

What Role and / or Function does English Play / Fulfil in Africa Today to Justify its Study by Africans?

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Abstract: Our concern is what role and or function does English play in Africa to justify its study by Africans? Which aims at providing functions that English plays in outer circle and extended circle. We used one of the qualitative methods which is case study used to find more information through careful analysis of existing cases. English plays an important role in employment, tourism, diplomacy and in medicine. This is why English is taught and learnt by Africans.

Keywords: Africans, outer circle, extended circle, function, role

Resume: Notre sujet est " quel rôle ou fonction que joue l' Anglais en Afrique pour justifier son apprentissage par les Africains ? Ce sujet a pour but de mettre à la portée des gens le rôle de l'anglais dans les pays anglophone et non anglophone justifiant ainsi son apprentissage par les Africains. Nous avons ainsi trouvé que l'anglais joue un rôle important dans: l'offre d'emploi, tourisme, diplomatie et la médecine.

Mots clés: Africains, hors cercle, cercle répandu, fonction, rôle.

Introduction

English is a language naturally spoken in United Kingdom and in America. It is also spoken in other countries that have been colonized by England and took English as an official language. In other countries, English is taught in schools after another which is taken as an official one which is in most of the countries French.

AT editor (2015) argues that English is largely taking hold in Africa. While British colonizers were only a single player in Europe' s scramble for the continent in the 1880s, English is on its way to become one of the major, if not the major, languages spoken in the region. The vestiges of other European languages are slowly losing traction, and English learning is being enforced in the education system. Given this trend, is English becoming the working language of Africa?

Therefore, in Africa, English plays different roles depending on the place where it is spoken.

We developed our concern taking into account the outer circle where English is an official language and the extended or expanded circle where English is taught as a foreign language.

1. Role of English in the Outer Circle

Outer circle include African countries that are former colonies of English among them we can quote: Uganda, Tanzania , Kenya, Nigeria, Singapour, India, ...

English occurred largely developed as results of colonial system of English speaking nations where colonized nations adopted English as the second language in the country.

Therefore, English plays many roles or functions in the country.

Coleman (2010), identifies four areas where English has the role to play:

- for employability
- for international mobility
- for unlocking development opportunities and accessing information
- as impartial language

Apart from these four above roles, English plays role in

- Education
- Commerce
- diplomacy
- country policy
- entertainment
- Communication

1.1 Employability Role of English

English plays the role for employability as people who are to work governmental services are to be familiar with English, are to know or master it in order to communicate, exploit and send send report.

In non governmental organizations for example, to be committed one has to be well skilled in English so a to communicate with his employees speaking English.

For a post of interpreter, a native to be selected or to be employed is to equipped with knowledge of non-native language that is to be& English.

AT editor 2015) says that "English is a procedural language, or commonly known as the working language, is regarded with its unique legal status of being a primary means of communication. Where it is recognized, other languages exist but a working knowledge is a primary means of daily correspondence and conversation. For instance in the African Union, given that it is composed of 54 member states, English is one of the four official languages alongside Arabic, French and Portuguese. However, a working language does not guarantee that it is the official language. Regardless of the distinction, language plays a distinct role in the conduct of business and personal affairs".

According to Mark Warschauer, a professor in the Department of Education at the University of California – Irvine, English has become the second language of everybody where almost any part of the world considers its knowledge as being educated. By 2050, researchers estimate that almost half of the world's population will know how to speak English.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 26 of the countries have English as one, if not the only, official language. On the other hand, French is on a decline, having been once a major language in the continent. Former French colonies have been switching to English as a medium of instruction their education systems, with rough estimates that in two decades time, French would no longer be spoken in Africa

1.2 International Mobility Role of English

International mobility means leaving one country to another or one place or area to another.

Therefore, to travel from one country to another, a traveller has to know English as English language has become a widely speaking language. The mastery of English in Africa requires learning it.

AT editor (2015) says that while the issue of mobility in Africa often evokes images of people afloat the Mediterranean Sea, knowledge of English also contributes on the international mobility of Africans. As the primary language of academia, a large portion of academic publications are written in this language. Knowing how to speak the language increases the probability of being admitted to foreign universities. This gives them an advantage of gaining skills and knowledge abroad which they can, ideally, bring back to their home countries and contribute to development. On the other end of the mobility question, those who are locally educated and has the capability to use the language gives them an incentive to move out of the country to seek employment. While this has also admittedly contributed to the brain drain problem of Africa, African governments are slowly building mechanisms to reintegrate their diaspora, whether physically or not, to their own societies.

1.3 Unlocking Development Opportunities and Accessing Information Role

The development comes from outside and from a powerful person or country. The world powerful country is America which is an English speaking country. So , English is worth learning it.

International information is broadcasted in an international language. Being in an English speaking country to get access of a good information, he is to have a mastery of English.

AT editor (2015) argues that "undoubtedly, knowledge of English gives Africa skills to become competitive in the global marketplace. However, its development alongside the development of its native languages is not mutually exclusive. Africa should avoid losing its own culture for the sake of global competitiveness. At the end of the day, who are Africans without knowledge of their own culture? Playing with English as its working knowledge should not be a zero-sum game with its 800 other languages. Likewise, focusing on English alone will increase stratification in the African society and will stoke resentment among the ' uneducated' class as the language will continually be described as the language of the elite. Cultural wealth should not be sacrificed for material wealth".

1.4 Impartial Language Role

English plays a role of impartiality i.e it doesn't belong to this category of people or to that other category. Everybody is free to learn English or to speak it.

Poor people speak English as rich do speak it. No exclusion of rank, social race, ...young or old generations have granted the same opportunities of speaking English.

Lastly, English is perceived as an impartial language. With its largely colonial past, languages of formers colonizers are ascribed with a degree of negative value. Rwanda, for instance, has changed its language of

instruction from French to English in 2008 as an attempt to break away from its colonial past. French is linked with Belgium, France and Rwanda's genocide past. Changing their language of instruction gave them an opportunity to modify their national identity.

However, not everything is good with the widespread use of the English language. Critics argue that it is the language of imperialism. It is not as value-free as it was being championed by its supporters. Along with the learning of the language comes certain world-view that is detrimental to the African identity. Eurocentrism is also an excess baggage attributed to learning English, rather than formulating a development strategy that also develops indigenous African culture. In the spirit of Pan-Africanism with its African ideals, English is not a unifying factor as it estranges African from their own identity. It also increases estrangement and desolation from groups who were not educated with the same language, and enlarges the class between those perceived as educated and not.

1.5 Educational Role

English speaking countries, English is a language of education. It is taught as a branch of a lesson from the beginning of the teaching i.e from the kindergarten schools. Apart from being the branch of English taught in English and a course taught in national languages, all other branches taught at school are taught in English. All the books used in these countries are English books except those of national languages.

We can say in brief that English is a language of instruction in circle world i.e in English speaking countries.

1.6 Commercial Role

English plays an important role in commerce. As commerce include all activities done from the production, transformation until goods reach to the consumer.

Therefore, traders dealing with home or foreign trade need to know English to facilitate communication.

Foreign traders for example who are to go in China from Tanzania need to know English which will allow them communicate with Chinese who do not know Kiswahili but knowing other native languages from china.

Home traders need also to know English because goods are not only bought by natives but also by strangers , tourists or other wholesalers from other areas not knowing the native language of the place, Rwandan for example going to Tanzania.

1.7 Diplomatic Role

In outer circle, countries have chosen English as an official language. English is a language used in the court, offices and in instruction.

Countries being in the same community choose English like official one as in African communities. President who are to deal with others ruling English speaking countries is to use English language.

It is to be noted that United States of America (USA) is the powerful country of the world. All African countries are obliged to cooperate with USA. Cooperating with USA president, ministers and dupities need to English in order to able to discuss or talk with other authorities. Apart from USA, United Kingdom is another powerful part of the world that countries of Africa need to cope with.

It is also to be mentioned that countries being in outer circle seem to be the best protected which probably Rwandan authorities or Rwandan government to adopt English as their official language rather than French.

1.8 Country policy

The policy of the country is influenced by the English language. In outer circle English plays a major role as an official language, language of administration, a language of court, a language of instruction.

This language, English, help leaders communicate with others through letters, calls...

People from other countries which are not English speaking ones are to cooperate with these countries using this official i.e they are to learn English.

1.9 Entertainment

English is a language used in songs, in football and in other clubs .Football originated from United Kingdom where people do speak English. So many words relating to football are English. People are to use those words in their in their real life being even unconscious.

Football animation is done in international languages. Africa being concerned by the football, in habitants of Africa are either to follow that animation or comments in English or in French.

As far as Outer circle countries are concerned, the football animation is to be followed in English as it the language of the instruction.

Musicians use most of the time English in their songs in order to render them popular all over the world. People from these countries in outer circle need to know English in order to interpret songs that please him while listening it .

As United Kingdom and United States of America are powerful not only economically but also powerful in army, this power influences African countries especially those in outer circle. This can be the reason that a great part of musicians use English while singing of the entire song or inserting some English words in songs.

In choirs, English songs are sung in different churches.

On Television, young people who are used to watching films they watch films which are played in English. These young people can spend a day long watching it and those are not informed are to be to retold in another language they master well.

Players of film in contrary, play different roles in English so that their films be liked by many people including educated ones. They also play in English to attract other people of other countries, African or United Kingdom included.

1.10 Communication

English plays an important role in communication. It helps people from different countries communicate, interact, buy or sell deferent items. A person from Kigali for example reaching Dar-es-slam; to communicate he is to use English otherwise nobody will hear him if he dears utter Kinyarwanda words and Vice versa.

Role of English in the Expanded Circle

1. Introduction

Richard Nordquist in his abstract "The expanded circle of English speaking countries" published in November 5th, 2019 says that the expanding circle is made up of countries in which English has no special administrative status but is recognized as a lingua franca and is widely studied as a foreign language.

Countries in the expanding circle include China, Denmark, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, and Sweden, among many others.

According to linguist Diane Davies, recent research suggests that:

"...some countries in the Expanding Circle have . . . begun to develop distinctive ways of using English, with the result that the language has an increasingly important functional range in these countries and is also a marker of identity in some contexts" (Varieties of Modern English: An Introduction, Routledge, 2013).

The expanding circle is one of the three concentric circles of World English described by linguist Braj Kachuru in "Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: The English Language in the Outer Circle" (1985). The label's inner, outer, and expanding circles represent the type of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of the English language in diverse cultural contexts. Although these labels are imprecise and in some ways misleading, many scholars would agree with Paul Bruthiaux that they offer "a useful shorthand for classifying contexts of English world-wide" ("Squaring the Circles" in the Davies, recent research suggests that: International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 2003).

Examples and Observations

Sandra Lee McKay: The spread of English in the Expanding Circle is largely a result of foreign language learning within the country. As in the Outer Circle, the range of proficiency in the language among the population is broad, with some having native-like fluency and others having only minimal familiarity with English. However, in the Expanding Circle, unlike the Outer Circle, there is no local model of English since the language does not have an official status and, in Kachuru's (1992) terms, has not become institutionalized with locally developed standards of use.

Barbara Seidlhofer and Jennifer Jenkins: Despite the all-pervasive use of English throughout what many like to term the 'international community' and despite countless anecdotes about emerging varieties such as 'Euro-English,' professional linguists have so far shown only limited interest in describing 'lingua franca' English as a legitimate language variety. The received wisdom seems to be that only when English is a majority first language or an official additional language does it warrant description. . . . Expanding Circle English is not deemed worthy of such attention: users of English who have learned the language as a foreign language are expected to conform to Inner Circle norms, even if using English constitutes an important part of their lived experience and personal identity. No right to 'rotten English' for them, then. Quite the contrary: for Expanding Circle consumption, the main effort remains, as it has always been, to describe English as it is used among the British and American native speakers and then to 'distribute' (Widdowson 1997: 139) the resulting descriptions to those who speak English in nonnative contexts around the world.

Andy Kirkpatrick: I argue . . . that a lingua franca model is the most sensible model in those common and varied contexts where the learners' major reason for [studying] English is to communicate with other non-native speakers. . . . [U]ntil we are able to provide teachers and learners with adequate descriptions of lingua franca models, teachers and learners will have to continue to rely on either native-speaker or nativized models. We have seen how a native-speaker model, while appropriate for a minority of teachers and learners, is inappropriate for the majority for a range of linguistic, cultural and political reasons.

A nativized model may be appropriate in Outer and in certain Expanding Circle countries, but this model also carries the disadvantage of cultural inappropriacy when learners require English as a lingua franca to communicate with other non-native speakers.

2. Roles or Functions of English

English plays different roles in the countries belonging in the expanded circle. We are going to point out roles depending on the domains which are: education, the advertisement, the policy and diplomacy, the trade, the tourism and the medicine

2.1 Role of English in Education

In African, countries that are in expanded circle, English is taught as subject like other branches not like French in which all other branches are taught.

We can say that English does not play any role in education but it plays important roles in other domains or fields that can justify its learning in at school.

2.2 Role of English in Politics or in City Diplomacy

Africa is a continent that has been colonized by European countries. Today where we have the new form of colonization called "neo-colonialism"; colonies are still receiving either helps or orders from the metropolis or any other powerful country.

To receive orders, representatives of countries are to be brainly equipt in foreign language in order to communicate with them properly.

Rogier van der Pluijm with Jan Melissen say that "Although more dimensions could be identified, the six dimensions most often referred to in the literature and by interviewees are security, development, economic, cultural, cooperative and representative dimensions of city diplomacy. These dimensions are discussed in the coming paragraphs, not to provide a complete picture of city diplomacy, but to explain why it is worth studying English in African especially in expanding circle.

2.2.1 Security

Africa is a continent with no peace on his large space. Some countries invade others. Security recovery need negotiation. As English is a language spoken by powerful countries, the invaded leader is to meet them; the language to speak is English.

Africans themselves, need to speak one language which is to be understood by others. Nowadays, English is a dominant one.

Therefore, English is to be taught at school in order to prepare leaders.

2.2.2 Economic Dimension

Economy of a country depends on exportation and importation. Going outside his or her own country one is to know the language spoken there especially the official one. Otherwise, he is to look for an interpreter. We can affirm that it is worth teaching English in order to everyone that difficulty of looking for another person to speak at your place, which is shameful.

2.2.3 Cooperative and Representative Dimensions

Countries cooperate and when they cooperate, inhabitants visit the countries with no many problems. Leaders of those countries choose their representatives "ambassadors". These ambassadors need to know the official language of that country. This is another reason to teach English in order to train future ambassadors.

2.2.4 Development and Cultural Dimensions

To develop the country, one is to go abroad to see what is done outside from the country. From there he comes with new things. As development goes together with culture, we acquire English culture through the development of technology.

2.3 Role of English in Trade

We distinguish home trade from foreign trade. Home trade needs to be done by people who are natives; who know the local languages so that they may communicate easily with people they are selling articles.

Foreign trade needs to be done by people who master a language other than from his country like French or English. Therefore Africans need to learn and to teach English at school in order to allow prospective traders go in any country without difficulties as he is well prepared in advance.

2.4 Role of English in Tourism

People who need discover the world, cross countries and countries. They need also to know a language which is spoken in the area he wants discover. As so many languages can be spoken in the same area, it is better to know one language which is widely spoken all over the country either English or French which are spoken in different countries.

An English speaking person for example going to French speaking country needs to get a native person to guide him, to accommodate him in the hotel or restaurant. Therefore fore, these people to receive guests, tourists, speaking English need to know English. To know English, they are to learn it at school. That's why it is worth teaching English at school especially in expanding countries.

2.5 Role of English in Medicine

In Africa, a large number of medicines, tablets are imported from either Europe, America or Asia, and most of the time, the posology and other instructions are written in English.

It is also to be mention that a large number of people prefer attending more pharmacies than hospitals.

Therefore, need to be taught school so as people be able to get instructions written on tablets.

Conclusion

English plays so many roles or functions in Africa depending on where it is spoken either in outer circle countries or expanded/ extended countries.

English plays major roles in different domains like in: trade, education, tourism, policy, development, culture, representation, employability, entertainment, ... as we have explained here above.

All the roles/functions explained in each domain show sufficiently that English is worth studying by Africans or teaching to Africans because without learning it many people can loose their opportunities.

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