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**LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

By

Prof. BEBAN SAMMY CHUMBOW

University of Yaounde I

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INTRODUCTION

Language is **power** because it can be used to achieve a wide variety of effects and results.

Language can be used to cajole, to flatter, to deceive, it can also be used to slander to vilify, to destroy and to kill; but it can also be used to motivate to galvanise, to construct and to build.

Language is a **powerful instrument** because of what it can do. It is therefore an **instrument of power**, for the one who accepts and undertakes to be its master.

This paper examines the questions below, in the context of Higher Education:

1. What are the traditional objectives and functions of language in Higher education?
2. How can these functions be adequately executed to obtain maximum results in the service of Higher Education and nation development?
3. To what extent are these objectives achieved in the experience of francophone African high education?
4. Problems, prospects and perspectives.

THE GOAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The goal of Higher Education in Africa according to the **Action Plan** of the African Union 2006-2015 is “the **revitalisation** of High Education in Africa with the emergence of strong and vibrant institutions profoundly engaged in fundamental and development-oriented research, teaching, community out-reach and enrichment services to the lower levels of education: and function in an environment of academic freedom and institutional autonomy within an overall framework of public accountability”. (*The second decade of Education in Africa 2006-2015 Plan of action: 8.*

How is **language** in Higher Education Institutions relevant to the attainment of this goal? It is important in this respect to observe that it is now **axiomatic** that the most fundamental objectives and functions of universities and Institutions of Higher Education are:

5. Teaching - learning
6. Research
7. Community outreach (support to development issues at the local and national levels)
8. Impact of higher education on primary and secondary education.

A key term in the goal set for higher Education by the African Union as presented above is **development**.

Indeed, the above core objectives of higher education must be “**development – oriented**”

What is **development** and how is language related to development? To answer this double barrel question, is a starting point to answering the earlier question, “How is language relevant to the attainment of goals of higher education.

2.0. LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

National development is a much sought-after ideal in the developing **nations** of Africa as evidenced by the pervasive periodic (Five or Seven- year) National Development Plans characteristic of African nations. Yet, despite over half a century of planning for development, it cannot be said that the ideal of development, (the object of the search), has been achieved. In spite of evidence of growth, the quintessence of development has eluded all efforts and initiatives as well as all economic paradigms designed for development, from the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) to the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The relative achievements of African nations since independence in relation to the evidence of extensive abject mass rural poverty, is best described as **growth without development**. This sorry state of affairs is due, in part at least, to the fact that the language factor has not been fully and comprehensively addressed or has been addressed only haphazardly and half- heartedly (Chumbow 2005).

It has been argued forcefully that the economic and social development of Africa depends crucially on the development and use of African languages in the enterprise of national development (Bamgbose 1990 and 2003, Chumbow 1990 and 2005-among others). Thus, Chumbow (2005) articulates this issue in the following terms:

“An evaluation of the efforts of African countries in the enterprise of national development shows that in most cases, there has been what we may call **growth without development** because despite visible signs of economic progress(along with considerable population explosion), African countries are characterised by a massive presence of abject poverty in the rural communities (villages) and the outskirts of urban areas (where most city dwellers live) surrounding a few affluent villas capped by token sky-scrapers in the city centres.” (Chumbow 2005:168)

2.1. National Development

While there is no universally acceptable and accepted definition for **national development** a situation where little evidence of conspicuous consumption in parts of the urban centres contrast sharply with the generalised poverty, misery, illiteracy, ignorance and disease in most of the national territory is far from being a reasonable approximation of the **national development ideal**. The target of development should be the improvement of the welfare and social well-being of the **entire citizenry**.

We define national development (in Chumbow 1990) as “the nation’s **human resources** acting on its **natural resources** to produce **goods (tangible and intangible)** in order to improve the **welfare and social well-being of citizens** of the entire nation in terms of indicators of development predicated on **minimum standards of living** which include (among others) a reasonable standard of good health and housing facilities, food security, life expectancy (reduction of infant mortality and improvement of maternal and reproductive health), education and literacy, and employment..”

The United Nation’s Development Programme (UNDP)’s human development index mirrors the basic necessities of life that can guarantee acceptable level of development of the human condition.

The United Nation's millennium development goals (MDGs) adopted by developing nations as development objectives for horizon 2015 include basic (universal primary) education, Education and health have been found to be **central** to development initiatives (Menrhot1999?)

2.2. Education and National Development

Education in all its forms (formal, informal, and life-long education and apprenticeship training schemes) is crucial for national development because only a human population possessing knowledge and skills acquired through education and training can serve as veritable agents of change to convert raw material or the nation's natural resources into finished products to satisfy consumption needs of the national economy. (Chumbow 2005:169)

2.3. Language and Education

Language is the means by which knowledge, skills and technological know-how are transferred from a source to a destination, from the one who possesses the knowledge and skills to the one who does not, but wants to.

Thus, all forms of education (formal, informal or life-long require the use of language (oral, written or signed). Effective communication via language determines the extent to which the knowledge or technology is transferred from the source to destination.

The relation between **language, education and development** should be obvious and self evident from the foregoing. Education is relevant to national development because only educated, trained or skilled human resources are useful as agents of change capable to transforming raw material or generating the finish products ideas and knowledge needed to improve the human condition.

This underscore the fact that the contribution of the un-educated untrained unskilled to the development equation is relatively low.

Language in turn is crucially relevant to education because it is the primary means of human communication and no education (learning and teaching) can take place without effective communication.

3.0. LANGUAGE AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The University or Institution of Higher Education has a unique responsibility in its role of capacity building for national development. There is therefore a need to carry out a foresight analysis of the language industry in higher education with respect to the language function as a necessary **sine qua non** contribution to the attainment of the objectives of the University institution. The analysis has to be done with respect to the following dimensions:

Knowledge Acquisition

Knowledge Dissemination

knowledge Production

Knowledge and Extension Services and Programmes

3.1. Independently of the general foresight analysis there is a need to recognise two types of language activities. The first is the language programmes of the various language degree programmes of Academic Faculties where languages studies are undertaken for degrees (from BA to Ph.D) in Language and / or literature.

These are programmes of language as a body of knowledge on the same level as History, Maths or Physics.

Secondly, there is Language as a skill and a tool for the acquisition of knowledge in any discipline which needs to be taken by all who seek to acquire knowledge, including those in Language degree Programmes (if such skills are not explicitly or implicitly taught in their programmes).

These programmes exist in many universities under different names with different stories to tell as far as their efficiency and efficacy is concerned. Some Universities do not have them or have poorly conceptualised versions. These programmes are however, quite important and necessary.

The context of Distance and Open Education being considered here makes them an absolute necessity, particularly since independent learning requires considerable reading and writing skill.

This will be the focus of a number of considerations from our knowledge and experience within the francophone African context.

3.2. Language and skills programme and awareness

The first and most fundamental challenge is that those who need the programme most, students (and staff) do not often realise their need for it. There is therefore a need to sensitise the entire university about the power of language and its value as a tool and facilitator of knowledge acquisition, dissemination and research. There are studies which indicate the correlation of success in these Language and skills programme and success in academic and professional disciplines. It is important to use results of local studies in any awareness campaign. If they don't exist, the Language and Skills Institute, Department or Unit should undertake them.

Students' resistance to this course is manifested in many ways – subtle and not so subtle. Teachers in the Faculties need to be convinced and motivated where necessary for them in turn to motivate and encourage their students.

3.3. Students variable

Another major challenge faced by the language programme is the disparity of levels of undergraduate students in the language, despite the fact that there is a minimum requirement.

3.3.1. To obtain a minimum effect the Language and Study Skills Department needs to have a **Language Needs Assessment** procedure in the form of a diagnostic test for placement of students at various levels of the Language and skills programme as determined by performance in the diagnostic test. Standardized tests may be used, but experience shows that it is advisable to use tests with local norms. Tests constructed locally. At any rate, if a standardized test from abroad must be used, local norms should be established before they are widely used.

3.3.2. The teaching of learning skills

In the focus on the learner, there is a need to both inform and survey learning styles and learning strategies: Relevant issues in this respect are:

- Characteristics of good language learners
- A learner-centered approach to Language teaching.
- Learning strategies in and out of the classroom

- Learning strategy preferences.

3.4. Programme variable

The challenge here is the identification and organisation of skills needed to be taught in the programme. Here, experience and knowledge of principles of language syllabus and curriculum development are needed to ensure that various discrete language skills are articulated in appropriate doses at various levels of the programme. Elements of the syllabus include the four basic language.

Grammar, Reading, Writing, Speaking along with teaching vocabulary, phonology etc.

This should be envisaged along with methodological considerations concerning each skill. Thus, for instance, with respect to Grammar, the programme must have an attitude with respect to how grammatical information is to be taught 'explicitly or implicitly etc. Hence the need emphasised earlier of competence and versatility with issues.

Problems that arise from young teachers are ironed, out in our experience, with periodic refresher courses and seminars (to be discussed below).

3.5 Language materials variable

Consideration of appropriateness and suitability of materials is informed by the learner and programme variables and the level.

Problems arise in this respect because there are many books in the market fuelled only by the profit motive. They are not based on the application of any psycholinguistic theory of language learning nor do they take into consideration cognitive and sociolinguistic variables (learner variables). Also, the Language teaching method underlying the teaching may not be discernable.

The choice of language materials needs to be done on the basis of an insightful analytical evaluation (with checklist) that takes these factors into consideration.

Materials selected or adopted must be **adapted** to specific situations by a careful comparative and differential analysis of needs and content.

Ultimately, it is recommended that each programme after being taught and examined for a number of years, should design its own course book, taking into consideration students performance over the years as relevant input in the course design.

3.6. Language teaching methods variable

The challenge here is that language teaching methods are changing quite often in response to research findings in psycholinguistic and sociolinguistics of language learning.

Methods used, should often be congruent with the learners goals for language learning while it is important to update information and methods of teaching, care must be taken not to jump on the band wagon of a train on its way to derailment, because it is not solidly anchored.

Any rate eclectic principles requiring the use of time honoured methods are useful.

There is however a need for the programme to co-ordinate the choice and use of method to avoid unnecessary disparities.

3.7. Research activity

The language teacher who is not focused on research may soon be irrelevant to the teaching-learning process as a reliable facilitator of the learning experience.

The dynamics of the information on the teaching-learning process makes research by the teacher not only desirable but indispensable. Sandra Lee Mackay presents principles of language research in general with a section on **Action Research** which is collaborative research carried out by teachers with a view to changing things in the classroom to ensure participation of a team of colleagues (Mackay 2006: 29-39). Time honoured techniques of Survey Research; Introspection and Qualitative approaches may also be useful in getting material for effective teaching.

We recommend that these techniques should be taught to teachers in the programme during Refresher courses and their work reviewed by peers as part of the quality assurance procedures.

3.8. Teacher variable

The language teacher as the facilitator in the language learning enterprise mediates and ensures the oversight of the maximal interactive correlation of the entire variable in the teaching learning environment. The teacher variable is examined at three levels as follows:

3.8.1. Capacity Building of Language Teachers to assume this function.

Inadequacy of trained language teachers for Language Programmes

Problem: Most teachers recruited to do this job, end up defending a thesis in Linguistics or literature and moving away from language pedagogy per se to Literature and Language Departments so as to become Professors since this programme is run as a short time service programme.

Solution: Contractualisation as part of the recruitment deal

All teachers in the programme sign a binding contract on a minimum duration of service

- Build Action Research into a viable applied linguistics research domain whose results will inform issues in the area patterning to students, programme, language materials etc.
- Get university authorities to recognise service as Language teacher, as a career option with an approved career profile for upward mobility, similar to what obtains for laboratory technicians who can rise from Assistant laboratory technician to Chief laboratory technician passing through the ranks of Laboratory technician, Senior and Principal laboratory technician.

3.8.2. Improving Teachers Morale and Goals:

Ensure that teachers are motivated by adequate conditions of service.

- Attitude Engineering: Undertake principles that will ensure positive attitude, positive thinking, positive action

Action to be taken: (?)

- **Training: (?)**

3.8.3. Enhancing Teacher Competence

There is a need to ensure that language teachers of the programme are trained teachers from the outset or given a language teaching training by way of refreshers courses or a series of seminars and hands-on tasks.

- Design periodic **refreshers courses** based on new information relevant to good or best practice in pedagogy.
 - Updating teachers' language and knowledge in terms of grammar ...
 - Updating teachers skills in the area of methodology
 - Updating competence in Evaluation and testing

3.9. Exploring new horizons

Objectives: There are a number of emerging trends or key emerging issues in diverse areas of the language industry that need to be examined, explored and appropriated for the effective implementation of strategic objectives of university language programmes.

This will require interchange between scholars, practitioners (as teachers), psycholinguists engaged in language acquisition research, sociolinguists concerned with the learning environment etc.

Goal: To monitor emerging international research priorities and methodological best practices in language teaching and appropriate (adoption and adaptation to our local situation).

Action

(Food for Thought:What specific actions need be envisaged that are compatible with these objectives and goal?)

Language and Learning skills discussed above takes care of the Acquisition and dissemination (learning – teaching) component of the Higher Education. There is need to say something about language in respect of Outreach and Research objectives.

4.0. LANGUAGE FOR OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

The Millennium Development Goals report of the United Nations 2006 indicates for all of the 8 goals that progress has been made but Sub-Saharan Africa lags behind considerable with respect to the targets and in some cases, unless something is done, it is unlikely that the 2015 targets will be met with respect to the eradication of poverty and hunger, universal primary education and maternal health. We have argued (Chumbow 2007) that this, in part, is because many of the activities geared towards solving the problems are conceived and made available to the masses of the rural population only in French or English. The medium of education in most of Africa is still largely via an exoglossic or foreign language of colonial heritage such as English, French, Portuguese Spanish, etc. with the consequence that only an estimated 20 to 40 percent of the African population is educated in these languages. **-The fact that the sum total of the knowledge, technology, skills and techniques relevant to and required for national development are confined to and transmitted in a foreign language used by a relatively small fraction of the population means that the majority (60 to 80%) who do not speak the official foreign language are literally marginalised and excluded from the development equation**

In order to democratise access to knowledge needed by the rural population who constitute 60 to 70% of the population we have to use a language they understand. There is therefore a need to accelerate the **valorisation** of African languages by enhancing their instrumentalisation, giving them orthographic and grammatical/norms etc. so that they can assume new functions in communicating new knowledge in science and technology.

University Departments of linguistics and African Language and appropriate Language Institutes of the state where they exist, have to be empowered and enabled to assume responsibility with respect to the revitalisation, revalorisation, instrumentalisation and intellectualisation of African languages so that they can be used along with partner languages (English, French, Portugal, Spanish) as languages of national development from the grassroots upward. This is not to say that African Languages should be used only for outreach purposes. The advocacy is for them to be used in education and made to assume other valorising or economically valued functions.

The point made here is that universities cannot achieve their outreach goals at all with only the use of exoglossic or foreign languages.

5.0. QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Quality assurance is indispensable in ensuring that set objectives are achieved and targets met.

For the Higher Education Language Programme, quality assurance mechanisms put in place by the university for all disciplines should be adequate if they are properly conceptualised. The francophone African universities until recently, have been quite weak on quality assurance because they thrive on the authoritarian mode of delivery in university institutions that prevailed before 1968. With the advent of the decision to implement the Boulogne process called the 'système LMD' (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate Programme) which implies the adoption of the North American system already adopted in Europe (including France), the university communities are bracing up to adopt more rigorous quality assurance principles which should include the following (which exist in some universities already):

- **Teacher self-Assessment** via a detailed questionnaire that seeks to have the teacher reflect on what he has done for the course and what he thinks he has achieved determining strengths and areas that need improvement.
- **Students questionnaire** on all aspects of each course, including an assessment of the teaching etc. This has sparked dissention among lecturers who cannot accept 'to be evaluated by students'. Explanations to the effect that the teacher is not being evaluated but the course and the teaching process are... and the teacher happens to be only one element in the process, don't seem to have solved the problem.
- **Peer Review Process**, where colleagues give feedback to each other about their work
- **Mentoring**: The process where junior lecturers are attached to senior lecturers for advice and guidance seems to work well, in an informal situation.

6.0. LANGUAGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Francophone African countries as a geo-political unit, refers to all countries of Africa where French is the official or dominant language. Of the five regions of the African Union, Francophone African countries are found mainly in: The North, West and Central Africa. The North African Francophone countries also have Arabic as official or dominant language West and Central African Francophone countries numbering about 20 constitute the core of African **Francophonie** to which Madagascar and Mauritius must be added.

6.1. French language as a colonial legacy.

The language situation in Francophone African institutions of Higher Education, today, predictably mirrors the language policy of the French colonial master in the era of colonisation. French educational policy in its colonies was one of cultural assimilation and the French language (as element of culture), was the main instrument of assimilation as the sole medium of instruction in the school system of the colonial era (Chumbow 1980).

The direct method based on the use of the target foreign language (French) to the exclusion of the African mother tongue, was introduced in French Equatorial Africa (most of present day Central Africa) by its Governor General, R. Antonelli in 1925 and was generalized throughout French West Africa. It is this system of total emersion in French that produced the first generation of Francophone African Leaders (Senghor, Houphouët Boigny, Rabemanjara, the Diops etc).

Leopold S. Senghor an exemplary product of the French assimilation machine was a master of the French language and this earned him the unusual distinction of being admitted to the highly prestigious and elitist (Académie Française) French Academy. He was, however, sufficiently lucid to proclaim his negritude. He romanticized with the French language in the following terms “French, this precious jewel, this wonderful instrument lifted from the ashes of Colonialism ...” (Senghor 1962).

As pointed out in Chumbow and Bobda 2000, the French assimilation policy was bound to produce what Frank Fanon dramatically called black-skin white masquerade”. The policy was characterized by the belief in the superiority of the French language such that African languages were seen as mere “primitive patois”, therefore, unfit to express the fruits of the rich French civilization (Chumbow and Bobda 2000: 42). The consequence was that French was deliberately, through a selective educational policy, made available only to a few privileged individuals, earmarked as collaborators in the service of the socio-economic goals of colonialism. This explains why out of a population 119,573,000 only about 13,000,000 or 29.5% have a functional knowledge of French,(Nkot and Paré 2001: 29). This means that more than 70% of the people in Francophone countries do not know French.

9. Language in Francophone Higher Education Institutions

- Overview

With respect to the language and linguistic situation, the francophone African countries have slightly varying experiences in terms of details but they have a common denominator.

The French language is prominently attested as a medium of instruction.

However, the advocacy for the use of the mother tongue in education over the years (ACCT, UNESCO, OAU, etc) has led to varying attempts to “integrate” national languages in adult literacy programmes and exceptionally in the primary school system with the impulsion coming from the University Departments of Linguistics and African Languages.

6.2.2. Francophone North Africa

While French is waxing strong in francophone Northern African countries of Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania, Arabic is considered the official language. There are, however, two varieties of Arabic in a situation of diglossia: Classical Arabic used in schools at all levels and the local variety, used in non formal situations, along with indigenous African languages like Berber, Amazir etc. French is taught in the school system and especially used in the university as medium of instruction in many Faculties and Schools, but most importantly, as language of research and scientific discourse along with Arabic (Boufarra 2008, Rispaill, 2005, Kahlouche, 2000).

- Sub-Saharan Francophone Africa

French is the sole language medium of instruction at all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) in most countries of this geopolitical unit, with the exception of Cameroon and Mauritius which have a dual status of belonging to both the Francophonie and Commonwealth of nations and have English in addition to French as official languages and languages of the educational system as we shall see presently.

As observed by Nkot F. and J. Paré 2001, it is an illusion to think that francophone Africa is uniform and homogenous in terms of the base languages and their relation to French. There are indeed, sub systems within Francophone Africa in particular.

Francophonie in the ex-Belgian colonies is lived differently in the sense that French, the official language is dominant at the school level but some indigenous African languages developed by the Belgian colonial authority to deliberately limit access to French, the language of power, now enjoy the status of national vehicular languages or **Lingua Franca**. Thus, Kinyarwanda in Rwanda, Kirundi in Burundi and Lingala, Kikongo, Ciluba and Kiswahili in the Democratic Republic of Congo have a special de facto status as Lingua Franc, even if in recent years their role in education is predominantly in adult literacy.

Recently, Kiswahili has been introduced in schools of Burundi and Rwanda. While English has been adopted as official and school language along with French as a result of the massive return of Rwandan refugees from Anglophone countries (after the 1994 genocide) where they have been acculturated as anglophones.

In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, French the official language and the national vehicular languages interact with over a hundred indigenous languages. At the level of higher education, French is the main medium of teaching and research with local languages used after research in the development of literacy materials for adult literacy and basic education. Foreign languages are taught and used in the various foreign language Departments.

6.2.3. Francophone Countries with Non-Francophone Heritage.

Constrained by geographical contiguity with bigger francophone countries, propelled by the need to be members of regional economic communities (ECOWAS, CEMAC), some counties with a Portuguese or Spanish colonial heritage are members of the Francophonie. This includes Cape Verde Island in West Africa, Guinea Bissau, and São Thome and Princiipi Island (off the Coast of Gabon) which are of Portuguese origin and now use French along with Portuguese over a background of a local Creoles (and some African languages in the case of Guinea Bissau. There is also the Equatorial Guinea of Spanish colonial heritage which has now added French to Spanish, the original official language.

To this category, must be added Djibuti (in the horn of Africa, a neighbour of Somalia and Ethiopia) which although a former French colony, has undergone extensive interaction with Ethiopia and Somalia and Arab nations of North Africa and the Middle East as a result of its isolation from other francophone territories and because of its linguistic and cultural affinity with its neighbours, Arabic and French are official languages, de jure in terms of the constitution, but Arabic has a de facto dominance as a result of the entry of Djibuti in the Arabic League in 1997 (Couvert 1986).

6.2.4. Francophone Countries with some Anglophone Heritage

Cameroon and Mauritius belong to both the Francophonie and the Commonwealth of nations as a result of a complex linguistic legacy that includes English as part of the colonial heritage. Thus, French and English are official languages and languages of education in the school system at all levels.

In Mauritius, English and French are used in the university as medium of instruction by the staff. Mauritian Creole is the Lingua Franca for non-formal discourse even at the university. Tirvassen 2008 indicates that there is Anglophone dominance in Higher Education, particularly with respect to scientific discourse and scientific publications, as francophone lecturers trained in France, quite often publish in English while lecturing in French.

In Cameroon, English and French as official languages are used as medium of instruction. The lecturer makes the choice and the students have the obligation to adjust to either language because in principle, the English-French bilingual system at the primary and secondary levels is supposed to have prepared them adequately, although this is not always the case.

A compulsory university bilingual training programme is provided for all undergraduate programmes in English for Francophone students and French for Anglophone students. Degree award may be withheld until a language proficiency requirement is satisfied. Students may respond to question in the language of their choice both in classroom interaction and examination. Teachers are expected to have the competent enough to access students' output in either language.

Other European languages such as Spanish, German, Arabic and Italian are taught as subjects in a degree programme in the various languages Departments of the Faculties of Arts and Schools of Education.

African languages are the object and subject of linguistic studies (analysis at the level of phonology, morphology and syntax and semantic) in the Departments of Linguistics and Africa languages. A few selected indigenous languages, Kiswahili, Ffulde, Ewondo, Duala, Bassa, Fe'fe, are taught as proficiency courses. But no Africa languages are offered at the degree level. Research has been undertaken for the production of language for teaching materials.

The recent decision by the Minister of Secondary Education to start teaching Cameroonian languages in schools as from September has led to the commitment of the Minister of Higher Education to request for the implementation of degree programmes in African Languages in addition to the well known powerful African language and Linguistic programmes.

Francophonie in countries with a French language colonial heritage. French is the unrivaled and unqualified language of Education at all levels in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Niger, Togo, Benin, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo and Gabon. Only the language Departments have English, French, Spanish and German as medium of instruction.

In the French language Departments, French is taught as a first language with a first language methodology.

In some universities, (in Senegal and the Congo etc) have English as a foreign language (EFL) is voluntarily pursued under the impulse of its international impact in the context of globalization. Because it is taught with an EFL methodology or as English for special purposes (ESP) it does not take root as it is used with hesitation and interference.

African languages which were totally neglected by the French colonial policy perpetuated in the early years of independence have gradually been recognized.

In 1992, the Francophone Cultural and Co-operation Agency (ACCT) developed a ten year-programme of language in the Francophonie countries of the South in which it asserted that “the future of French in Africa is inextricably” linked to the development and use of indigenous African languages” (Chumbow and Bobda 2000).

Departments of Linguistics and African languages have been working hard on descriptive and applied aspects of language studies with evidence of productivity more importantly in the development of mother tongue literacy programmes.

The initiative was supported by the ACCT which sponsored regular training seminars in the Ecole the Bordeaux in the 1980s and 1990s to empower young researchers and lecturers in applied language research (devising orthography, writing, pedagogical grammars, lexicography or dictionary making etc).

At the status planning level, in virtually all Francophone countries of this category, French is the official language along with many official or non official vehicular languages including vehicular cross border languages or mega languages of wider communication spread over several countries.

Major Vehicular Cross Border Languages of Sub-Saharan Francophone Africa.

Language	Number of Speakers	Geographical Spread
Fulfulde (Peul)	≅ 25 millions	Cameroon, Tchad, Niger, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinee, Benin, Nigeria.
Kiswahili	≅ 24 millions	Congo, RDC, Burundi, Tanzanie, Ouganda, Kenya, Zaire.
Sango (Ugbandi, Yakoma)	≅ 12 millions	RCA, Tchad, Congo, RDC, Cameroon.
Kirundi (Kwondo, Bulu)	≅ 12 millions	Rwanda, Tanzania.
Beti-Fang Ewondo, Bulu)	≅ 8 millions	Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea.
Haousa	≅ 6 milions	RCA, Tchad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger.
Arabic	≅ 6 millions	Cameroon, Tchad, Soudan.
Kikongo	≅ 6 millions	Congo, RDC.
Lingala	≅ 6 millions	Congo, RDC, RCA.
Yoruba	≅ 6 millions	Benin, Togo, Nigeria.
Wolof	≅ 6 millions	Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia.
Malinke-Mandigue Bambara (Dioula)	≅ 6 millions	Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Guinea Bissau.

Source: Wamba 2008

NB: The figures are estimates.

10. While research is done in African languages, no national degree programmes are available in African languages, comparable to what obtains in Anglophone African countries like Kiswahili in Tanzania and Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo in Nigeria. Two factors explain this situation: the nefarious impact of the colonial legacy, which presents the development and use of African languages in the academic domain as a concession and favour, and the inadequate preparation with respect to the instrumentalisation of the national African language. Other reasons may be adduced as contributory factors.

6.3. French as an African Language?

Because of the evidence of appropriation of French by African as a result of the many phonological, morphological and lexical “particularisms” in the various varieties of African French which, for want of space, we cannot present now (see Chumbow and Bobda 2000 and Tabi Manga 200), some

scholars argue that French is an African language. Thus, Dummont 1990 came out with a book on the issue aptly titled “Le Français Langue Africaine”. Statement or question? This title provoked several reactions including Mendo Ze’s 1999, collection of views favourable to the assertion and Ngallasso 2008 who adduced cogent arguments to deny the status of African language for French. For Ngallasso, French is a language of Africa but not an African language.

A LINGUA FRANCA FOR SCIENCE

What is the language of scientific research in the Francophonie in general and in Francophone in particular?

While English is rivaled considerably by other world-class languages as the main language of globalization, it is virtually unrivaled as the language of science at the global level. A study by Professor Foued Laroussi of the university of Rouen, based on the number of publications and or their impact calculated in terms of number of citations in scientific journals as contained in citation index of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) in Philadelphia, USA and the Pascal and Francis of the National Institute of Science and Technology of the French National Centre for Scientific Research, Nancy is very eloquent in this respect.

A 2004 report shows the regression of publications in relative terms despite increase in absolute terms, leading to what he calls “crises in French Scientific Research”.

For the year 2001, French comes second to English but with only 2, 1779 publications or 2,1% of world total and far behind English with 95,5036 publications or 83,12 of total publications. The report also shows a regression of the French (language) publications from 2.1% in 2001 to 1.7% in 2002 and 1.6% in 2003. The fields of Science, Medicine and Technology are more affected by this disparity than social Sciences and Humanities since publications in French constitute 10.21% of world total publications in the Humanities and 4% in the Social Sciences in 2001 (Laroussi 2008).

What are the implications of this for the language of research in Higher Education in Francophone Africa?

When it is considered that some top French Scientific journals like “Les Annales de l’Institut Pasteur and “La Nouvelle Revue Française d’Hématologie” maintain their French language title but publish almost exclusively in English; considering that others (like Fundamental and Clinical Pharmacology) use English titles for their journals and publish mostly in English; considering that most French researchers of different research fields endeavour to publish in English, Francophone African Universities will have to step up the teaching of English in the university in general and to the Faculties of Science in particular, if Africa is not to be marginalized.

The increasing use of English in Scientific journals by francophones despite appeals from the Francophonie to patronize French is rationalized by Philippe Van Parijs 2004 as follows:

“Publishing in French is a battle from the rear..... which prevents the scientist from sufficient exposure to readership and criticism.”

CONCLUSION

Knowledge production in all African universities must be stepped up for Africa to remain competitive in the global market of science and technology but more importantly, for the university to contribute to the social and economic transformation needed for development.

In addition, Francophone Africa will need to address the language question in higher education by integrating the teaching and use of African languages and the ultimate medium for developing a base for science and technology and stepping up English as a means of participating in scientific and intellectual debate at the global level.

Finally, a case has been made for the generalization of Language and Skills Programmes in Institutions of Higher Education and measure taken to ensure that play their role in providing the language and learning skills indispensable as instruments of effective acquisition and dissemination of knowledge in the service of the nation and in the service of mankind.

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