

Language Use in American Institutions in Chad: A Case of ExxonMobil and Equal Access International

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Abstract: The study of language use in multicultural setting has interested many researchers around the world several years back. This study focuses language use in American institutions in Chad where English coexists with French and Arabic, the official languages. A three-part questionnaire and interviews served the data collection on the uses of coexisting languages in the workplace domains. Results have shown that English, a foreign language only used in secondary schools and in some universities in Chad is progressively conquering the work and education domains of language use in the selected American institutions. The uses of English are expanding as the demand for better jobs with English run companies is growing every day in the country where French and Arabic are supposed to dominate. At all the three levels of the workplace divisions namely, administrative level, general services level or security level, French and Arabic are challenged by the users of English. Local workers with zero-English have a good perception of English and they are making efforts to learn it through practice and learning centres. The results could imply that American institutions are becoming a vector for the expansion of English in all the domains of language use.

Keywords: Language Use, Chad, American Institutions, Workplace, Perception, Attitude

1. Introduction

This work investigates language use in multilingual workplace in Chad and the perception of employees regarding English as labour language. The nature of language use has deeply changed with the growth in international business through creation of subsidiaries all over the globe. The world has expanded and inhabitants of other countries and cultures have become almost like neighbours with different languages and cultures. This aroused the interest in linguistic research, with focus for instance on multilingualism and more specifically, multilingualism in the workplace. Researchers have therefore shed light on policies and practices related to language use in multilingual workplaces [2, 9, 10]. Multinational Companies (MNCs) and other international institutions create subsidiaries and agencies cross-border to boost their turnover. These subsidiaries operate in multicultural workplace where employees face the problem of communication.

This work investigates language use in multicultural workplace settings in Chad, with a special focus on the perception local employees have on the language policy and language use of the selected MNCs workplace. Chad is a large landlocked country spanning north-central Africa. It is bounded to the north by Libya, to the east by Sudan, to the west by Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon, and to the south by the Central African Republic. The country's capital is 1,060 kilometres away from the nearest seaport, Douala, Cameroon [12]. Because of this distance from the sea and the country's desert climate, Chad is sometimes referred to as the "Dead Heart of Africa".

Since 2012, Chad has been divided into 23 regions [14]. The subdivision of Chad in regions came about in 2003 as part of the decentralisation process, when the government abolished the previous 14 prefectures. A presidentially appointed governor heads each region. Prefects administer the 61 departments within the regions. The departments are divided into 200 sub-prefectures, which are in turn composed of 446 cantons. The constitution provides for decentralised government to compel local populations to play an active

role in their own development.

Chad has more than 200 distinct ethnic groups, [4], which create diverse social structures. Nevertheless, Chad's people may be classified according to the geographical region in which they live. French and Arabic are the official language, as stated by the March 31st 1996 constitution of that in its article 9. It is important to shed light on the type of Arabic the constitution refers to, since it does not specify classic Arabic or the local Chadian one. In Chad, classical Arabic and the French language are foreign languages spoken by very few people. However, since the constitution does not state the type of Arabic, which is official language, it is likely that classical Arabic is the one because the Chadian Arabic is rarely written. However, many Arabic speaking Chadians exalt local Chadian Arabic as predominating the literary version. This has provoked one of the most heated debates since the days of independence among natives. French is the most disseminated language of administration comparatively to Arabic, which many Chadians see as linked to Islam. Those who are close to Arabic perceive French as a language dealing with anything distant from Islam [4]. According to the same author, many confuse language and religion. French used to be the only official language in Chad because of the French historical colonization of the country. After independence in 1960, French language continued to be taught in schools and spoken in all public affairs. It was during the eighties, that Arabic, the language of Islam, has been adopted as the second official language. Chad is henceforth a bilingual country. That is how the President of the Republic of Chad has decided that teaching and learning Arabic is compulsory from the school year 2010/2011 to all public and private schools and universities. He said that teaching Arabic should be systematic in all schools so that it favours the hiring by the government of Chad. Francophones and Arabophones should be treated evenly in terms of assignments and training.

With the oil field activities, English has started to become very attractive for young Chadians in search of better jobs with English owned organisations. Chadians began to be exposed to English language through religious medium. The pioneer of English language was Peter Cameron Scott from Scotland who arrived in southern Chad in 1895 with the goal to evangelize [1]. Years after, more English-speaking people started to settle in Chad and the language started to be taught to believers and to the community members with the goal of converting more people to Christianity. Until the independence days, British and American began to sponsor English language teaching through various organizations like the American Peace Corps [1].

Chadian education system has adopted English as a foreign language and it is seen as a must for getting a well-paid job with oil companies. Anderson [1], held that English language opened educational, technological, vocational and even locational doors to Chadians. Another factor that has prompted the eagerness of Chadians to English learning is increased international relations with Nigeria, Taiwan and

other countries that use English as language for business or for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) focusing on development.

Many organizations and companies from English speaking countries have established and have been working in Chad in various domains for decades and some of those have maintained English as their labour language. This has created the problem of mutual intelligibility among workers from various cultural backgrounds. Since the year 2000s, English has expanded and many Chadians have shown eagerness to learn it [15] and many of them work for English companies in various positions. In addition, many labourers have working contracts with those companies although many do not speak the language of the contract. This study analyses the frequency of language use in the selected American institutions with a focus on the attitudes of the local workers towards English.

2. Method

In this research, data were collected by means of interview with workers in managerial position, administration of questionnaires to workers and participant observation. All the data were collected by the same method and the design of the questionnaire was crucial.

The target population of this study consisted of American and Chadian employees of the selected American institutions operating in Chad namely *ExxonMobil* and the *Equal Access International*. Chadian workers are divided into two groups namely; those who were hired based on their fluency in English among other criteria and those who do not speak English at all but are hired for the type of position they occupy. The last group is the largest because it contains labourers of all kinds and are the core of the present research.

Three different types of questionnaires were designed. One questionnaire for informants working in the administration section of the selected American institutions, one for those working in the general services section and one for the security section. The questionnaires were used to collect statistical information or opinions from the participants. Data were analysed based on a description of the sample population, the language use and the attitudes of participants, which are all summarised in tables for easy understanding.

3. Results

This section analyses the various answers by participants on the use of the three languages, French, Arabic and English in the workplace oral and written communication, where only three [5] domains are concerned, namely *work* domain, *education* domain and *friendship* domain. Participants were asked to indicate which language they use when dealing orally at work with co-workers and when dealing in writing at the workplace in each of the three sections. Table 1 below shows the trends in the answers related to language use in oral formal communication in the workplace.

Table 1. Summary of formal oral communication in ExxonMobil and Equal Access. N= 235.

Uses	Languages		English		French	
	Arabic	%	English	%	French	%
Never	172	73.19%	23	09.79%	20	08.51%
Not often	35	14.89%	21	08.94%	26	11.06%
Sometimes	27	07.71%	61	25.96%	18	07.66%
Very often	1	0.421%	33	14.04%	43	18.30%
Always	0	0.00%	97	41.27%	128	54.47%
Neutral	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Total	235		235		235	

Table 1 above is a recapitulation of the trends in the answers of participants concerning language use in the workplace in the selected American institutions. The highest trend in the use of the three languages showed that 54.47% of participants always used French in the workplace oral business communication. This trend is followed by the use of English language in the oral workplace business communication, representing 41.27% of the population. The table clearly showed that no participant used Arabic for business communication in the workplace. Participant who sometimes use English for oral business communication in the work place represent a higher trend of 25.96% of the population. Compared to Arabic and French, which are 07.71% and 07.66%, English is sometimes more used for formal oral business communication in American institutions' workplace.

To sum up the various trends in the analysis of the data on language use in workplace for formal oral communication in the three sections of the selected American institutions, findings showed that French is the most used language. However, English is more used than French and Arabic in the general services section for oral workplace communication. It is also more used under the "sometimes" statement of the Likert scale in the same section of the American workplaces in Chad. These trends showing a growing use of English in the *work and education* domains predict that English is progressively challenging French and Arabic in Chad in the work domain as shown in [13]. In the section that follows, the analysis of the trends on informal oral communication in the workplace is done in turn.

Table 2. Summary of trends in informal oral workplace communication in ExxonMobil and Equal Access.

Uses	Languages		English		French	
	Arabic	%	English	%	French	%
Never	70	29.79%	34	14.26%	20	08.51%
Not often	46	19.57%	45	19.14%	7	02.98%
Sometimes	88	37.45%	79	33.50%	10	04.26%
Very often	26	11.06%	22	09.30%	45	19.15%
Always	5	02.13	56	23.80%	153	65.10%
Neutral	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Total	235		235		235	

Table 2 above displayed the trends in the answers of participants in terms of informal language use in the two selected American institutions irrespective of the sections. It showed that 65.10% of participants use always French in their business communication and it showed that after French, 23.80% of participants use English for their communication in the workplace in the American institutions. The table also showed that in some domains, Arabic and English are sometimes most used that French in the workplace communication of the selected American institutions. This is shown in the trend of percentages of 37.45% and 33.50% respectively.

Just like in the formal workplace oral communication, French is the most spoken language in the selected American institutions in oral informal communication in the workplace. The second language most spoken in the selected multilingual workplace is English.

The findings from the variable of oral communication in the workplace clearly showed that French is the most spoken language in the selected American institutions. However, English is more spoken than French and Arabic in the general

services sections of the selected American institutions. Also, under the "*sometimes*" statement the questionnaire items, English is sometimes more spoken in oral workplace communication than French and Arabic.

These findings showed that participants are very positively motivated for the learning and use of English so that it will end up conquer the other domains of [5] domains. These findings fall in line with [15], "attitude and motivation of Chadian learners of English, where the authors asserted that despite Chad was colonised by France and has as official languages French and Arabic, Chadian learners of English generally take learning English seriously. They have a positive attitude towards that language. Female university students' positive attitude to English reaches 100%. The various findings at all levels indicate that both male and female learners have a strong instrumental motivation in learning the language.

As a matter of fact, their compatriots and foreigners who work with oil companies such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, Petronas, CNPC, or Glencore and whose working language is English are a daily motivation for them. That can be observed

in their active attendance to English classes in high schools and their choice to read it as one of their major subjects at higher levels. The learners' interest to learn English is for integrative purposes such as travelling or communicating with English-speaking people is also quite significant at all

levels. Participants were also asked to express which of the three languages they use in their written communication in the workplace. In order to provide a synopsis on the trends of the answers, a recapitulation of the trends is summarised in table 3 below.

Table 3. Summary of trends in language use for written communication in ExxonMobil and Equal Access International. (N=235).

Uses	Languages						
	Arabic	%	English	%	French	%	
Never	174	74.04%	36	15.32%	6	02.55%	
Not often	31	13.19%	24	10.21%	19	08.09%	
Sometimes	20	08.51%	32	13.62%	48	20.43%	
Very often	10	04.26%	24	10.21%	52	22.13%	
Always	0	0.00%	119	50.64%	110	46.80%	
Neutral	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
Total	235		235		235		

Table 3 above clearly showed that globally speaking, one hundred and nineteen (119) participants representing 50.64% of the population always use English language in their written communication in American institutions' workplaces. One hundred and ten (110) participants representing 46.80% of the population always used French in their written communication in the workplace. It is clearly shown that English is more used in written communication in American institutions workplaces in Chad than French and Arabic are.

One hundred and seventy-four (174) participants representing 74.04% of the population do never use Arabic for written communication and thirty-one (31) participants representing 13.19% of the population used Arabic not on often basis. Twenty (20) participants sometimes used Arabic and only ten (10) or 04.26% of the population who asserted to use Arabic very often in their written communication in the workplace. One hundred and ten (110) or 46.86% always used French in their written communication in the American institutions, fifty-two (52) representing 22.13% very often used French for written communication in their workplace, forty-eight (48) participants representing 20.43% of the population sometimes used French for written communication. Nineteen (19) participants representing 08.09% of the population do not often use French for written communication in the American institutions and six (6) participants representing 02.55% never used French in their written communication in the American institutions' workplace.

The summary of the analysis of the data on written

communication in the workplace, both formal and informal, of the selected American institutions showed that the use of English language is dominant in all the sections of the workplaces analysed. French is no doubt the most spoken language, but it is highly challenged in the Fishman's *work* domain of the selected American institutions by English where it is the most used language for written communication. In essence, findings showed that written documents are compulsorily end written in English in the selected American institutions. In accordance to oral workplace communication, the most used language in the selected American institutions is French with an exceptional high use of English in some sections and under "sometimes" statement. In accordance to written workplace communication, the most used language is English. This is verified by the citation "who speaks what language to whom and when" [6]. To conclude, both French and English are most spoken languages depending on the topic, the location and the interlocutor.

English is also the most spoken language in one section and under "sometimes" statement in the general services section. But, considering findings of the variable oral communication, French is the most spoken language of the selected American institutions. Participants were asked to express their perception on the use of English compared to the two other languages in the selected American institutions. The summary of the answers related to the *language use and attitudes towards English* is recapitulated in table 4 below.

Table 4. The three languages' importance perceptions in the three sections of American institutions.

Languages	Perceptions	Sections			Total	Percentage
		Admin section	Security section	G.S.O. section		
Arabic is more important	Strongly disagree	14	10	33	57	24.25%
	Disagree	24	15	48	87	34.47%
	Neutral	18	11	49	78	33.19%
	Agree	0	0	13	13	05.5%
	Strongly agree	0	0	0	0	0.0%
	Total				235	100%
English is essential important	Strongly disagree	7	0	18	25	10.63%
	Disagree	8	0	1	9	03.82%
	Neutral	16	0	17	33	14.04%
	Agree	17	21	70	108	45.96%
	Strongly agree	10	15	35	60	25.53%

Languages	Sections		Admin section	Security section	G.S.O. section	Total	Percentage
	Perceptions						
French is more important	Total					235	100%
	Strongly disagree		8	6	28	42	17.87%
	Disagree		27	16	38	81	34.47%
	Neutral		16	11	70	97	41.28%
	Agree		5	3	7	15	06.38%
	Strongly agree		6	0	0	6	02.55%
	Total					235	100%

Table 4 above showed that eighty-seven (87) participants from the selected American institutions disagreed that Arabic is more useful for workplace communication in Chad and no participant has strongly agreed with that statement. These findings show that Arabic is not yet at the point of challenging French in the work and education domains of language use in the selected settings. Results also showed that eighty-one (81) participants from the two settings of this study have disagreed with the statement that French is more useful for workplace communication in American institutions in Chad than English and Arabic do. Ninety-seven (97) had no point of view about the statement and only fifteen (15) participants agreed that French is most useful for workplace communication in American institutions in Chad.

The findings also revealed that one hundred and eight (108) participants agreed with the statement and sixty (60) others strongly agreed that English is more useful and essential for workplace communication in the selected American institutions in Chad than French and Arabic do. In sight of the trends given by respondents, the use of English as workplace language of communication dominates the answers. Since this variable focused on examining the attitudes of participants towards the use of English as labour language, these high trends in agreeing with the statement “*English is essential for workplace communication*” showed that participants have a positive perception of English and are eager to learn it.

These findings fall in line with [3], “Tunisians attitudes towards English and its use in the Tunisian context where the findings showed that English is the most spoken language in the Tunisian context, and wish it to be used as a medium of instruction in schools and Universities. Findings also indicated that English played a major role in the development of Tunisia, that there is no negative influence of English on Tunisian Arabic or French.

To summarise the findings from the questionnaires data, it is clearly observable that participants from the selected American institutions have all stated that they speak three different languages namely *French, English and Arabic*. From the findings of the questionnaires, the level of languages spoken of participants both in French and in English is average. The two languages are used essentially in the *work* and *education* domains. Participants also use Arabic in some domains like friendship to communicate in the workplace despite the type of Arabic referred to, is local.

Regarding the existence of a formal language policy, participants asserted that there is no explicit written document stating a language to be official, however it is clear that English is the dominant language in the American

institutions. Competency and proficiency in it is one of the prerequisites to be eligible for some positions.

English is the most spoken language in the American institutions in formal written workplace communication, since it is the official working language in the selected American institutions in Chad. Efforts are made both by participants with zero English level and the institutions to promote the learning of English. Training centres are available for newly hired personnel who need English training. The centres are also open to the public learners of English as the motivation of Chadians towards learning English [15] is growing all the time.

This research contributes to knowledge in the field based on three areas namely, consistency of the findings with the theory used, contribution to research methodology and users of the findings in the professional field. Findings have shown that not every participant speak all the languages that make up the linguistic repertoire of the selected institutions, some only speak French or English, others can speak both. [6] who speaks which language to whom and when can be checked at this level. Who, is the Participant that guides the choice of one of the three languages used depending on whom the interlocutor is and on when, the location or setting of the conversation is taking place. This verifies the theory of domains of language use [5] which is based on the topic, the interlocutor and the location as stated in [6], “who speaks what language to whom and when”.

To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no research in the field has ever been carried out in the Chadian context. However, this research being one of the first ones could be a useful material for research in the field for the posterity. It would help understand advanced research methodology in terms of design. End users of the findings of this research may come from government services that collaborate with MNC, students and other researchers. It could contribute to fill the gap in lack of such research in the field in Chad.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, a summary of the results of this work discussed is done showing the originality of the work and, to show how it has contributed to knowledge. Findings showed that English is more used in the written form of workplace communication than in its spoken form in the selected American institutions in Chad. These findings are similar to those of [8] who asserted that English is more used in professional workplaces in China Hong-Kong in its written form than it is in oral and informal communication.

Another emerging pattern of language use in American institutions' workplace is the use of French for spoken conversations and phone calls among co-workers at work. However, it is worthy underline that in the general services sections of the selected American institutions, English is the most used language for oral communication in comparison to French and Arabic. The linguistic repertoire of the selected American institutions is made of three main languages spoken by participants whose levels of education varied from high schools, to professional and university levels. No formal and explicit language policy in the selected American institutions in Chad. This finding is similar to [2] where MNC employees have created a working environment where a top-down, bottom-up language management is adopted. This is also shown in [7] who revealed a multilingual workplace with flexible approach to language diversity. Findings showed that the frequency use of English language in American institutions is higher than the other coexisting languages. In all the sections of the institution, most of the participants asserted to use English always in the workplace. English is essential for working in American institutions in Chad where majority of respondents agreed that English is essential for working in American institutions.

Participants with zero-English are eager to learn and improve the language and be able to interact with non-speakers of local languages without needing any translation services. They managed to negotiate understanding by using gestures and sometimes by code switching from French to Arabic and to some English words. Participants report that English remains a dominant language in their daily interaction while French is valued as a mother tongue. The findings suggest that French remains relatively strong but at the same time, people are motivated to acquire both English and other languages just like [11] revealed.

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