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006). Linguistic insecurity intensifies when speakers believe their linguistic competence does not conform to the standard or dominant language variety (Abtahian & Quinn, 2017). In other words, linguistic insecurity pertains to speakers' perception of the so-called ugliness, badness, and inferiority of the dialect or a variant of a language they speak (Meyerhoff, 2006; Preston, 2013). Practically, Abtahian and Quinn (2017) describe two different scenarios regarding the concept of linguistic insecurity: The first pertains to the speaker's perception of the appropriateness of the language variety itself, and the second to the speaker's perception of their level of proficiency relative to a particular language.

In a somewhat monolingual society, linguistic insecurity usually focuses on dialectal differences and their perceived acceptability and appropriateness. However, in multilingual contexts, researchers primarily concentrate on individuals' concerns and insecurities about their fluency in a dominant language (usually a foreign language imposed on them by colonisers) rather than their proficiency in native or inherited languages (Abtahian & Quinn, 2017). In the context of this study, linguistic insecurity refers to speakers' unwillingness to use their native language, given their apprehension of others' negative perceptions. Despite the paucity of literature on this topic in the Ghanaian context, related studies have shown that pupils tend to shift to the English language when they wish to portray a positive self-identity (Nyamekye et al., 2023). This change suggests that in some circumstances, people avoid speaking the local language as it does not portray their intellectual identity (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014; Nyamekye et al., 2023). Studies have found that linguistic insecurity correlates with language shift in multilingual contexts. The more embarrassed people feel about speaking a less dominant language, the more likely they are to change to a dominant language with world- or nationwide recognition (Bonner, 2001).

2.2 Model Conceptualisation and Hypothesis Development

This study devised a conceptual model that examines the predominant predictors of linguistic insecurity in the Ghanaian context. The researchers achieved this by synthesising previous literature on the potential factors that tend to promote linguistic insecurity among pupils in the Ghanaian educational context. After a meticulous review of Ghanaian literature and from observation of some home- and school-related linguistic practices, the study proposes in the current conceptual model that linguistic insecurity can be perpetuated by language attitude (LA), victimisation of pupils (VS), and parental coercion (PC). The upcoming paragraphs conceptualise these factors, develop hypotheses, and test them statistically.

Language Attitude (LA): Language attitude has received much scholarly attention. According to Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) and Coronel-Molina (2014), language attitude pertains to people's feelings, beliefs, and evaluations of a particular language, which might be either positive or negative. Language attitude indeed influences linguistic choices; typically, people have a favourable attitude towards prestigious languages. For instance, English is generally accorded a higher level of social prestige, especially in the African context (Edu-Buandoh, 2016; Nyamekye, 2022). The literature affirms that the prestige associated with the English language and other prestigious foreign languages compels most Africans, especially the educated class, to switch from their indigenous language to such prestigious languages to portray a somewhat higher social status. This prestige is not associated with the local languages. Unlike foreign languages, local languages are usually considered languages of illiteracy (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014; Nyamekye et al., 2023). An individual is likely to be stigmatised or considered primitive when persisting in speaking the vernacular, especially in formal domains. Such perceptions and misconceptions appear to be commonplace in educational settings. Hence, the likelihood is that pupils fostering a negative attitude towards the local language are more likely to feel linguistically insecure about speaking their indigenous language. Therefore, the study hypothesises the following:

H1: Language attitude influences pupils' linguistic insecurity

Victimisation of Pupils (VS): In the African educational context, English is erroneously perceived as a marker of pupils' intellectual status and, to some extent, an indicator of a promising academic career. These fallacies could be one of the primary reasons why most school authorities strive to ensure that their pupils gain an adequate level of proficiency in English, the language of the curriculum. To this end, most schools strictly advocate for the exclusive use of English as both the language of instruction and communication among pupils. Pupils are commonly victimised when caught speaking their home languages on school premises. The punishment of such culprits could be either physical or psychological. Fellow pupils are made to "police" local language speakers. In Ghana, victims are either lashed or expected to weed large portions of overgrown school property. In some schools, snail shells and filthy objects are hung around the culprit's neck as a form of humiliation. Similarly, a Ugandan case study by Nalubega-Booker and Willis (2020) showed that the punishment for speaking Luganda in school was either caning or wearing a bone necklace as a

source of humiliation. These practices have a disastrous effect on pupils' perception of the appropriateness of their inherited languages, since they are likely to grow up believing their languages are inferior. From the perspective of this study, such victimisation will likely make pupils feel linguistically insecure, especially if it succeeds in shaping their perception of their local language; thus, we tested the following hypothesis:

H2: Victimisation of pupils influences their sense of linguistic insecurity

Parental Coercion (PC): The importance of parental involvement in language preservation or shift cannot be overstated. Parental attitudes towards their home language influence whether or not their children develop a positive attitude towards the native language. Wu (2005) reveals that children's desire to use and maintain their ethnic language largely depends on their parents' level of attention to its use at home. This finding demonstrates that parents function as language models for their children's language use. Existing research suggests that most parents hold the mistaken belief that their children's competence in a foreign language—particularly in English, which appears to be the language of instruction in some nations—is an indication of academic ability. Most parents are overwhelmed by the prestige associated with ensuring their children demonstrate an appropriate degree of skill in a globally recognised foreign language (Ndamba, 2008; Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014). In the African context, several scholars have indicated that parental attitudes towards their ethnic language and their disapproval of it as the language of education threaten the maintenance of African indigenous languages in children (Iyamu & Ogiegbaen, 2007; Ndamba, 2008; Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014). Therefore, in the context of this study, the researchers assume that parental coercion can influence Ghanaian senior high school pupils' linguistic insecurity, and thus formulated the following hypothesis:

H3:Parental coercion influences pupils' linguistic insecurity

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework depicting how the various components structurally connect to pupils' linguistic insecurity.

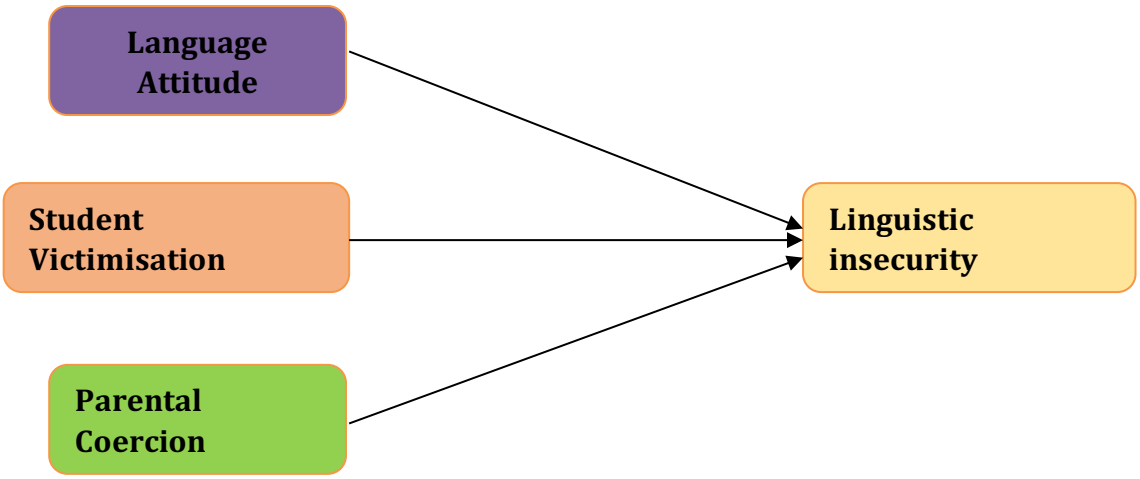

Figure 1: Linguistic Insecurity Framework
Source: Authors' construct

The proposed conceptual framework demonstrates that pupils' linguistic insecurity can be influenced by their attitudes towards the local language, parental demands for L2 speaking, and the fear of being victimised for speaking a local language.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study used a quantitatively oriented research approach, i.e., a cross-sectional survey design, to ensure the representativeness and generalisability of the research findings. We purposively selected so-called Category A (exceptional) senior high schools within the Cape Coast Metropolis because they are well-known for their high-quality education and policy of using English as the only medium of instruction and a language of casual contact among pupils. Most notably, the study selected these schools because they appeared to be among the rare schools that did not offer any of the local languages as a subject. Hence, we considered these schools ideal for the study. Five hundred and sixty pupils from four schools participated in the survey.

The study developed a questionnaire to collect data. After reviewing the literature, the researchers created categories to assess the factors of language shift in the African schooling context. The questionnaire design comprised four themes: Language Attitudes, Parental Coercion, Victimisation of Pupils, and Linguistic Insecurity, with a five-point Likert scale of agreement items for responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Table 1 shows samples of the categories and sample items.

Table 1. Constructs and sample items

Construct	Sample Items
LA	1. Proficiency in my local language is valuable for my personal growth.
	2. The local language is an important part of my cultural identity.
	3. I think that the local languages are very relevant in today's world.
VS	1. I could be punished by teachers if I speak vernacular.
	2. Teachers embarrass local language speakers.
	3. My seniors will punish me for speaking my native languages.
PC	1. My parents expect me to avoid vernacular to improve my English proficiency.
	2. My parents feel proud if I communicate with others in English.
	3. My parents think I may fail in academics if I do not speak English.
LI	1. I feel too local when I speak my local language.
	2. Speaking the local language is sometimes embarrassing.
	3. People will think I am too local when I speak the local language.

The study utilised PLS-SEM to evaluate the reliability and validity (both convergent and discriminant). The measuring approach (see Section 4) was adequate, meaning that the items assessed their respective underlying constructs thoroughly and appropriately. Following a review of the validity and reliability analyses, the structural model was tested to quantify the essential links in the proposed model.

The study addressed ethical considerations. First, the institutional review board of the University of Cape Coast (IRB) reviewed the study. After securing ethical approval from the IRB, the researcher sent an introductory letter to the headteachers of the senior high schools engaged in the study and obtained the subjects' permission. Crucially, the pupils volunteered to participate in the study; no subjects were coerced into responding to the questionnaire.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Demographic Data

Table 2 summarises the demographic composition of the respondents who participated in the current investigation. The table presents their gender, native language, and perceived degree of ability in their respective native languages.

Table 2. Demographic background of the respondents

		Count	Table N %
Gender	Male	283	50.5%
	Female	277	49.5%
Language			
	Twi	224	40%
	Fante	208	37.0%
	Ewe	40	7.1%
	Ga	32	5.7%
	Northern Languages	56	10.0%
Fluency	Very Bad	32	5.7%
	Bad	40	7.1%
	Average	112	20.0%
	Good	184	32.9%
	Very Good	192	34.3%

The total number of respondents who actively engaged in the survey was 560. Fifty-five per cent of the 560 pupils were male, while the remaining 49.5 per cent were female. The majority of the respondents spoke Akan as their first language (40 per cent were Twi speakers and 37 per cent were Fante speakers). Ewe speakers made up 7.1 per cent of the sample, while Ga speakers made up 5.7 per cent. The remaining 10 per cent spoke the languages of Ghana's Northern regions. As seen in the table, most respondents indicated an acceptable proficiency in the local language. Nonetheless, 72 claimed a lack of proficiency in their native language.

Measurement Model Assessment

In the PLS-SEM context, assessing the measurement model is a prerequisite for hypothesis testing to ascertain the validity and reliability of the constructs in the proposed model. In particular, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were assessed to determine the appropriateness of the model for testing the proposed hypothesis of the study. The subsequent subsections present the statistical results for validity and reliability assessment.

Internal Consistency and Convergent Validity of Constructs

According to Hair et al. (2019), the precise statistical criteria required for validity and reliability assessments are composite reliability (Jöreskog, 1971), Cronbach's alpha (α), and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which specifically assess the convergent validity of the constructs. Table 3 presents the statistical results of the constructs' convergent validity based on indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and the AVE values.

Table 3. Internal Consistency and Convergent Validity of the Model

Constructs	Loadings	α	rho_a	rho_c	AVE
LA		**0.785**	**0.778**	**0.835**	**0.508**
la1	0.734				
la2	0.614				
la3	0.862				
la4	0.729				
la5	0.592				
LI		**0.884**	**0.891**	**0.907**	**0.524**
li1	0.803				
li2	0.599				
li3	0.770				
li4	0.644				
li5	0.682				
li6	0.811				
li7	0.686				
li8	0.809				
li9	0.673				
VS		**0.868**	**0.886**	**0.899**	**0.600**
vs1	0.681				
vs2	0.730				
vs3	0.745				
vs4	0.793				
vs5	0.828				
vs6	0.856				
PC		**0.838**	**0.882**	**0.884**	**0.570**
pc1	0.421				
pc2	0.839				
pc3	0.842				
pc4	0.815				

pc5	0.772
pc6	0.754
pc7	0.421

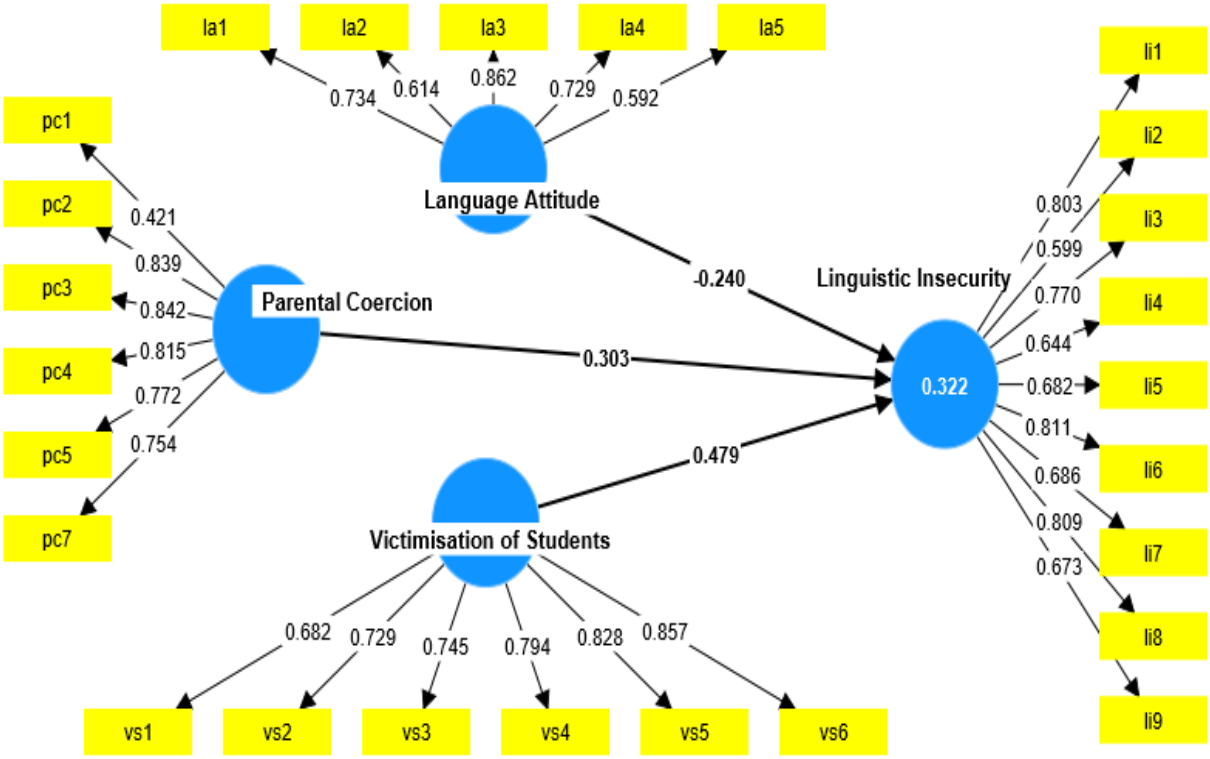

Figure 2. SmartPLS Measurement Model

The first step in evaluating the measurement model is to ensure that the indicator loadings are suitable. Loadings equal to or greater than the recommended criterion of 0.70 are typically acceptable, since they indicate that the underlying concept explains more than 50% of the variation in the indicator variable (Hair et al., 2019). Nonetheless, Hair et al. (2019) suggest that indicators with loadings as low as 0.40 can remain in the model, especially if they do not affect other indicator metrics such as the AVE. Within the context of this investigation, it is accordingly reasonable to infer that the latent variables have reached the required factor loading threshold. As depicted in Figure 2, loadings below 0.7 were retained because they did not affect the AVE values of the constructs.

The internal consistency analysis is the second element of the measurement model evaluation. This study examined both Cronbach's alpha reliability and Jöreskog's (1971) composite reliability. The purpose of composite reliability as an indicator of construct reliability is to determine how well the underlying construct explains the variability in its indicators. The statistically acceptable composite reliability criterion is .70 (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2021). Cronbach's alpha values and

composite reliability values of LA (α = 0.785; rho_a = 0.778), LI (α = 0.884; rho_a = 0.891), VS (α = 0.868; rho_a = 0.886), and PC (α = 0.838; rho a = 0.882) are distinct indications that the constructs of the model have excellent internal consistency reliability, as shown in Table 2. It is also worth noting that none of the composite reliability values exceed 0.95, signifying that none of the constructs have redundant indicators. The values also demonstrate that undesirable response patterns, such as straightlining, are low in the data, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019).

The convergent validity analysis using the AVE is the third factor in evaluating the measurement model in this study. The AVE determines how well the construct converges to explain the variations in its latent variables. In other words, it establishes a statistical argument that the construct indicators all point to the same underlying concept (Dos Santos & Cirillo, 2023). In practice, an AVE value of 0.5 or above is regarded as a good indicator of convergent validity. The constructs in this model are above the statistically acceptable AVE values, which is consistent with the suggested threshold, thereby implying that the indicators measured a shared concept.

Discriminant Validity

The study also performed discriminant validity analysis to assess the quality of the suggested model. This validity analysis focused on ascertaining how the many constructs of the model were theoretically distinct from one another (Voorhees et al., 2016; Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). In PLS-SEM, establishing discriminant validity often relies on either or both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait criterion (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2021). The discriminant validity of the current model is based on the two aforementioned criteria analysed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Under the Fornell-Larcker criterion, discriminant validity is obtained when the square root of the AVE of each construct is higher than the interfactor correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Hence, the discriminant validity of the current model has been established, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	LA	**LI**	**PC**	**VS**
LA	**0.713**			
LI	-0.151	**0.724**		
PC	0.124	0.25	**0.755**	
VS	0.109	0.438	-0.049	**0.775**

Table 5. HTMT Ratio

	LA	LI	PC	VS
LA				
LI	0.231			
PC	0.274	0.274		
VS	0.156	0.475	0.174	

When using the HTMT ratio, discriminant validity is achieved when the average of item correlations across constructs is significantly lower than the average of the item correlations measuring the same constructs. Discriminant validity is met when none of the HTMT correlations is higher than the 0.90 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2019). Thus, the HTMT values in this study further demonstrate that the constructs in the proposed model are theoretically distinct, as seen in Table 5.

Structural Model Assessment

The ultimate goal of the structural model assessment was to determine whether language attitude, victimisation of pupils using the local language, and parental coercion predict linguistic insecurity among pupils. The study assessed the structural model using the bootstrapping method. Figure 3 illustrates the results of the bootstrapping, i.e., the t-values of the outer and inner models, the path coefficients (β), and the coefficient of determination (R2). Table 5 presents further results of the structural model assessment, namely the significance levels of the hypotheses and the predictive relevance (Q2) of the model.

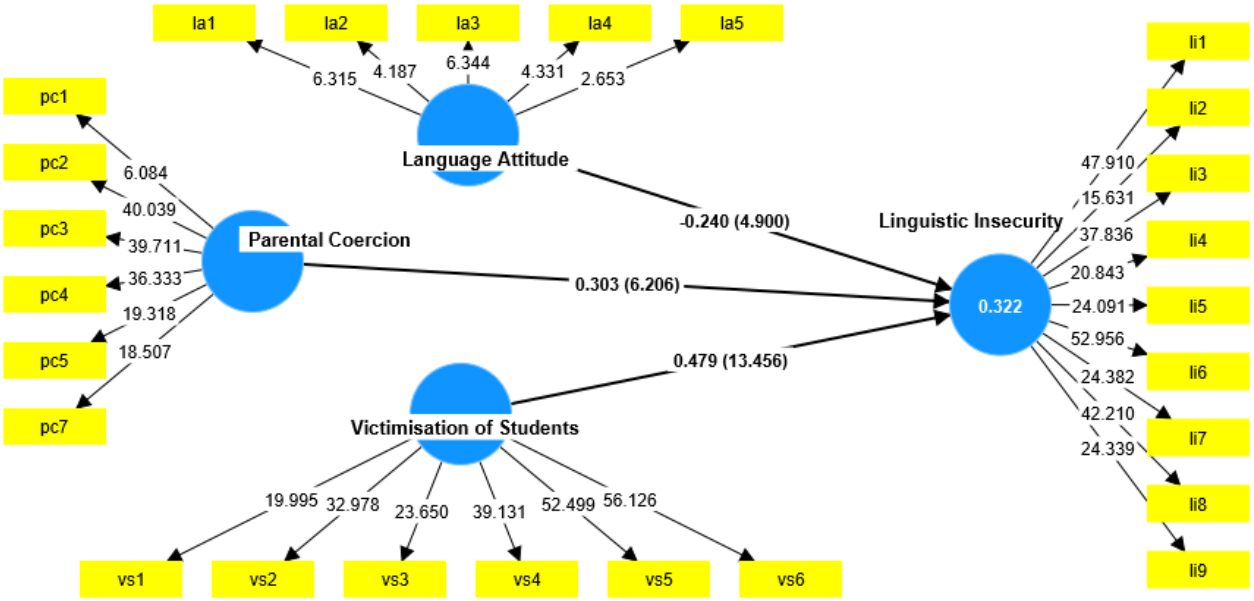

Figure 3. PLS-SEM Structural Model

Table 5. Bootstrapping results

Hypothesis	Path	β	SD	*t*	f^2	R^2	Q^2	*p*
H1	LA → LI	-0.240	0.049	4.900	0.083	0.322	0.302	<0.001
H2	VS → LI	0.479	0.036	13.456	0.332			<0.001
H3	PC → LI	0.303	0.049	6.206	0.133			<0.001

The results presented in Table 5 show that pupils' attitude towards their local language is, indeed, a significant predictor of their sense of linguistic insecurity (β = -0.240, t = 4.900; p<0.001), thereby confirming the first hypothesis (H1). The f^2 value of 0.083 indicates that language attitude affects linguistic insecurity minimally. Cohen (1988) states that an effect size of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represents small, moderate, and strong, respectively. Notably, the negative path coefficient (β = -0.240) signifies that language attitude is inversely associated with linguistic insecurity. In the context of this study, this result indicates that pupils with a more positive attitude towards their local language may feel less linguistically insecure about speaking their local language, while those with a negative language attitude are likely to exhibit a high level of linguistic insecurity.

The second hypothesis (H2), which examined the influence of the victimisation of pupils on their sense of linguistic insecurity, was also statistically significant. Thus, the stated hypothesis was retained (β = 0.479, t = 13.456; p<0.001). The positive and significant association between the exogenous and endogenous variables had an f^2 value of 0.332, which indicates an almost strong effect. This significant prediction shows that pupils are more likely to develop linguistic insecurity as a result of being victimised for speaking their inherited local languages within the confines of the school.

The structural model has shown that parental coercion significantly predicted pupils' linguistic insecurity (β = 0.303, t = 6.206; p<0.001), thereby leading to confirmation of the third hypothesis (H3). The f^2 obtained for this statistical prediction is 0.133 (which is close to 0.15), indicating a somewhat moderate effect size. The positive associations established in this context indicate that the more parents coerce their children to speak English, the more they develop insecurities about using their local language.

The R^2 value of 0.322 shows that 33.2% of the variability in pupils' sense of linguistic insecurity was accounted for by language attitude, victimisation of local language speakers, and parental coercion to speak English. This finding indicates that 66.8% of the variability in linguistic insecurity can probably be explained by factors yet to be incorporated into the model. To wit, other factors not addressed here contribute to pupils' linguistic insecurity about using their local languages as a medium of communication. Lastly, the model achieved appropriate predictive relevance. A Q^2 value of 0.302 was obtained for the endogenous variable, which Hair et al. (2013) regard as an indication of somewhat moderate predictive relevance.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The goal of this study was to build a theoretical model that explains senior high school pupils' sense of linguistic insecurity regarding their native language use. The model considered how certain linguistic behaviours, i.e., attitudes, parental coercion, and victimisation, typically discussed in the literature, empirically contribute to pupils' sense of linguistic insecurity. The resultant statistical model provides comprehensive insights that align with previous scholarly propositions. Above all, the model provides sufficient evidence that individuals' sense of linguistic insecurity about a particular language can be contingent on their attitude towards the language, among others. The negative association ($\beta = -0.240$) established between language attitude and linguistic insecurity makes it apparent that pupils' sense of linguistic insecurity tends to heighten when they develop a relatively negative attitude towards their native language. It follows that as pupils develop a more positive attitude towards their local language, their sense of linguistic insecurity would diminish. As Owusu-Ansah and Torto (2013) suggest, the local languages of Ghana are declining as speakers avoid their native language in favour of English, which they deem more prestigious. This finding can be attributed to such speakers' attitudes, which contribute to their sense of insecurity about speaking their native language in particular communicative domains. Insight from the existing literature shows that some Ghanaians harbour a negative attitude towards their indigenous languages (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014; Nyamekye & Baffour-Koduah, 2021; Mahama, 2023). Furthermore, there is a tendency towards increased linguistic insecurity among such Ghanaians.

Because parents serve as language models for their children at home, researchers have theorised that parents' linguistic behaviours are likely to impact those of their children significantly (García, 2005; Humeau et al., 2023). Hence, the necessity to embark on this particular investigation is because parents introduce children to societal norms, values, and practices, thereby significantly influencing their socialisation process. In Ghana, parental influence often manifests as a deliberate attempt to suppress the use of local languages in favour of English, driven by the perceived benefits and increased social mobility of doing so (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014; Fredua-Kwarteng & Ahia, 2015; Agyekum, 2018). The statistical hypothesis of this study confirms that such parental practices in the Ghanaian context are potential predictors of their children's sense of linguistic insecurity. Thus, in alignment with Agyekum (2018), the parental practice of forcing Ghanaian children to communicate in English both at home and at school is a subconscious way of telling them that their inherited language is socially inferior with limited social worth. Such subliminal communication can cause children to develop an inferior perception of their inherited language, which could lead to insecurity when speaking.

Lastly, the results of the statistical model ($\beta = 0.479$; $f^2 = .332$) demonstrate that the victimisation of pupils for speaking their native language is the strongest contributing factor to the development of linguistic insecurity captured in the model. This result indicates that attempting to improve pupils' English language proficiency by punishing and humiliating those who speak their native

languages at school has disastrous repercussions for pupils' perceptions of the social acceptability of their native language. The significant positive association established in the model analysis provides the understanding that the more pupils feel penalised or humiliated for speaking their native language, the stronger their sense of linguistic insecurity associated with it. This finding supports existing scholarly claims that pupils' unwillingness to pursue indigenous languages as a programme of study at school is a function of the humiliation attached to such languages (Owu-Ewie & Edu-Buandoh, 2014). The study concludes that through punishment and other forms of victimisation, pupils subconsciously believe that speaking the local languages is an unprofessional and disgraceful act, thereby causing them to feel a degree of humiliation when speaking their native language in some communicative situations.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Theoretical Implications

The study developed a conceptual model that explains the development of linguistic insecurity among Ghanaian pupils. This model improves understanding that linguistic ideologies and practices within the Ghanaian social and educational context contribute to the development of pupils' insecurity. The study sets a precedent for understanding linguistic insecurity by offering sufficient empirical evidence to support the viewpoint that the perennial practice of victimising pupils for speaking their native language can significantly contribute to their linguistic insecurity. Moreover, the evidence supports previous scholarly assumptions that parents serve as language models for their children. Thus, their ideologies, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular language can significantly influence their children's notion of the suitability of a language for social interaction.

Managerial Implications

The research results have implications for policy and practice, revealing how some school-related practices, such as teachers humiliating and sanctioning pupils, contribute to the slow development of indigenous languages. For instance, such practices could impede the implementation of indigenous languages in education policy. It would be difficult to cultivate pupils' appreciation for the usefulness of education in their native language when they feel insecure speaking that language. Therefore, the researcher recommends that policymakers should consider prohibiting such practices that give pupils the perception that their native languages are socially unsuitable.

The conception of English as the language of literacy and globalisation seems deeply ingrained in Ghanaian society. Thus, convincing parents to minimise coercive behaviours would be arduous. Nevertheless, the study recommends that concerned stakeholders, especially local language advocates, launch sensitisation programmes to inform parents about the importance of desisting from coercing their children to speak English, as this can promote subtractive bilingualism and a consequent language shift.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study examined linguistic insecurity among Category A senior high school pupils in Ghana. Since these schools typically enrol children from high socio-economic backgrounds, the researcher expected their responses to differ significantly from those of pupils in other, less prestigious schools in Ghana. Therefore, the study suggests that future studies should investigate such schools for further insight. A comparative study between the linguistic insecurity of Category A senior high school pupils and those of schools in other categories would provide novel insight into how the development of linguistic insecurity might differ between pupils from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

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