

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH YOUR SWAH? INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS KISWAHILI STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

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This study embarks on a survey of students' attitudes towards Kiswahili studies at the University of Ghana. Although Swahili is said to be one of the world's globalized languages in terms of its status as an academic discipline, as an African language, it is studied in relatively few non-East African countries. The University of Ghana is one of the few African universities, which has had Kiswahili as a course of study for over fifty years. Over this period, each year a number of students graduate with combined majors in Kiswahili and other courses. Against a background of perceived negative attitudes towards the study of Kiswahili at the University, the main objective of the study was to investigate the attitudes of students of Kiswahili at various levels (second to final year) towards Kiswahili studies, with the aim of uncovering (1) the key factors that determine these attitudes, (2) changes in their attitudes and perceptions if any, and factors that necessitated the change of attitudes from negative to positive and (3) the overall impression of these students about the study of Kiswahili at the University of Ghana and its importance to their future careers. The survey was conducted by administering a 32-item instrument with a target number of 100 students. The result of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data showed that most students had negative attitudes towards the course prior to their enrolment due to a lack of knowledge about it. However, subsequent to enrolment and studying for some time, these attitudes changed to positive.

Introduction

Many studies have investigated students' attitudes towards the study of foreign languages. The purposes for these studies, as well as their theoretical orientations, vary. Many of these studies such as Yang (2012), Saidat (2010), Jahin & Idrees (2012), Gömleksiz (2010), Soleimani (2013), Hashwani (2008), Lasagabaster & Sierra (2009), and Baker (1992) focus more on so-called prestigious foreign languages such as English rather than languages that are not as widespread. These studies embark on cognitive or psychological investigations into the motivation and attitudes of students towards the learning or study of English as a foreign language (EFL) and how these impact their performance.

Csajbok-Twerefou et. al (2014) discuss students' attitudes and motivations in the learning of French and Russian at the University of Ghana. The study touches on various factors that motivate students to learn these foreign languages. It offers some insightful suggestions on how the language teaching and learning process can be made more interesting and motivating for students of Russian and French through the use of films, documentaries, and other media.

This study is a survey of the attitudes of Ghanaian students who study Kiswahili at the University of Ghana towards the Kiswahili programme. Although Swahili is said to be one of the world's globalized languages in terms of its status as an academic discipline and is studied in many

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universities across the globe (Moshi 2006), as an African language, it is studied in relatively few non-East African countries. In fact, currently in West Africa, Kiswahili is studied only in Ghana. According to the Tanzanian Ambassador to Nigeria with oversight over other West African countries, currently, the University of Port Harcourt in Nigeria is in the process of reviving its Swahili programme which did not quite take off in the nineteen sixties. The University of Ghana is one of the few African universities, which has offered Kiswahili as a language course for over fifty years. Over this period, each year a number of students graduate with combined majors in Kiswahili and other courses.

Nevertheless, in Ghana, there is very little awareness of the existence of Kiswahili as a language and people tend to have negative perceptions about the language especially due to the fact that it is ‘another’ African Language. One student of mine told me some years ago that his friends teased him by asking him ‘What are you going to do with your Swah after school?’ Such comments are indications that erroneous perceptions that Kiswahili is not a good choice of subject that can take one far in their future career prospect persist among Ghanaians in general. This question and similar ones are the motivation for embarking on this survey.

The Status of Kiswahili in Ghana

Today, Kiswahili is one of the most known African languages whose impact is felt globally. Recently, UNESCO declared July 7 as World Swahili Day, to be observed globally every year. This acknowledgement of Kiswahili is an indication of its significant role in the world. Although Kiswahili is globally acclaimed, in Africa its impact was not felt beyond East Africa for many years. However, in Ghana, historically, Kiswahili has played a significant role, especially during the immediate post independent years. Through the influence of the late Premier President of the Republic of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who was known to have advocated for the adoption of Kiswahili as a continental language for Africa, not only was Kiswahili used as a broadcast language for many years, but also it was taught in two public tertiary institutions one of which was the University of Ghana. At the University of Ghana an undergraduate Kiswahili programme was established in 1964 and has been sustained over all these years (Dzahene-Quarshie 2013). Over the years Ghana’s strong historical connection with Kiswahili has waned and sadly the result of this study indicates that many Ghanaians are oblivious of its existence, although the University of Ghana has made the effort to sustain its Kiswahili programme for over fifty years of its establishment.

Objectives and Scope of the Study

This present study aims at investigating first, students’ perceptions about Kiswahili as a language prior to the commencement of their study of the language and secondly to find out if these attitudes

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change as they progress in the study of the Kiswahili programme, and the key factors that determine these attitudes. Thus, the main research questions underpinning this study are:

1. What were students' attitudes and perceptions of Kiswahili (studies) prior to their enrolment at the university?
2. Have their attitudes and perceptions changed after at least one year of study?
3. What factors have contributed to these changes?
4. How important do they perceive Kiswahili studies in relation to their future careers?

Student Attitudes Towards Kiswahili

In the literature, very little research has been done with respect to attitudes towards the teaching of foreign African languages in African countries, not to mention attitudes towards Kiswahili in non-Eastern African countries, since Kiswahili is taught in very few non-East African countries. In this brief section on previous studies, I intend to review studies that focus on attitudes towards the study of less commonly taught foreign languages such as Kiswahili and other studies that focus on attitudes towards the learning of foreign languages that may be relevant to the present study.

It is important at this juncture to define attitude as used in this study. Various definitions have been put forward by various scholars and we look at a few. Oskamp and Schultz (2005: 9) view attitude not as a behaviour, but rather as "preparation for behaviour", thus an inclination to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to an attitude object, which includes things, places, people, situations, or ideas. Baker (1992) and Crystal (1997), view language attitudes as the feelings people have about their own language or language(s) of others. Dyers (1997: 29) defines language attitude as the strong "positive or negative emotions experienced by people when they are faced with a choice between languages in a variety of situations or are learning a language". Ibemenji et al. (2021: 2) defined attitude as a person's tendency to think or feelings or preferences about an object based on their beliefs about the object. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define attitude as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object. Ajzen (2005: 3) defines attitude as a disposition to respond to favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution or event. Kenchie and Doyle (1966) – cited in Kobia & Ndiga (2013: 3) – defined attitude as an organization of concepts, beliefs, habits and motives associated with a particular object. In all the above definitions of attitude, one theme that runs across is the fact that attitude is either a negative or positive response to a stimulus. In this study, attitude is understood as how receptive students are towards the learning of Kiswahili. The focus of this study is on sociological variables rather than on language proficiency.

The issue of students' attitudes towards Kiswahili is quite unique such that it is difficult to find literature that is directly related to it in any significant depth. Hence in the following paragraphs, I

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briefly review a few studies on students' attitudes towards the learning of Kiswahili in areas where there are competitions between Kiswahili and English or Kiswahili and other local languages.

Ideh and Tibategeza (2022), in their study on Attitude of Learners towards English and Kiswahili in Tanzania, propose the use of the two languages, English and Kiswahili in education in Tanzania. The authors point out that the varying positions occupied by African languages and their foreign counterparts, affect the perceptions and attitudes towards each of the languages. They pointed out that African languages from pre-colonial times to date are often defined on the basis of several nomenclatures which are often negative in comparison with their foreign counterparts. Upon assessing the status of English and Kiswahili in Tanzania, and the attitudes of learners towards the use of English and Kiswahili, the study proposed the use of the two languages in education on the basis that they are equally important to the people of Tanzania.

Walmawa et al. (2020) look at attitudes towards the learning of Kiswahili in primary schools in Kenya. The study calls for the creation of awareness about the instrumental value of Kiswahili language to learners from the early stages of their academic development. Employing the use of questionnaires on attitudes and the theoretical frameworks of Behaviourists' unicomponential conception of attitudes and Mentalists' multicomponential conception of attitudes, the study reveals that although learners have positive attitudes, Kiswahili language learning still faces challenges of not being accorded the same level of seriousness given to English in language learning. The study recommended the creation of awareness about the instrumental value of Kiswahili language to learners from the early the stages of their academic development and encourage them to speak grammatical language as much as it is possible.

Walmawa et al. (2013) discuss students' attitudes and perceptions towards Kiswahili in Mtwara region in Tanzania. The study is set against the background of the multilingual situation in the region. Employing the behaviourists and mentalists view of attitude, the paper undertakes an investigation into students' attitudes towards Kiswahili to determine whether the language shift situation whereby there is a shift from Kiswahili to English has impacted students' attitude towards Kiswahili. The authors intimate that although the result of the study indicates that students in the region show a positive attitude towards Kiswahili, research in the preservation and conservation of local languages will enhance development of Kiswahili in areas such as lexicography, terminology, and literature.

Juma and Atoni (2022) embark on a bifurcated objective in their study on the relationship between students' attitudes towards Kiswahili and their performance. The two-pronged objective was to investigate relationships between students' attitudes towards Kiswahili and their performance and the role gender plays in this in Vihiga County in Kenya. Data for the study was collected through the administering of a 19-item questionnaire and a mixed methods approach was

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adopted in analysing the data. The study established that students with a positive attitude towards Kiswahili performed better than those who admitted to a dislike for the subject because they did not view it as useful in their future.

Mutheu et al. (2019) worked on a study of language attitudes in the teaching and learning of Kiswahili. Their objective was to assess challenges related to learners' attitudes toward the teaching and learning of Kiswahili in public secondary schools in Hamisi sub-county and to establish strategies for coping with those challenges. The study established that the negative attitudes of students were towards the teaching methods and evaluation techniques employed rather than the language. Thus, the study recommended a review of the Teaching and evaluation methods to address the issue. The study used a mixed methods approach working with a quantitative and descriptive qualitative approach. Kevogo et al. (2015) examine the attitudes of Kiswahili speaking secondary school students of Somali descent in Garissa County, Kenya, towards the learning of Kiswahili. The findings of the study indicate that Kiswahili is the language of intercultural or interethnic communication in Garissa town and that a negative attitude towards Kiswahili is not to be blamed for poor performance in Kiswahili in national examination in Garissa town, but rather the competition with English in the role of serving as a language of communication in the wider multilingual environment.

The objective of Kobia and Ndiga's (2013) study on language attitudes was to examine the attitudes of secondary school students towards the implementation of Kiswahili curriculum in public secondary schools in Igembe South District in Meru County, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey design with a target population of 2,400 form four secondary school students from all 24 public secondary schools in Igembe South District, Meru. The data showed that majority of secondary school students had a negative attitude towards Kiswahili, and this affects their performance and hence its implementation as a curriculum. Most of the students use vernacular in communication while in school. They also allocate very little time for Kiswahili hence the poor implementation of Kiswahili curriculum leading to poor performance of the subject at the national examinations.

Musau (1999) investigates how effectively indigenous African languages are taught and learnt. Using Kiswahili as an example, he argues that if the teaching and learning of these languages are backed by research on the effect of attitude on teaching, they will serve the Africans' interests.

Methodology and Data

Data for the study was solicited purposefully by administering a 32-question questionnaire to Kiswahili students at the Kiswahili Section of the Department of Modern Languages, University of Ghana. The target respondents were all second, third, and fourth (final) year students of

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Kiswahili at the University of Ghana. In all, out of the target of 104 questionnaires which is equal to the total number of second, third and final year Kiswahili students, 84 were returned, and the breakdown was: 25 second-year students, 34 third-year students, and 25 final-year students. Freshmen were not included in the survey because they had only been enrolled for a few months and therefore would not be in the position to answer some of the pertinent questions. The questionnaires were administered between April 23 and April 28, 2021.

The questionnaires were designed to collect information that would lead to answers to the main research questions underpinning the study. It consisted of three sections. Section A covered demographic information; items in Section B covered Kiswahili students' perceptions and attitudes about Kiswahili/Kiswahili studies prior to their enrolment. Section C consisted of items that focused on student perceptions and attitudes towards Kiswahili after at least one academic year of study.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in analysing the data. A descriptive approach was adopted for the analysis of the qualitative aspects of the data and SPSS was used for the analysis of the quantitative data. The demographic information of the respondents shows that 18 of them were male and 66 were female constituting 21% and 79%, respectively. Most of the students were between the ages of 21-25, that is 62% of respondents; 22.6% were 19 years or below and 3% were over 25 years old. All the respondents had studied Kiswahili at the University for more than one academic year and were still enrolled in the Kiswahili programme.

Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the data is analysed and discussed concomitantly for the sake of coherence. The section is in three parts. First the data on the perceptions and attitudes of respondents prior to their engagement with the Kiswahili programme is analysed and the result is discussed. This is followed by a discussion on their change in perceptions after embarking on the course and the factors that contributed to this change of attitudes and perceptions. Next, the problem of stigmatization and its effects on respondents is discussed and finally, respondents' overall impression of the study of Kiswahili at the University of Ghana is discussed.

Initial Perceptions and Attitudes of Students and Contributing Factors

The data indicates that 50% of the respondents did not know about the existence of the Kiswahili language prior to applying for admission to the University of Ghana. Those who had knowledge of the language indicated that they heard about it through friends, the media, or the university admission process. The largest means through which the respondents learned about Swahili is through the media, representing 42.2% of respondents. It is worth noting that 8 respondents specified that they got to know about Kiswahili in their history class at Senior High school. The

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fact that some students remembered that they got to know about Swahili in their history class indicates that for most students, although it had been mentioned in their history class, they took no notice of it. From the above, it can be argued that one of the factors that account for a negative attitude towards the language is the lack of knowledge about its existence as a language.

Against the background of little or no knowledge of Kiswahili as a language prior to their commencing the course at the university, the respondents were asked about their perception of the Kiswahili language. About 43% of respondents indicated that they had positive perceptions about the language despite their lack of knowledge of the language. The key reasons these respondents gave for their positive perception attitudes can be summed up as the fact that studying a language has advantages and enhances one's communication skills. Some respondents also said they had positive attitudes towards the Kiswahili programme because they had an interest in learning languages, or they had a flair for learning languages. So, for this category of respondents, their concern was not about the status of the language per se, but the opportunity to learn a new language. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they had negative perceptions about the language. The main reasons they advanced for the negative attitudes included the fact that to them it was just another African language, or that studying it did not have any visible advantages or benefits in terms of career prospects.

Although 57% of respondents had negative perceptions about Kiswahili studies, it is interesting to note that, 71% of the entire respondents from their answers to a question about their impressions about the language later in the questionnaire showed that they believed that Kiswahili is an important course to study. It is then clear that, for some respondents, the fact that they had negative perceptions about Swahili did not affect the fact that they deem it an important course of study. The main reasons for deeming it an important language according to some respondents, were the fact that it is the most widely spoken African language with a growing population of speakers, it will soon be the language of the continent and it is a global language. In other words, their motivation to study Kiswahili in spite of their negative perception is the fact that they recognize it as a widespread African and global language of significance. Nevertheless, when asked to rate its importance in comparison to English which is the official language of Ghana, 60.7% of respondents rated Kiswahili as equally important. Only 4.8% of respondents deemed English more important than Kiswahili. However, 32.1% of respondents rated Kiswahili as less important than English. Rating Kiswahili in comparison to other foreign languages, the responses were the same for 'less important' that is 4.8%. The responses for 'more important' and 'equally important' were quite similar, 28.6% and 64.3% respectively.

At the College of Humanities, in the University of Ghana, undergraduate courses other than Law and Business Administration are offered in bouquets of three subjects. So, students are

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required to choose a bouquet. There are about 75 of such subject combinations and Kiswahili occurs in 6 of them. They are:

Sociology, Social Work, Kiswahili

Psychology, Kiswahili, English

Psychology, Archaeology, Kiswahili

Political Science, Study of Religions, Kiswahili

Finance, Economics, Kiswahili

Accounting, Economics, Kiswahili

39.3 % of the respondents indicated that they chose to study Kiswahili on their application form, by opting for one of the above combinations. Reasons given for the choice of Kiswahili as a course of study are similar to the reasons given for positive perceptions about Kiswahili. The main reason for most of them was the desire to learn a new language; this was followed by curiosity. For 60.7 % of respondents, Kiswahili was offered to them although they did not choose it. Their reasons for not choosing Kiswahili were mainly because they did not know anything about it. It is clear that the main reason for having a negative perception of Kiswahili stems from the fact that they did not know about its existence.

Change in the perception after at least one year of study

The majority of students after studying Kiswahili for at least a year experienced a change in their perception and attitude towards the language. Seventy-five percent of respondents responded in the affirmative to the question asking if their initial perception of the language has changed after pursuing the course for at least a year. Asked whether their perceptions had changed from negative to positive or vice versa, 55 respondents indicated that their perceptions had changed from negative to positive. The respondents' responses indicate that several factors have contributed to the positive change in perceptions. The factors which in their opinion have brought about the change in perceptions are indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Factors that have contributed to positive changes in perception

<i>The lectures are good and quite a number of Africans speak it.</i>
<i>Before, I never really had teachers that were patient enough to teach and answer my questions. They make the language easier to learn.</i>
<i>The fact that I was becoming good at it.</i>

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It has been very interesting and exciting.

The way the lecturers taught in class changed my perception.

Now I can describe myself in the language and also understand most words in the language but not all.

From the start of the lectures I didn't really like the course but as time went on I enjoyed it.

From the content of the reasons given in table 1, the two main reasons for the change from negative perception to a positive one can be summed up as the fact that they find it easy to study, and also the fact that they developed an interest in the study as a result of how interesting the lecturers made it.

Stigmatization and Its Effects on Student Attitude Towards the Language

Stigmatization is a word that is often used in or defined in sociological, psychological, mental health, or medical terms. For the purpose of this study, the word is used with simple dictionary meaning in mind. The online Cambridge Dictionary defines stigmatization as “the act of treating someone or something unfairly by publicly disapproving of them.”¹ Thus, for our purposes, stigmatization refers to the negative attitude people display towards Kiswahili as a language, as well as the expression of disapproval towards students who study Kiswahili. This expression of disapproval may affect the learners of the language in a way that may discourage them and in turn affect their attitude towards the Kiswahili programme negatively. Owu-Ewie and Edu-Buandoh (2014) in a study investigate the negative attitude of Ghanaians towards the study of first language (mother tongue) hence L1 in Senior High Schools (SHS) with the objective of examining ways that this negative attitude towards the study of L1 can be changed. The study found that parents, school authorities, other language teachers and students, and the general populace had negative attitudes towards Ghanaian language study in the SHS and this negative portrayal also affected the morale of both Ghanaian language teachers and students. In the following subsections, we discuss the results of the survey with respect to stigmatization of Kiswahili students and its effect on them.

Stigmatization from colleague students associated with the learning of Kiswahili

Over the many years that Kiswahili has been a course of study at the University of Ghana, stigmatization of students who study Kiswahili by their colleagues has been one of the issues many of them have had to contend with. Seventy-seven-point four percent (65) of respondents said they had suffered from one form of stigmatization or another from fellow students, because they were

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org> (Last visited 14-04-2023).

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pursuing Kiswahili studies at the university. Mostly their colleagues pass sarcastic comments about Kiswahili or ask sarcastic questions about what there is to gain from learning an ‘irrelevant’ language such as Kiswahili. The following in Table 2 are some direct responses from respondents:

Table 2: Nature of stigmatization

<i>It is not a popular language and cannot be of any use as compared to French, Spanish and Chinese. Also, you will not be able to find a job with Swahili.</i>
<i>People assume that I actually know the language, so always question why I am studying it. Therefore, they look at me weirdly when I don't understand something.</i>
<i>It is an African language and it's of no use. Difficult to get a job.</i>
<i>Where I will be doing Swahili after completing with this.</i>
<i>They were like "you are in Ghana and you are learning Kiswahili. Where will it take you?"</i>
<i>They ask, "What is that, I haven't heard of anything, like that. I would have preferred a better course"</i>
<i>They ask why I'm studying Kiswahili of all languages and they ask me where it will take me to and what I'm using if for.</i>
<i>They claimed it's spoken only in East Africa and moreover it's not internationally spoken.</i>
<i>People tease me when they ask the courses I am studying and when Kiswahili is mentioned they begin to laugh and say what is its benefits since it is an African language.</i>
<i>A lot of people think the language is not important so if you study it then you don't know what you are doing.</i>
<i>The reason is, they say Kiswahili is not relevant in the 21st Century.</i>
<i>What kind of language is that? Is this language important to study?</i>

From the above statements which are cited as constituting forms of stigmatization by our respondents, it can be argued that virtually all the reasons stated by these students are unfounded and based on facts that are untrue. This exposes their own ignorance and lack of knowledge about the language and further substantiates the fact that very little is known about Kiswahili in Ghana.

Attitudes of parents and family towards respondents' pursuit of Kiswahili studies

Unlike their fellow students, parents and family of students studying Kiswahili tended to have positive attitudes towards the course. 73.8 % (62) respondents said their parents and family had

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positive attitudes towards their pursuit of Kiswahili studies. Mainly the positive attitudes stem from the fact that they recognize Kiswahili as a foreign language and they see learning a foreign language as an added advantage. Table 3 below contains the direct responses from respondents.

Table 3: Attitudes of parents and family towards respondents' pursuit of Kiswahili studies

<i>They believe learning a language is important in the business world one way or the other.</i>
<i>Learning a new language has many advantages.</i>
<i>They are happy I am learning a new foreign language.</i>
<i>It is good to learn different languages.</i>
<i>They think it's advantageous because it creates opportunities and it's the only African language I speak.</i>
<i>They find it interesting that other languages can be studied in addition to English.</i>

Effects of stigmatization on respondents

Stigmatization is a negative act that often affects the victim adversely, psychologically, and socially. In order to measure the extent to which stigmatization from fellow students has affected the motivation of respondents to pursue the course, they were also asked to indicate the extent to which they have been affected by choosing one of the variables as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: To what extent have friends' negative attitudes affected your motivation to study Kiswahili?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	It has not affected my motivation	52	61.9	66.7	66.7
	To a little extent	21	25.0	26.9	93.6
	To a high extent	5	6.0	6.4	100.0
Total		78	92.9	100.0	
Missing	System	6	7.1		
Total		84	100.0		

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Among many respondents, 61.9 % indicated that stigmatization has not affected their motivation for learning Kiswahili. For 25% of respondents, stigmatization has affected their motivation to a little extent, and for 6 %, stigmatization has affected their motivation, significantly, that is to a high extent.

For respondents who have suffered stigmatization, they were asked to indicate how the stigmatization has affected them. The various effects of stigmatization on them are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: How has stigmatization affected you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Discouragement	9	10.7	26.5	26.5
	Self-esteem	3	3.6	8.8	35.3
	Inferiority complex	5	6.0	14.7	50.0
	Loss of confidence	5	6.0	14.7	64.7
	Demoralized	2	2.4	5.9	70.6
	Indifferent	10	11.9	29.4	100.0
Total		34	40.5	100.0	
Missing	System	50	59.5		
Total		84	100.0		

Forty percent of respondents indicated that they were discouraged, experienced loss of self-esteem, inferiority complex, loss of confidence, or demoralized. Out of the 40%, 11.9% indicated that they were indifferent to the stigmatization as shown in Table 5 above. In other words, the stigmatization did not affect them in any way. The fact that as much as 40% of the 34 respondents indicated that they have been affected one way or the other by stigmatization is worrying. It can be argued from the results that often respondents' negative attitude towards Kiswahili stems from the general ignorance about it as well as the attempts at stigmatization by their colleagues. Thus, the lack of knowledge triggers the negative perceptions and the negative perceptions trigger negative attitudes. However, upon embarking on the course for at least a year, after gaining more knowledge about the language and enjoying the class, respondents' perceptions begin to change positively, and this results in change of attitudes from negative to positive, to the extent that over 62% percent of respondents indicated that they would continue to pursue Kiswahili studies.

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Overall Impression of the Study of Kiswahili at University of Ghana and Its Perceived Importance to Future Career Endeavours

Questions 20-32 of the questionnaire focus on the overall student impression of the study of Kiswahili at the University of Ghana and the perceived relevance of the study to their future endeavours. To the question how important is the study of Kiswahili to you? 89.3% indicated that it is very important to them, while 11.7% indicated that they were indifferent. Furthermore, 44% of respondents said they rate Kiswahili important among their various subjects of study while 54.8% rated it as moderately important. Only 1.2%, representing one respondent, rated Kiswahili low among the subject they study as seen in Table 6 below.

Table 6: How do you rate Kiswahili among the subjects you take?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	high	37	44.0	44.0	44.0
	moderate	46	54.8	54.8	98.8
	Low	1	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total		84	100.0	100.0	

The study was also interested in finding out whether the respondents were interested in carrying on with their study of Kiswahili. Asked if they intended to carry on with the course in the next semester, an impressive 65.5% answered in the affirmative. These respondents have developed various interests in the course that make them decide to carry on with it even when there is an opportunity to drop the course in preference to other courses. It is important to mention here that, per the nature of some of the courses which combine with Kiswahili, some students find it too demanding to combine them with Kiswahili. Finance is one of the subjects that students find too demanding to combine with Kiswahili. Also, students who pursue Social Work are not allowed to combine it with other subjects. All these intricacies come to play in students' decision to carry on or drop Kiswahili as they progress towards their final year of study and indeed some respondents cited some of these as reasons why they cannot carry on with the Kiswahili programme. Key among the reasons given by respondents for opting to continue with the course were: the desire and interest to learn the language, the fact that it is easy and boosts academic performance, and the opportunities that come with the language. The detailed reasons are shown in Table 7.

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Table 7: Reasons for carrying on with Kiswahili

<i>A language is an added advantage. I want to be fluent in Kiswahili. I would love to travel to either Tanzania or Kenya.</i>
<i>I really want to know the language and at least know how to communicate in it.</i>
<i>I want to gain more knowledge in the field.</i>
<i>It is important to me.</i>
<i>I just love the language.</i>
<i>It is an interesting course.</i>
<i>Because I want an opportunity to learn more about the course.</i>
<i>Since I have interest in learning a new language I will carry on.</i>
<i>Because I desire to learn more languages, Kiswahili included.</i>
<i>It is easy to study.</i>
<i>Comparing it to my other course, it is giving me good grades.</i>
<i>Because it builds my G.P.A</i>
<i>Because I want to graduate with the language.</i>
<i>Because of career purposes.</i>
<i>Because I want to go to Tanzania. I dream of operating a business or working in East Africa someday.</i>
<i>Because I think it will have a positive effect on me in the near future.</i>
<i>There are many opportunities in studying this language.</i>
<i>It is compulsory for B.A. Admin students.</i>
<i>I'm combining Kiswahili, so I do not have a choice.</i>
<i>I want to explore all possibilities that comes with it and prove all who doubted its importance wrong.</i>
<i>I love it when I know how to speak more languages. It boosts my self-esteem so I'll like to study it to become fluent in it so that when there's an opportunity and I can apply the language, I won't slack.</i>

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The above reasons in Table 7 tie in with respondents' expectations of their study of Kiswahili as indicated in Table 8 below. While 36.9 % expect to acquire proficiency in the language, 20% see it as part of their preparation for their careers and 30% see it as encompassing all three reasons as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: What are your expectations of your study of Kiswahili?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Acquisition of language	31	36.9	36.9	36.9
	Knowledge	9	10.7	10.7	47.6
	Academic discipline	2	2.4	2.4	50.0
	Preparation towards career	17	20.2	20.2	70.2
	All of the above	25	29.8	29.8	100.0
Total		84	100.0	100.0	

About 81% of respondents against 18% percent indicated that given the opportunity again, they would choose Kiswahili as a course of study. Thus, indicating that they had no regrets about learning Kiswahili as one of their courses of study even though they may not have chosen to study it in their first year. The key reasons given by some respondents are listed in Table 9 below. Of the 18% who answered no to the question, one of them indicated lack of interest as their reason and another wrote that they found the course too difficult.

Table 9: Given your experience, will you choose Kiswahili if given the opportunity again?
Yes.

<i>Because I would want to know much about the language.</i>
<i>I want to add to my knowledge.</i>
<i>I have come to like the language.</i>
<i>It broadens one's knowledge.</i>

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<i>Because of its positive effects.</i>
<i>No particular reason.</i>
<i>It's a language which entails information.</i>
<i>Because it's easy.</i>
<i>I am happy that I have learnt a new language.</i>
<i>There are many job opportunities.</i>
<i>It's an enjoyable experience.</i>
<i>It is an interesting language and the lecturers are good.</i>

Another aspect that the study covered was the respondents' views and perceptions about the Kiswahili programme, stemming from the fact that their perception of the programme in respect to the contents of the course, the pedagogic approach to the study of Kiswahili by the teachers at the University of Ghana and how useful they perceive the course as relevant to their future careers. Eighty-nine percent of respondents said they were happy with the approach to the study of Kiswahili at the University of Ghana. Various reasons given for their affirmation of being happy with the approach to the study of Kiswahili at the university are listed in Table 10 below. From those who answered no, only two respondents gave a reason each. One said, "Pictures should be attached to the studies," and the other said: "More effort by the department should be made by engaging students on their various social media platforms."

Table 10: Are you happy with the approach to the study of Kiswahili at UG?

<i>The lecturers are good and explain thoroughly.</i>
<i>The lecturers explain everything in detail and are patient when answering questions.</i>
<i>Both lecturers and teaching assistants help us when we have problems understanding something in the language.</i>
<i>Kiswahili is taught to our understanding</i>
<i>The lecturers are very good and patient with us. When I listen to some of my colleagues who are also studying other languages, I see a vast difference. I love my lecturers.</i>
<i>Lecturers make the course understandable.</i>

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<i>No reason</i>
<i>Because it is conducive, and lectures are lively and interactive.</i>
<i>Because the lecturers are very dedicated to their work.</i>
<i>At least I can speak a new language.</i>
<i>Because the lecturers put you on your toes to study it well for your good.</i>
<i>It is a little easy and the lecturers take time to teach it well.</i>
<i>It is moderate and easy to learn.</i>
<i>Because the approach is good.</i>

In terms of subjects, they enjoy most, grammar tops the list, followed by orals, then, writing and comprehension, and then Literature. Nineteen percent of respondents enjoy all the subjects. See Table 11 below for the details. As pointed out by (Adegbija 1994) positive attitude towards a language influences the learners' readiness to learn that language.

Table 11: Which aspects of the course do you enjoy most?

Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
	Grammar	33	39.3	39.3	39.3
	Oral	22	26.2	26.2	65.5
	Writing and comprehension	7	8.3	8.3	73.8
	Literature	6	7.1	7.1	81.0
	All of the above	16	19.0	19.0	100.0
	Total	84	100.0	100.0	

The following statements in Table 12 are the main reasons given by respondents as to why they enjoy particular aspects/subjects of the course.

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Table 12: Reasons why respondents enjoy particular subjects under the Kiswahili programme

Grammar
<i>It is easy to do.</i>
<i>Because it is easy to understand.</i>
<i>Me personally, I think the grammar is the basics of the language. So that's why I enjoy it.</i>
<i>The lecturer takes her time when teaching.</i>
<i>I like the way the lecturer approaches us when teaching and she is very friendly.</i>
Grammar and Oral
<i>Because I like to speak and write Kiswahili.</i>
<i>Because they help you know how to construct sentences and also how to express yourself</i>
<i>I am good at reading Kiswahili. The grammar seems a little difficult now because I have forgotten the basics but I am willing to catch up.</i>
Writing and Comprehension.
<i>Writing and Comprehension. It is easy to do and involves your thoughts.</i>
Oral
<i>Because I learn more of the language.</i>
<i>I just like the fact that I am speaking a different language.</i>
<i>They are all interesting.</i>

Respondents were also asked to rate their impression of the content of the Kiswahili curriculum. A total of 98.8% out of 83 respondents rated it as excellent or good. Table 13 below shows the statistics of respondents' ratings and Table 14 the reasons respondents gave for the rating of their impression.

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Table 13: What is your impression of the content of the Kiswahili programme?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excellent	27	32.1	32.5	32.5
	Very good	44	52.4	53.0	85.5
	Good	11	13.1	13.3	98.8
	Average	1	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total		83	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		84	100.0		

Table 14: Reasons for respondents' impression of the content of the Kiswahili programme?

<i>Excellent. We are given enough materials.</i>
<i>Very good. It has helped me to learn a new language.</i>
<i>Excellent. It's not that easy though but.....</i>
<i>Very good. It is useful.</i>

One answer that occurred several times in the reasons given for stigmatizing students of Kiswahili was the claim that Kiswahili was not relevant or important for their future careers. However, when asked about their perceived significance of their study of Kiswahili to their future careers, about 69% of respondents felt that Kiswahili was relevant to their future career and 27% felt that it was averagely useful, while only 2% felt that it was not useful for their future career. Table 14 below shows respondents' reasons for their ratings.

Table 14: How useful is Kiswahili to your future career?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very useful	58	69.0	69.9	69.9

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Averagely useful	23	27.4	27.7	97.6
Not useful	2	2.4	2.4	100.0
Total	83	98.8	100.0	
Missing System	1	1.2		
Total	84	100.0		

Various reasons were given by respondents for their ratings in Table 14. Table 15 below shows their reasons for their ratings.

Table 15: Reasons of respondents for their rating of how useful Kiswahili is to their future careers

<i>Very useful. I will be able to speak well when I find myself amongst people who speak Kiswahili.</i>
<i>Very useful. It will help me as a philanthropist travelling around.</i>
<i>Very useful. Because of my career and other advantages it has.</i>
<i>Very useful. I wouldn't mind returning to East Africa to live and work. So learning Swahili helps.</i>
<i>Very useful. For job opportunities in both Ghana and other parts of the world.</i>
<i>Very useful. I would want to join an organization which is not language biased so I make use of my studies here.</i>
<i>Very useful. I can communicate with anyone I see who is from an East African country.</i>
<i>Very useful. Other job opportunities require an additional language.</i>
<i>Very useful. It has a lot of opportunities.</i>
<i>Averagely useful. I don't really know how to go about it after here.</i>
<i>Averagely useful. Personally, I assume studying another language makes your opportunity in the business world easier.</i>

The instrument also asked respondents to make recommendations to improve the study of Kiswahili at the University of Ghana (UG). Recommendations provided by respondents for the

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improvement of the study of Kiswahili in UG can be categorized into three kinds. Namely, they recommended that for the improvement of the study of Kiswahili at UG, more extra-curricular activities and usage of technology should be introduced, there should be increased student-lecturer interaction, and there should be the provision of more resources for the study of the language. The responses have been categorized in Table 16 below.

Table 16: What recommendations you will make to improve the study of Kiswahili in UG?

More extra-curricular activities and usage of technology
<i>Addition of photos in teaching. Introduction of Swahili dance/culture in level 100</i>
<i>Visual and audio systems to enable learning to be more impactful.</i>
<i>In terms of the history and civilization aspects, audio-visuals could be used to enhance understanding.</i>
<i>There should be Kiswahili debates and translation competitions</i>
<i>The history behind the language should be emphasized.</i>
Increased student-lecturer interaction
<i>More tutorial sessions.</i>
<i>More assignments, less tests</i>
<i>There should be more explanation of the language to the students.</i>
<i>Lecturers who are not Ghanaians should take their time when teaching the language.</i>
<i>Lecturers should consider being a bit more patient with students.</i>
<i>Good interaction with students to maintain interest in the course.</i>
<i>It would be nice if we engage more in the orals.</i>
<i>Usage of the language.</i>
<i>More practical.</i>
<i>The natives of the languages should be involved in our learning process.</i>
<i>More use of the local dialects in teaching to make it more flexible and understanding.</i>
Provision of more resources for the study of the language.
<i>Reading more Kiswahili books.</i>

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<i>Provide more books and novels.</i>
<i>Introducing dictionaries students can refer to during Interim Assessments and exams.</i>
<i>To take more students for year abroad.</i>
<i>They should build a language complex like that of Maison Francais for the Kiswahili language.</i>
<i>They should organize more seminars for the language. So, students will know the relevance of the language.</i>
<i>There should be conferences and good advertisement to clear the negative perceptions about the language.</i>
<i>Increasing students' participation and inviting natives of the language to speak with us. Or any tourist site based on the language.</i>
<i>I met an improved environment when I joined the Kiswahili studies.</i>
<i>They should offer the language to more people to make it more known in the country.</i>

Ninety-five percent of respondents indicated that they would recommend the course to others because they see it as a source of knowledge, it brings about exposure and it is a good language to learn. Table 17 gives a comprehensive list of reasons why they would recommend Kiswahili to others.

Table 17: Reasons why respondents would recommend Kiswahili to others

<i>Because it would add up to your languages.</i>
<i>Because it will add to their languages and knowledge.</i>
<i>The course is important and interesting.</i>
<i>People are making money out of it.</i>
<i>It is a good language.</i>
<i>Because it a good language to study.</i>
<i>Because you get to learn more about their culture.</i>
<i>It is a good language.</i>
<i>It is very useful.</i>

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From my perspective, I think learning another language (Kiswahili) is equally important as any other language.

It's an interesting language and easy to learn.

Kiswahili is an interesting program and we don't do grammar or only orals. We get involved and we get to know more about the people of Bantu. We even prepare some of their dishes during the languages week celebration. More like exploring.

Because it is good to study a new language which will help you communicate with others from other African countries.

Kiswahili is a nice program to read.

It is very interesting and has a lot of job opportunities when studying it.

It is good to know a language.

It is a fun language to learn and it's pretty simple if you put your mind to it. It doesn't hurt to learn a language.

It is a good language and can be beneficial as well as

Conclusion

From the above discussion, we can conclude that generally the negative attitude or perception about Kiswahili comes from the lack of knowledge about Kiswahili as a language.

This study has established that students are likely to have positive attitudes towards Kiswahili studies if they have more knowledge about it prior to applying for admission, because largely their attitudes towards the language change after studying the course for at least one year. Although generally, they are affected by stigmatization, especially by their colleagues, most of them are able to overcome this after their first year of study. The change from a negative perception to a positive one usually stems from the knowledge they acquire about the language, the nature, and content of the Kiswahili programme, as well as their favourable perceptions of the teachers of the language.

Going forward the study has established that knowledge of Kiswahili is minimal in Ghana. There is therefore the need to revive the awareness of Kiswahili in Ghana, especially with the declaration of July 7 as World Kiswahili Day by UNESCO. Other recommendations of students that need to be addressed are the use of technology, and more academic resources to improve the Kiswahili programme at the University of Ghana.

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In terms of future studies on this subject, I intend to undertake a survey of the wider Ghanaian community's knowledge and impressions of Kiswahili. This would be done against the background of the prospect of Kiswahili as a continental language of Africa.

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