

Prospects Of The Teaching And Learning Of The French As A Foreign Language For Business Communication In Ghana : The Case Of Business Students In The Faculty Of Business Education, UEW-Kumasi

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Abstract: This paper examines the prospects in term of employment opportunities of the teaching and learning of French in business communication among Management students at the Department of Management Studies Education in the Faculty of Business Education, University of Education, Winneba- Kumasi Campus (UEW-K). The objectives are to investigate students' perception about the prospects of the use of French as a medium for business communication, examine the important role that the French language plays as an effective tool in business communication in Ghana and assess the employment opportunities of having the knowledge of French as a foreign language for business professionals in Ghana. The target population of the study consisted of Level 200 students at the Department of Management Studies Education who had studied French for four semesters. The research made use of a convenience sampling method to select a total of 362 respondents made up of 202 males and 160 females. The study employed a descriptive survey with a structured questionnaire which was a 5-point Likert scale format (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree) to investigate students' perception about the prospects of the use of French as a medium for business communication and the need for Ghanaian students to learn the French as a foreign language. The data was analysed using purely quantitative descriptive statistical technique to explore students' perception about the prospects of having the knowledge French. The results indicate clearly that the knowledge of the French language has a lot of prospects as 86% of the respondents believed that the knowledge of French language is positively related with employment chances. It is therefore recommended that a vigorous foreign language policy framework should be put in place in the educational system in order to promote, motivate and encourage Ghanaian students to take French language seriously. Tertiary institutions in Ghana are implored to support and promote the teaching and learning of French by making it a requirement for graduation.

Keywords: Business communication, communication, culture, employment, foreign language, language, second language.

I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Languages by nature are very dynamic and closely intertwined with human culture; they serve as a medium through which the cultural artifacts artifacts: art, music, dance, customs, literature etc are expressed and interpreted. Culture is very important in the study of language. To communicate

meaning through language to someone from a different cultural background, there is the likelihood of misunderstanding due to cultural differences (Robock, 1989). Language is obviously a vital tool not only as a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but also it forges friendships, cultural ties, and economic relationships. Learning

a language works in unison with learning about the culture, values and traditions of that type of language and people.

Throughout history, many scholars have reflected on the importance of language. For instance, the scholar Benjamin Whorf as cited in Algeo (2001) has noted that language shapes thoughts and emotions, determining one's perception of reality. John Stuart Mill as cited in Kroon (2017) said that "language is the light of the mind. For Sapir (1929), language is not only a vehicle for the expression of thoughts, perceptions, sentiments, and values characteristic of a community; it also represents a fundamental expression of social identity. He noted that a common speech serves as a peculiar potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language. Language therefore is considered as an important means of cultural transmission as far as each society has a culture or cultures and culture is defined as what society does or thinks and language is seen as a particular show of thought. In short, as a member of society, the individual expresses his or her identity or show solidarity with other members and maintains feelings of cultural kinship through language.

Hjelmslev (1968) as cited in Kwofie (2005:6), offers the following definition of language:

Language is the instrument by means of which man fashions his thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions, the instrument by means of which he influences and is influenced by others, the ultimate and deepest foundation of human society.

Moirand (1990:8), offers a similar definition of language:

Le langage est un instrument, un outil. C'est un outil magnifique, mais difficile à manier. Son premier but est de servir, d'être utile. Sans le langage, il n'y a pas de communication entre les êtres. C'est pourquoi nous avons cherché à enseigner, dès le début, le langage comme un moyen d'expression et de communication.

These definitions indicate clearly that the principal tool for human communication is language and therefore it is indispensable for all societies. Community life is therefore not possible without communication. Language as an instrument for human communication is made up of words and meanings put together to form sentences. These sentences are put together to provide information and exchange ideas with other people (Van Berkum, 2008). Exchange of thoughts, feelings, opinions and values among members of a community is what makes community life meaningful. There are many indigenous languages in Ghana in particular and in Africa in general which are unwritten and therefore of little use in literacy (<https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/features/african-indigenous-languages-and-education.html>).

However, a good number of them are coded and have been very effective and studied at various levels of education. Currently, there are eleven government-sponsored languages supported by the Bureau of Ghana Languages (The Bureau of Ghana Languages-BGL, 2013). The use of colonial languages especially English and French has become dominant in politics, international diplomacy and business transactions throughout the world.

Today, French as a foreign language is the official/co-official language in over 29 countries across five different

continents, most of which are members of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the community of 84 countries which share the official use or teaching of French (OIF, 2007).

It is spoken by about 80 million people (i.e. France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada (principally Quebec), Italy, French Islands). It serves as a second language for some 52 million or more people, mainly in Africa, Middle East and Asia. Africa is the continent with the greatest number of French-speaking people in the world. Francophone Africa had about 321 million people in 2007 with a projected population of 733 million in 2050. In West Africa, the Francophone states are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Chad, Togo, Mali, Guinea Conakry, Niger, Senegal and Mauritania while the Anglophone states are Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone

(French language growing, especially in Africa – Francophonie – RFI, 2013).

In addition, the French language is taught and used as a foreign language by many countries, including Ghana. Many countries are making it mandatory to learn a foreign language while attending school. Foreign language teaching is compulsory at a young age in countries like England, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Singapore (Henry, 2012).

Given the above information, it is evident that the French is one of the world most powerful languages and among the five dominant languages of ECOWAS, AU the United Nations, the European Union, UNESCO in particular where Ghana is a member state and NATO in general (The status of French in the world, 2015).

The importance of foreign languages really shines in business transactions where companies try to reach global audiences and markets. Therefore more and more business organisations realised that, to be competitive, there is the need to have the knowledge in many foreign languages particularly French.

The focus of this paper is to examine the prospects of the French language as an effective tool for business communication in Ghana. The French language, like any other language, is seen as a principal tool for communication in various fields of human endeavour. Language remains an effective instrument the people can always use to inalienably bind themselves socio-economically and culturally together, kith to kin, across regional and political boundaries.

A. GENESIS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE IN GHANA

In Ghana, despite the official status of English as a second language (colonial heritage), the teaching and learning of French dates as far back as 1879 (Amonoo, 1988). It was taught sporadically at Mfantshipim and Adisadel schools in Cape Coast, when the then colonial school authorities deemed it fit to introduce French as a second foreign language. It eventually spread to other schools in Ghana. The decision to teach French, it must be noted, was as a result of the geographical location of Ghana. The country is bordered by three francophone neighbours namely: Togo in the east, Côte d'Ivoire in the west and Burkina Faso in the north. This strategic geographical position makes it expedient for the teaching and learning of French in Ghana. Consequently, the

government of Ghana, with support from the French government has, over the years, put in place various measures to enhance the teaching and learning of French. Hence, the creation of departments of French in three Colleges of Education (Mount Mary, Wesley and Bagabaga) with the aim of increasing the number of trained teachers of French for the basic schools.

Also, Ghana as a member state of the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and United Nations Organisation (UNO) finds it necessary for the teaching and learning of French in order to foster regional and global integration. One of the objectives of regional integration anywhere is to foster unity, understanding and the spirit of working together of member states in order to achieve set-up goals.

Today, various tertiary institutions (both public and private) in Ghana particularly the University of Education, Winneba, University of Cape Coast and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology train French teachers for the first and second cycle schools. Additionally, from 1970-1995, the Government of Ghana with generous support from the French government saw the need to establish regional centres for the teaching of French (CREF). The objective for the creation of these centres was to boost the teaching and learning of French through the organisation of in-service programmes and training workshops. As a result, the National Coordination Office of CREF was set-up in 1997 in conjunction with the Ghana Association of French Teachers (GAFT) for the continuous training of French teachers to upgrade and improve on their professional competencies in the content and methodologies and sharpen their skills in the teaching and learning of French in Ghana. In 2006, a resource and documentation centre known as Francozone was established in Accra, again with massive support from the French government, to enhance research in the various areas of French language teaching and learning in Ghana. The country's interest in the teaching and learning of French and culture culminated in the attainment of membership status in the prestigious International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF) in 2006, under the leadership of President J. A. Kuffour. As a member of the 56-member organisation, it implies that Ghana:

- ✓ accepts to adhere to the democratic values, cultural diversity through co-operation and the use of the French language
- ✓ can have easy access to some special priority research and development grants/funds (e.g. FSP), which, as a non member, she would not enjoy.

As a member, Ghana also benefited from OIF's assistance to:

- ✓ strengthen the French language skills for Ghanaian diplomats and public officers with international responsibilities and engagements
- ✓ increase the number of teachers of French at the second and tertiary levels
- ✓ develop partnership with the private sector for the teaching of the French language in private companies and associations (OIF, 2007)

Statistics show that enormous efforts have been made by the French government to ensure that the study of French is

beneficial and relevant to Ghanaian professionals. There is therefore the overriding need for Ghanaians to communicate in French, not only because Ghana is surrounded by francophone countries, but also because French is the second international language after English and it is spoken at the United Nations' Conferences. It is also an important language at all levels of global businesses. The prospects of French language to the socio-economic and political integration of ECOWAS, African Union in particular and the entire globe in general cannot be overemphasised.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although the English language is the most popular and important tool for communication worldwide today and is the official language in Ghana, the French among other foreign languages is equally dominant because it is one of the international languages, a tool of communication between countries, cultural groups, various companies and organizations, communities and friends. The ability to communicate in a language other than English or one's native language can be very beneficial to the success of any business venture. Ghanaians cannot overlook the economic and diplomatic relationships that Ghana has forged with other French-speaking countries. The knowledge of French is becoming a highly vital and marketable skill in today's world owing to the impact of globalization and Ghanaian businessmen and women should not ignore the prospects of the French language as far as global competition is concerned and should understand that language is an international passport. However, it on record that majority of Ghanaian professionals cannot speak French. Hence, it has become expedient to take an objective look at the prospects of having the knowledge of French in Ghana using the case of Management Studies students in the Faculty of Business Education, UEW-Kumasi.

C. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this paper are to:

- ✓ Investigate students' perception about the prospects of the use French as a medium for business communication for Management Students students in the Faculty of Business Education, UEW-Kumasi.
- ✓ Examine the important role that the French language plays as an effective tool in business communication;
- ✓ Investigate students' opinion of the benefits/employment opportunities of having the knowledge of French language for business professionals in Ghana.

D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- ✓ What are the prospects of having the knowledge of the French language as a business professional or diplomat in Ghana?
- ✓ What important role does the French language play as an effective tool for business communication?

- ✓ What benefits will the knowledge of the language have on business students in the Faculty of Business Education in particular and Ghanaians professionals in general?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature is reviewed on the important roles foreign languages play in communication in general and business communication in particular as well as the employment chances that exist for having the knowledge of the languages.

A. DISTINCTION BETWEEN FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE

There are no major differences in terms of definitions that different writers have provided about foreign language and second language even though many of them have not differentiated between these two terms. The distinction between acronyms like TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) and TEFL (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language); FLS (Français Langue Seconde – French as a second language) and FLE (Français Langue Étrangère – French as a foreign language) draws the attention of researchers to the various concepts on foreign language and second language.

For Richards and Schmidt (2002), a *second language* is any language learned after one has learnt one's native language. They pointed out that a foreign language in contrast refers more narrowly to a language that plays a major role in a particular country or region though it may not be the first language of many people who use it. In the Ghanaian context, English is a second language where as French is considered a foreign one. English is a second language for many countries especially in Africa because it fulfils many important functions in those countries (including the business of education and government) and learning English is necessary to be successful within that context. They also note that foreign languages are typically taught as school subjects for the purpose of communicating with foreigners or for reading printed materials in the language. For Crystal (2003), there is a distinction between *first language* and *second language*: a language other than one's mother-tongue used for a special purpose, e.g. for education and government business. A second language in turn is distinguishable from *foreign language* where no such special status is implied. For the case of Ghana, apart from the various local/native languages, English is a second/official language while French is considered a foreign language.

Stern (1983) believes that today, there is consensus that a necessary distinction has to be made between a non-native language learnt and used within one country to which the term *second language* has been applied and a non-native language learnt and used with reference to a speech community outside national or territorial boundaries to which the term *foreign language* is commonly given. So therefore, for him the distinction between “second language” and “foreign language” is a geographical and environmental distinction. The two indicate two different situations of learning, not two kinds of languages and can be considered as a continuum. But for the

case of Ghana the two are distinct. This is because premium is given to the study of English as a second language and selected local languages at the expense of French as a foreign language.

B. FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The French is a Romance language meaning that it is descended primarily from Vulgar Latin that evolved out of the Gallo-Romance dialects spoken in northern France. It evolved and carried beyond the borders of the Roman Empire through colonization and trade. The language early forms include Old French and Middle French. It is worth noting that the French was also influenced by other ancient languages such as Gaulish, Frankish (Francien) and Old Norse.

These languages gave France its name. In short, the history of the French language came about as a result of the emergence and standardization of these varieties (*Frankish/Francien*) of French. The French was largely derived from Latin with the addition of modern vocabulary from English. Belonging to the Romance family of languages, French shares close lexical similarities with Italian and Spanish.

The influence of the French language in France and beyond was extended by exploration, colonization, and conquest as well as economic, diplomatic and cultural interest. Richelieu established the Académie Française to protect the French language. It retained this role until approximately the middle of the 20th century, when it was replaced by English as the United States became the dominant global power following the Second World War.

SOURCES:

- ✓ Ethnologue: French (2017)
- ✓ La Francophonie dans le monde 2006-2007, (2007)
- ✓ Le français dans le monde (2017)
- ✓ OIF (2014), The French language worldwide

C. THE FRENCH LANGUAGE AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Language, of course, is knowledge, and in our world today knowledge is one of the key factors in competitiveness as far as business transactions are concerned. Many companies operating in an international environment realize the need to explore other markets in order to sell their products and services because they have learnt the dangers of relying solely on English for their business transactions. They see the need to overcome the many challenges of effective communication in a foreign language. In the 80's, AT&T had difficulties in expanding in Europe due to lack of foreign language skills (Peterson, 2002). Communication involves written (verbal) and non verbal aspects and it is suggested in the literature that verbal communication is the top most competencies needed to excel in a managerial position (Shrivastava, 2012). Companies communicate internally and externally. Language, for that matter French is a vital aspect of communication.

In an advanced industrial and an increasingly interdependent world, the knowledge of other languages and for that matter French becomes indispensable. Several educational institutions across the globe have realized the

importance of communicating in a foreign language especially French in response to the increasing needs of job market. Consequently, most business organizations require employees in different capacities with good communication abilities in a foreign language not only for qualifications, but also for multilingual fluency in order to interact with customers and clients, explain policies and procedures, entertain foreign clients, conduct meeting, deliver presentations, liaise, respond to customer complaints and take orders (Schutzler, 2011). Since the world has gone global, the need to compete in it without efficiency in the French language will be extremely difficult.

For the last few years, millions of people across the world, who have the knowledge of the French language share common interests, are able to communicate with each other and exchange ideas. Not only are they able to do this due to the various technological advances, but also because they share a common language. French maintains a well deserved place of importance, for a number of reasons:

- ✓ It is widely spoken on five continents and in many countries, by approximately 200 million people, as a native tongue, language of instruction, language of government, and lingua franca of business.
- ✓ It is among the principal languages of diplomacy and of important international organizations.
- ✓ It is estimated to be among the most important languages of the internet, because of the number of WWW pages up, vigorous efforts to create viable internet discussion lists, success in connecting francophone countries in the southern hemisphere, and its use in page translator applications.

SOURCES:

- ✓ <https://www.un.org> (2016)
- ✓ <https://www.internetworldstats> (2016)

Of course, it is a fact that the knowledge of the French language is one of the most important tools available to us since political and economic issues take centre stage at the international level. Therefore, there is a growing need for Ghanaians and more importantly Ghanaian businessmen and women to be competent in foreign languages especially French. A command of the French language can be an asset to a career in business or international affairs. A basic competence in the French language, combined with business transactions may open up opportunities in francophone countries to a variety of small to medium sized enterprises that are active in Ghana. The French as a global language, matters in global communication (Charles, 2007). Effective communication is one of the key factors to building a thriving business. Business communication is goal oriented. The rules, regulations and policies of a company have to be communicated to people within and outside the organization. Effective business communication helps in building goodwill of an organization (Moreau, 2013).

Communication is the essence of an effective business management. This is because the main goal of every business is to communicate effectively with customers in order to sell products or provide services. Effective business communication requires an exchange or a progression of ideas to achieve a predetermined goal. For instance, Effective speakers begin with their desired results in mind, using

language and style to persuade an audience to take specific action. Effective business communication results in positive feedback, (Kaul, 2014).

Globally, multinational corporations, agencies are increasingly demanding that employees know more than one language. Any viable business organization has reasons for recruiting bilingual employees for effective and better communication (both oral and written). Being bilingual is now becoming the standard for communicating effectively and globally as far as business is concerned. Knowing a second language or the ability to speak French in addition to English can help advance one's career, as many businesses, market products and services to francophone populations exist. Additionally, governments and security agencies constantly need people who are bilingual to communicate effectively to enhance their products and services. Learning a second or foreign language can be useful and can enhance effective communication across cultures.

Source: <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20160811-the-amazing-benefits-of-being-bilingual>

The knowledge of a second or foreign language can give you access to many benefits. And if you learn a language that is in demand for today's market, you increase your employment opportunities exponentially. The knowledge of a foreign language especially French can enhance one's chance of getting a good and a lucrative job as well as understanding and learning other people cultures. The knowledge of the French can enhance the understanding of conversations, communications and negotiations between business practitioners and their francophone counterparts. Companies and other organisations can run business transactions more smoothly with the use of the French language and their francophone customers will feel more at ease and comfortable. In business communication, not only do the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) come into play, but also, important negotiating skills are required. Language is seemingly omnipresent and successful business communicators in foreign languages apply the principles of human behaviour (Robbins and Judge, 2007). Any foreign language, notably the French can be used in business depending on the customers and the nature of the businesses and the markets involved. Language is used to create customers' satisfaction, which in the long run, will lead to competitiveness. Competitiveness cannot be achieved without the skill and ability to use a foreign language to handle foreign customers. There is therefore the need for Ghanaian businessmen and women, as a matter of urgency, to have the knowledge of French as a foreign language in order to communicate effectively.

III. BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE AND PROSPECTS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

Studies indicate that the French language is among the more than 6,000 languages registered around the world according to the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF, 2014). It is also one of the most useful and most studied languages especially in the professional environment as determined by their diffusion around the

world, their interests from the economic and political point of view, as well as the geographical proximity with the country of origin.

A. FRENCH IS RANKED SECOND AFTER ENGLISH

Research studies show that the French language comes second after English as the ten most studied languages in the world. Table 1 shows the ranking of the ten most studied languages in the world.

S/N	Language	Position
1.	English	1 st
2.	French	2 nd
3.	Spanish	3 rd
4.	Italian	4 th
5.	Chinese	5 th
6.	Japanese	6 th
7.	German	7 th
8.	Arabic	8 th
9.	Portuguese	9 th
10.	Russian	10 th

Source: <https://www.mosalingua.com/en/most-studied-languages-in-the-world/>

Table 1: Ten most studied languages

Here, it is obvious that European languages including French have the upper hand. This is because their culture is the main reason people learn them around the world.

B. FRENCH AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN MANY COUNTRIES

French is spoken by approximately 125 million people as a first language and 165 million as a second language. The Francophone world is spread across Europe, Africa, and the Americas as well as in and around the Pacific, with Europe and Africa offering the largest concentration of countries where French is recognised as an official language.

In 2015, approximately 40% of the Francophone population (including L2 and partial speakers) lived in Europe, 35% in sub-Saharan Africa, 15% in North Africa and the Middle East, 8% in the Americas, and 1% in Asia and Oceania. French is the fourth most widely spoken mother tongue in the European Union. Of Europeans who speak other languages natively, approximately one-fifth are able to speak French as a second language. French is the second most taught foreign language in the EU. It is also the sixth most spoken language in the world, behind Mandarin Chinese, English, Hindi, Spanish, and Arabic, and is the second most studied language worldwide with about 120 million current learners (Ethnologue, 2016).

French is one of the world's most influential languages, and is reputed to be the foreign language which is most widely used in international communications, after English. Today it is one of the six official languages of the United Nations (<https://www.un.org> 2016).

Spanish is by far the most studied language in the United States, whether in high school or college. According to the Modern Language Association (MLA), in the United States, colleges and universities offer plenty of opportunities for students to learn foreign languages as requirement for

graduation. Below is a list of foreign languages taught in American schools and colleges based on Fall 2013 Enrollments. They reflect the popularity of these languages in terms of percentages and the total number of enrolled students where the French comes second after Spanish.

- ✓ Spanish is the most studied language in the US, with 50% of college students choosing to learn Spanish.
- ✓ French is next at just over 12%
- ✓ American Sign Language is studied by 7% of students
- ✓ German is studied by 5%
- ✓ Italian is next at just over 4%
- ✓ Chinese is at 3.9%
- ✓ Arabic is steadily growing, at 2.1% in 2013
- ✓ Latin, at 1.7%, is still taught in most US universities
- ✓ Russian was chosen by 1.4% percent of students
- ✓ Ancient Greek, at less than 1%, comes in last place, followed by Ancient Hebrew, Portuguese, Korean and Modern Hebrew, respectively.

SOURCE: American Council on the teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), 2015)

C. FRENCH A LANGUAGE FOR BUSINESS

The use of foreign languages has huge impact on business performance within SMEs. Evidence suggests that Small and Medium Size enterprises (SMEs) that compete in global markets look for employees with language skills and lose revenues when their work force does not have adequate foreign language skills. Multi-national corporations such as Apple, automobile manufacturers like General Motors have been adopted French language as the most effective means of gaining access to global commerce and trade (<http://www.communicaid.com/france-business-culture.asp>). This is reflected in the fact that French is seen as a worldwide language. Over 49 African countries use it as first or second language and several million students are currently learning French across the globe.

The knowledge of the French language will not only allow for access to commerce and trade, it also provides an efficient way by which business is conducted. Apart from cultural differences and aside the predominance of English, French serves as an efficient means of communication to conduct business throughout the world. It has also provided an effective tool used to deal with political differences seen as barriers to trade between Francophone and Anglophone countries in particular (<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Language-barrier-347516>).

French is among the top three most useful languages for business after English and Mandarin Chinese (the world's second-largest economy). It is the second business language of the European zone after English ahead of German, Russian, Italian and Spanish (Bloomberg, 2011). Bloomberg Rankings first identified the 25 languages with the greatest number of native speakers, and then narrowed the list to 11 that are official languages of G20 countries. Countries where English is the official language, or one of multiple official languages, were excluded. This is perhaps the over-riding reason why the French language apart from English has been considered as one of the most influential languages in the business world.

D. BENEFITS OF FRENCH LANGUAGE TO INDIVIDUALS

Research studies indicate that knowing foreign languages increases individuals' chances of finding a better job in their own country and abroad (European Commission, 2012). Demand for foreign language skills in the global labour market is steadily rising and also bound to increase in the short- to medium-term future. Existing research further indicates that there is a wage premium associated with foreign language knowledge in some European countries (Williams, 2011). With the continuous spread of French as the language of choice throughout the global business community, it is important for non-French speakers to understand that without the necessary French language skills they run the risk of being left behind. To be a cog in this dynamic world of business, it is important to learn the language. Hence, learning French is primary to individual success and should be given to anyone wishing to gain access to the corporate world of today's business. As the importance of French continues to spread, learning the language appears to be one of the most productive means to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world because research has proven that language knowledge is valuable in seeking employment (Beyene, 2012).

Today, French is one of the world's most influential languages, and is reputed to be the foreign language which is most widely used in international communications, after English.

It is the official language of more than 15 African countries, and of various French overseas dependencies. In addition, French is the unofficial second language of a number of countries, including Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, and Syria. (<http://www.francophonie.org/-84-Etats-et-gouvernements>).

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a descriptive survey with a researcher-designed questionnaire for data collection. Since the study sought to investigate students' perception about the prospects of the use of French as a medium for business communication, as an ongoing programme in tertiary institutions in Ghana, the survey research method was deemed appropriate. According to Neuman (2000), the survey design is also the most preferred since data to be collected are about self-reported beliefs on the prospects of French as a worldwide language. The study used a structured questionnaire with closed-ended items to gather data, with five-point Likert scale which represents strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree to find out students' perception about the prospects of the use of French as a medium for business communication and the need for Ghanaian students to learn the French as a foreign language. The questionnaire was grouped into two parts. Part I consists of items relating to the importance and prospects of the French language worldwide and part II focuses on the need for Ghanaian students to learn French.

B. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population comprised all Level 200 students who registered during the 2016/2017 academic year at the Department of Management Studies and had studied Business French for four semesters. Four hundred questionnaires were given out to all Level 200 students, with 362 valid copies properly filled made up of 202 males representing (55.8%) and 160 female representing (44.2%) for further analysis. Thus, the response rate was 90.5%.

C. INSTRUMENTS

A self-completion questionnaire was used for the study. Questionnaires are easy to administer, user-friendly, and fast to score. Therefore, it takes relatively little time for the respondents and the researcher to complete and score the questionnaires. The questionnaire was in two parts with 10 items each. Part one was about the important role of the French language worldwide and part two on the need for Ghanaian students to learn French. The respondents were required to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the questionnaire items on a five-point Likert-type scale where Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) have been combined to mean Agree (A), Neutral remains the same, Disagree and Strongly Disagree (SD) have also been combined to Disagree (D). To ensure validity and reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted using expert in the field. The final instrument for the study was produced after analysis of the pilot data.

D. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents who were attending lessons in French. As and when the questionnaires were completed and handed in, they were scrutinised to ensure that the respondents had properly completed them. A total of 362 out of the 400 selected Level 200 Management students took part in the study, representing an overall response rate of 90.5%.

E. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The researcher collected the questionnaires 362 respondents as raw data and analysed using purely quantitative descriptive statistical technique. An item-by-item analysis of the statements was run to determine respondents' opinions on the importance and prospects of the French language worldwide. Acceptance and Satisfaction with Video-Based Instructional Materials for Teaching Practical Skills at a Distance

V. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Level	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Primary school	112	31	2 rd
JHS	76	21	3 rd
SHS	6	2	6 th
Polytechnic	10	2	4 th
College of Education	7	2	5 th
University	151	42	1 st
Total	362	100	

Source: Field work 2018

Table 1: The responses regarding the first level respondents started learning French (Valid N= 362)

From Table 1, majority of respondents 151 (41.7%) started learning French the first time at the university, and this represents 1st in ranking order followed by those who started the French in Primary school 116 respondents (32%) and 2nd in ranking while 76 respondents representing 21% started it in JHS and represent the 3rd position in ranking. Meanwhile, 10 (2.8%) and 7 (1.9%) of the respondents started learning French in Polytechnics and Colleges of Education and occupy the 4th and 5th positions respectively. Only 6 respondents (2%) started learning French at SHS and they represent 6th in the ranking scale.

Table 2 represents other levels respondents learned French apart from the university. Out of the total 362 respondents, majority of the respondents 145 (40.1%) started learning French in JHS level apart from the university, and represent the 1st in ranking order, 110 (30.4%) respondents also learned French in Primary school and reflected 2nd in the ranking, while 32 respondents representing 8.8% learned it when they were in SHS and represents 3rd in the ranking order. Meanwhile, 21 (5.8%) and 7 (1.9%) of the respondents also learned French in Polytechnic and College of Education reflecting 4th and 5th respectively.

Level	Frequency	Percent
Primary school	110	35
JHS	145	46
SHS	32	10
Polytechnic	21	7
College of Education	7	2
Total	315	100

Source: Field work 2018

Table 2: Distribution of responses regarding other levels respondents also learned French apart from the university (Valid N= 315)

On the question of motivation, 279 respondents representing 78.4% were motivated in learning French as a Ghanaian as against 21.6% representing 77 respondents as indicated in Table 3.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	279	78
No	77	22
Total	356	100

Source: Field work 2018

Table 3: Distribution of responses as to whether respondents are motivated in learning French as Ghanaians (Valid N= 356)

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	292	82
No	64	18
Total	356	100

Source: Field work 2018

Table 4: Distribution of responses as to whether respondents have interest in learning French as undergraduates (Valid N= 356)

Table 4 below indicates majority of respondents (292) representing 82% had interest in learning French as undergraduates as against 64 representing 18%.

GOOD REASONS WHY FRENCH SHOULD BE GIVEN A PRIORITY IN GHANA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

The main issue in this section is the ranking on the importance and prospects of the French where respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement on the ten good reasons why the teaching and learning of French at all levels should be given a priority in Ghana's education system. Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) have been combined to mean Agree (A), Neutral (N) remains the same, Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) have also been combined to mean Disagree. The results are presented in Table 5.

Item	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed	RII	Ranks
1. French is a worldwide language spoken on the five continents (Valid N=354)	(245) 69.2	(75) 21.1	(30) 8.5	(2) 0.6	(2) 0.6	1.266	1 st
2. French is a language for the job market (Valid N=354)	(179) 50.6	(101) 28.5	(53) 15	(12) 3.4	(9) 2.5	1.162	4 th
3. French is the international language of cooking/fashion, arts/theatre, dance and architecture (Valid N=356)	(105) 29.5	(97) 27.2	(76) 21.3	(55) 15.5	(23) 6.5	0.989	9 th
4. It is a language of travel. France is the world's top tourist destination and attracts more than 79.5 million visitors a year (Valid N= 355)	(182) 51.3	(93) 26.2	(53) 15	(18) 5	(9) 2.5	1.155	5 th
5. French is a language for higher education and opens up study opportunities at renowned French universities and business schools (Valid= 353)	(218) 62	(93) 26.3	(26) 7.3	(12) 3.4	(4) 1	1.227	2 nd
6. French an international language is both a working language and an official language of the UNO, the EU (Valid N=349)	(149) 43	(97) 28	(47) 13	(39) 11.2	(17) 4.8	1.085	7 th
7. French is the third most widely used language on the Internet apart from English and German and offers news from the leading French-language international media (TV5, France 24 and RFI (Valid N=345)	(191) 55.4	(89) 25.8	(42) 12.2	(15) 4.3	(8) 2.3	1.181	3 rd
8. French is a language that is fun and easy to learn (Valid N=351)	(74) 21.1	(97) 27.6	(76) 21.6	(55) 15.7	(49) 14	0.901	10 th
9. French is good base for learning other languages as well as English: 50% of current English vocabulary is derived from French (Valid N=354)	(151) 42.7	(97) 27.4	(67) 18.9	(31) 8.8	(8) 2.2	1.103	6 th
10. French is a beautiful, rich and melodious language, often called the language of love (Valid N= 356)	(118) 33.1	(97) 27.2	(62) 17.4	(60) 17	(19) 5.3	1.011	8 th

Source: Field work 2018

() Frequency in brackets

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N= Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Table 5: Importance and prospects of the French language Worldwide

From Table 5, 90.3% believed that the teaching and learning of French should be given a priority in Ghana's education system and it is important for Ghanaian students to learn French in school because it is a worldwide language spoken on the five continents and is a language for the job market. Moreover, 88.3% of respondents felt French is a language for higher education and opens up study opportunities at renowned French universities and business schools. Majority of respondents (81.2%) see the French as the third most widely used language on the Internet apart from English and German and offers news from the leading French-language international media (TV5, France 24 and Radio France Internationale).

Of those participants of the study, 77.5% of respondents agreed that French is a language of travel and is the world's top tourist destination and attracts more than 79.5 million visitors a year. Indications from the results clearly show that 70% of respondents see French as a good base for learning other languages like Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and particularly English, since 50% of current English vocabulary is derived from French.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to the statements as indicated in Table 6 on the factors emanating from the literature review necessitating Ghanaian students to learn French as a foreign language. Again, Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) have been combined to mean Agree (A), Neutral (N) remains the same, and Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) have also been combined to mean Disagree.

Item	strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	disagreed	strongly disagreed	RII	Rank
1. The teaching and learning of French is necessary in Ghana	(229) 64.9	(69) 19.5	(48) 13.6	(6) 1.7	(1) 0.3	1.237	2 nd
2. The teaching and learning of French should be made compulsory at all levels of education in Ghana	(159) 45	(88) 24.9	(64) 18.1	(18) 5	(24) 7	1.095	7 th
3. There is the need for students in the Faculty of Business Education to learn the French language	(175) 49.6	(101) 28.6	(40) 11.3	(14) 4	(23) 6.5	1.134	5 th
4. The learning of French should be a requirement for graduation in tertiary institutions in Ghana	(92) 26	(80) 23	(88) 25	(49) 14	(44) 12	0.928	10 th
5. The learning of French should be made compulsory at the College of Technology Education.	(111) 31.1	(80) 22.4	(71) 19.9	(48) 13.4	(47) 13.2	0.953	9 th
6. The knowledge of the French can enable one get a very good and well paid job	(208) 59	(78) 22	(47) 13	(17) 5	(4) 1	1.195	4 th
7. The French language matters as far as business transactions between Ghana and other French-speaking countries are concerned.	(252) 70	(76) 21	(24) 7	(5) 1.4	(2) 0.6	1.268	1 st
8. French language matters as far as Ghana's diplomatic relations with French-speaking countries are concerned	(204) 58.1	(91) 25.9	(42) 12	(7) 2	(7) 2	1.205	3 rd
9. The language policy makers need to give priority to the teaching and learning of French in Ghana	(166) 47.6	(110) 31.5	(60) 17.2	(13) 3.7		1.118	6 th
10. The French should be considered as a second international language in Ghana	(138) 39	(84) 24	(79) 22.4	(33) 9.3	(19) 5.3	1.054	8 th

Source: Field work 2018 () Frequency in brackets

Table 6: Factors necessitating Ghanaian students to learn French as a foreign language

From Table 6, 328 (91%) respondents believed there is the need for Ghanaian students to learn French because it matters as far as business transactions between Ghana and other French-speaking countries are concerned representing first (1st) in the Likert ranking order. Moreover, 298 (84.4%) respondents felt the teaching and learning of French is necessary in Ghana indicating 2nd in the Likert ranking order. For the 3rd in the Likert ranking order, 295 (84%) respondents agreed that French language matters as far as Ghana's diplomatic relations with French-speaking countries are concerned. On the question of employment opportunities, 286 (81%) of the respondents believed the knowledge of French can enable one get a very good and well paid job depicting 4th in the Likert scale order. Again, 276 (78.2%) of respondents agreed there is the need for students in the Faculty of Business Education to learn French representing 5th in the Likert ranking order. Finally, 276 (79.1%) of the respondents believed language policy makers need to give priority to the teaching and learning of French in Ghana. This represents the 6th position in the Likert ranking.

A. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the findings, an average of 313 (86%) respondents in the first five items in the Likert ranking order indicate clearly the importance and prospects of the French language worldwide. Respondents agreed that the French as a worldwide language is spoken on the five continents representing 1st in the Likert ranking order. The 2nd in ranking also indicate respondents' opinion on the French as a language for higher education that opens up study opportunities at renowned French universities and business schools. For the 3rd in the Likert ranking order, respondents agreed that French is the third most widely used language on the Internet apart from English and German and offers news from the leading French-language international media (TV5, France 24 and Radio France Internationale). For the 4th and the 5th, respondents see French as a language for the job market and a language of travel and France is the world's top tourist destination respectively.

These results obviously answer the research questions on the prospects, important role as well as the benefits that the knowledge of the French language will have on business professionals in particular and Ghanaians in general. The French as a worldwide language is not only for business communication but also internationally recognized to be one of the working and official languages across the globe where the knowledge of it is positively related to employment opportunities.

B. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRENCH LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

French has a long history as an international language of literature, scientific standards and is a primary or second language of many international organisations including the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the

World Trade Organization, the International Olympic Committee, the International Committee of the Red Cross, African Union, and Economic Community of West African States of which Ghana is a member. It is also internationally recognized to be of high linguistic prestige and used in diplomacy and international commerce, as well as having a significant portion of second language speakers throughout the world where lucrative jobs could be created for Ghanaian professionals or diplomats with the knowledge of it.

French still remains a living, fast-growing global language, one of the working and official languages in many countries and will still be present in all the continents, and particularly predominant in a continent that, by 2050, should be a fast-growing economic powerhouse-Africa. This is where the knowledge of foreign languages is positively related with employment chances. Adults who know one or more foreign languages are more likely to be employed than those who do not know any foreign language. This relationship holds true even for basic competences. Being proficient in at least one of the two best known foreign languages is positively associated with employment opportunities. As indicated in the literature, knowing foreign languages is associated with higher rates of employment globally and that knowing them proficiently is increasingly more important and should be regarded as a useful asset in the jobs market. Knowing foreign languages increases the chances of finding a better job in one own country or abroad. *Languages for Jobs* report suggests that there is a great demand for foreign language skills in the European labour market (European Commission, 2011). The Commission working document stresses that language learning outcomes must be geared to support employability, mobility and growth. The association between foreign language knowledge and employment is likely to reflect the social, cultural and economic diversity in any country.

A study by Williams (2011) also indicates wage/salary difference associated with foreign language knowledge. Evidence further suggests that Small and Medium Size enterprises (SMEs) that compete in global markets look for employees with language skills and lose revenues when their work force does not have adequate foreign language skills.

C. IMPLICATIONS OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE FOR GHANAIAN STUDENTS

Ghanaians do not need to be told about the importance and prospects of the French language. It is taught in many universities around the world and it has influences especially in the diplomatic, business, journalistic, legal and academic worlds. The knowledge of French is widely considered to be a crucial skill for business owners globally. The competence of French language in organizational communication is indeed relevant and important for corporations all over the world as communication defines the *raison d'être* of organizations and determines the success or otherwise of companies. Business organizations could benefit a lot and find their client base growing considerably if their staff/employees are bilingual.

French as a language choice thus has serious implications for Ghanaian professionals. The French language is obviously largely appreciated as a vector of culture and business. As indicated in the literature, the French language is ranked third

among languages for business, and has proven to be a very vital skill on the global occupational scene. Ghanaian professionals in all fields of human endeavour will lose lucrative jobs to their Francophone counterparts if they do not take the French language seriously. The knowledge of foreign languages can have dynamic impact on the entire Ghanaian economy. A list of the top ten richest countries in the world like Luxembourg, Switzerland and Singapore is dominated by open, trade-driven economies where bilingualism/trilingualism/multilingualism is typical. A study led by James Foreman-Peck of Cardiff Business School estimated that lack of foreign-language proficiency in Britain costs the economy £48 billion (\$80 billion), or 3.5% of GDP, each year (<https://jamesforemanpeck.wordpress.com/>). Most of his recent economic policy concerns included investment in language skills, entrepreneurship, and human capital.

Therefore, the case for the employment benefits of knowing French as a foreign language in Ghana should be seriously considered because there is a multitude of factors that may influence labour market opportunities. Given the high graduate unemployment rate in Ghana, there is the need for policy efforts to boost foreign language competences in the educational system to link language teaching to the creation of career paths. And of course Ghana will continue to lose if greater investment in foreign-language teaching is not put in place. The issue of language is central in the formulation of education policies which has strong bearing on national development.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to examine the important role of the French language as an effective tool in business communication and investigate students' perception about the prospects in term of employment opportunities of the use French as a medium for business communication. Attempts have been made to discuss the prospects of the French language as an effective tool in business communication in a multinational context and some suggestions relating to the teaching and learning of French in Ghana. It is now possible to conclude this discussion by observing that, through the French language, Ghanaian professionals stand to gain a lot.

Knowing one or two foreign languages, and/or being proficient in the best known languages for that matter English and French is positively related and increases employment chances. The knowledge of the French language is a necessity and a hub around which the development of the nation revolves. In the case of Ghana, the facts of globalization, geographical location and economic development impose on us the need to give priority to French language teaching and learning: a language that is sure to make Ghanaians compete favourably with their Francophone counterparts in the West African sub region in particular and the world at large. The French language should seriously be considered as a language which serves as a medium of communication for daily interactions in every sphere of human endeavour.

In sum, these findings indicate that knowing foreign languages and being proficient in them is an important factor for being employed. It is therefore necessary to promote

among wide segments of the public and private sectors workforce a proficiency in the French language.

It is gratifying to hear in the March, 2018 edition of la Quinzaine de la Francophonie, the President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, affirmed that “We find ourselves in a global climate where the study of [foreign] languages is becoming more and more important ... This is one of the reasons why my government has decided to place particular emphasis on the study of the French language across the educational system”

This was confirmed by Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, Deputy Minister in charge of basic and secondary education who reiterated the government’s commitment to broaden access to the French language in Ghana and announced the beginning of the “bilingual class” project which is currently being run at the pilot stage in collaboration with the French Embassy. Fortunately, a new curriculum has been designed which takes effect in September 2019 with the introduction of French at the upper primary level. We hope that this time round the implementation of the new curriculum with the inclusion of French will be taken with all the seriousness that it deserves.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the global importance of the French language, the study recommends a vigorous foreign language policy framework in the educational system in order to promote, motivate and encourage Ghanaian students to take French seriously. Proficiency in French has dynamic effects on the entire Ghanaian economy. The increasing number of French companies now based in Ghana makes it expedient for changes in the educational structures and policies in the teaching and learning of French in our educational system. There is the need for more materials and teachers, plus a cultural premium on multilingualism that will enable more Ghanaian students to master French as a foreign language. Tertiary institutions in Ghana are equally implored to support and promote the teaching and learning of French by making it a requirement for graduation. This reflection is especially relevant for those who aspire to be professionals in the global workplace. There is the need for them to acquire the necessary skills and strategies in their writing, listening, reading, and speaking to be able to communicate effectively in French where the focus is on language as an effective tool for business communication. Future business professionals need to meaningfully integrate the French language to have the desired foreign language proficiency in order to understand the context and challenges of communication in a global market, as well as recognize and understand cultural diversity within the business world.

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