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## CREATING A BILINGUAL CAMPUS AT A POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA: INTERDISCIPLINARY ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### ABSTRACT

This paper presents the efforts to help create a bilingual (French-English) campus at the *Institut national polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny* (INP-HB) in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast. During a four-month stint on campus, the author conducted a needs assessment that included 1) the current state of the institute; 2) the needs and recommendations of multinational corporations that employ institute graduates; 3) the current levels of English of faculty and students; 4) the discussion of pedagogical strategies; and 5) recommendations for future action. Many significant challenges face the 3,000 students and 500 faculty and staff at INP-HB: an isolated location, a curriculum taught only in French, weak English skills,<sup>1</sup> the presence of few native English-speaking faculty on campus, the prohibitive cost of study abroad in the United States or the United Kingdom, and the outdated methods used to teach English in Ivorian secondary schools and higher education institutions. This project represents a classic challenge to strengthen interdisciplinary connections between English for Special Purposes faculty and faculty representing INP-HB's professional schools.

**KEYWORDS:** content-based language instruction, English for Professional Purposes, interdisciplinary connections, Sub-Saharan Africa

### THE CURRENT STATE OF THE INSTITUTION

Named after Ivory Coast's first president, the *Institut national polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny* (INP-HB) is a French-speaking grande école of engineering, agronomy, business, computer science, mining, and public administration with campuses in the capital city Yamoussoukro and Abidjan, one of Africa's largest port cities. INP-HB is the top polytechnic institute in Ivory Coast and one of the leading polytechnics in French West Africa. The Institute enrolls 3,000 students and employs 500 faculty and staff. Unlike its multilingual European counterparts, all subject matter coursework is currently taught in French. The students, the math and science elite from many nations throughout Africa, largely come from humble backgrounds; several of our students with whom we worked were raised in rural villages with no electricity and no running water. They pay no tuition but have minimal access to textbooks and reliable WiFi. Many classrooms and dormitories still have no air conditioning.

To combat these challenges, INP-HB promotes a project-based curriculum where students and faculty collaborate to solve real industrial and agricultural problems. Many class projects and activities culminate in final projects, including inventions, many of which are commercially viable. Complementing the project-based classes, students must complete an

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<sup>1</sup> CEFR A2 to B1 English skills.

internship during each of their years enrolled at the Institute. These two powerful pedagogical strategies make INP-HB graduates as technically ready for employment as any analogous students on any other continent. However, the inability of many INP-HB graduates to work effectively in English is INP-HB's Achilles Heel, a weakness that the director general seeks to address by installing a campus that is *parfaitement bilingue*.

Transforming a unilingual campus to a bilingual campus in French West Africa is what the French would call *la mer à boire* (unrealizable as in attempting to drink the ocean). Many significant challenges face INP-HB: an isolated location, a curriculum taught only in French, weak English skills on the part of the faculty, the presence of few native English-speaking faculty, the prohibitive cost of study abroad in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, and the outdated methods used to teach English in secondary and higher education. Two major positive factors slightly influence these impediments: Ghana, an English-speaking country is next door and they are highly motivated to learn English. To illustrate, many INP-HB students complete non-credit MOOC coursework taught in English in addition to their daily homework.<sup>2</sup>

The rationale for a French-English bilingual campus is self-evident. English is the official language of multinational corporations (MNCs) in French West Africa. Many INP-HB graduates are employed as engineers, agronomists, managers, and IT experts with multinational corporations in Ivory Coast. These MNCs include General Electric, Unilever, Nestle, Cargill, Caterpillar, and Schlumberger; GE, for example, needs English-speaking engineers in the 130 countries in which it operates (Sacco, 2018). Working for an MNC like GE provides INP-HB graduates with an opportunity to work outside of West Africa. More and more local and regional firms require their staff to work in English.

To create the bilingual campus we identified five steps:

1. Ascertain the current state of the Institute
2. Collaborate with multinational corporations that employ institute graduates to determine their language needs
3. Assess the ESL skills of Institute faculty and students
4. Discuss pedagogical strategies
5. Make recommendations for future action

## THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS

Despite providing employment to many INP-HB graduates, multinational corporations operating in French West Africa seldom have the opportunity to provide insights and recommendations in university or polytechnic curricula, especially the teaching of English. A meeting in March 2017 with US agribusiness giant Cargill yielded some interesting feedback (Akpess, 2017). First, they stated that this was their first opportunity to meet with INP-HB officials. Second, the main take-away from the meeting was the significant gap between Cargill's English skills expectations and the level of English skills possessed by INP-HB graduates. Two formal research studies confirm this English-skills gap with other companies and corporations (Le Bot & Aka, 2015; Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2016).

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<sup>2</sup> In addition, a group of agronomy students created English Club which meets every Saturday from 9am to noon in a blistering hot classroom.

Cargill is impressed with the technical talents of their INP-HB employees but were less than impressed with their English skills. Cargill's Director of Human Resources in Ivory Coast, an Ivorian educated at Georgia Tech, pointed out significant problems with skills, especially listening comprehension, which are critical to successful participation in videoconferences and face-to-face interactions with native English-speaking colleagues (Akpass, 2017). At Cargill, job interviews entail face-to-face interaction in addition to interviews via videoconferencing. Interviewees face a variety of accents, some native and some nonnative as they face once they are hired. Once hired, Cargill employees are expected to participate in frequent videoconferences in English, communicate globally via email, and generate proposals. Consequently, the gap between Cargill's English skills expectations and the level of English skills possessed by INP-HB graduates is significant.

Prior to the Cargill meeting, INP-HB researchers had conducted a study in partnership with the French and Ivorian governments to identify the needs and expectations of key companies and institutions in Ivory Coast in terms of training engineers and senior technicians.<sup>3</sup> Seven companies (including two multinational corporations) and five business associations (including three chambers of commerce) participated in the survey. Insufficient English skills ranked near the top of concerns for both the businesses and associations. The commission's report stated in its overall assessment that:

The teaching of English needs to be strengthened. The level of English is insufficient to practice trades offered by Ivorian companies. The activity of these is often turned towards the international as well at the regional level. Relationships with customers, suppliers and internal business relations require fluency in English. (p. 8)

One multinational corporation elaborated on the skills needed for success using both English and French:

It is necessary to develop the capacity to lead a team, to motivate it, to be able to convince, to defend its ideas, to organize, to demonstrate methodology, to know how to manage planning and to pilot a project. The Institute's engineers are considered deficient in oral and written communication. (p. 20)

The author conducted a follow-up study (Sacco, 2018) focusing on nonnative English employees currently working for 20 multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in French West Africa. Participating corporations, headquartered in nine different countries, operate in over 100 countries and represent 13 major industries. In the survey, the employees were asked to 1) identify their official workplace language; 2) identify their weaknesses in English; and 3) make recommendations for ESL instruction at French West African universities. The employees, 66 in all, were primarily INP-HB graduates.

The respondents confirmed that English is the official language of nearly every MNCs operating in French West Africa. Exclusive English use occurs between global teams 100 percent of the time. Videoconferences, proposals, PowerPoint presentations and all written communication between global teams take place in English. Nearly all the respondents pointed to weaknesses in two of the four skills: speaking and writing. Reading comprehension was not cited

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<sup>3</sup> My thanks to INPHB Professor SIAKA Sorho for providing me the report.

by any of the respondents. Listening comprehension, a weakness identified by Cargill, was barely mentioned.

Most respondents wished INP-HB and other French West African universities had better prepared them for working in English. Recommendations for ESL instruction at French West African universities was informative. Many respondents want ESL class activities to reflect their job tasks. That means frequent simulated practice in the following:

- Participating in mock job interviews,
- Designing and executing PowerPoint presentations,
- Role playing in mock videoconferences,
- Writing memos, proposals and reports,
- Defending proposals and reports, and
- Giving oral presentations

Several respondents asked if it were possible for INP-HB to teach discipline-oriented courses (engineering, business, mathematics, agronomy, computer science) in English. Several asked for affordable study-abroad opportunities.

In addition to the two studies mentioned in this section, Cambridge English (2016) cites data from over 3,000 corporations worldwide. Nearly 50% of corporations require advanced to native ability in English in the following four workplace tasks: 1) writing emails and letters; 2) delivering presentations; 3) reading reports; and 4) participating in meetings. Perhaps only a handful of the 66 respondents in the present study meet the advanced to native ability standard.

## THE CURRENT LEVELS OF ENGLISH OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS

Cambridge English's revelation that nearly 50% of corporations require advanced to native ability in English presents INP-HB with a huge challenge. Since INP-HB lacks the resources to conduct formal ESL assessments with faculty and students, the author conducted an unofficial assessment of skills using the following techniques. He:

1. used the Director of the American Corner and a key ESL instructor to assess the current levels of English of individual faculty and students.
2. conducted informal interviews in English with faculty and students representing all INP-HB colleagues.
3. assessed the ESL skills of faculty who attended the author's 10-week fundraising seminar.
4. assessed the skills of students in ESL classes the author observed.

The Director of the American Corner is the senior ESL expert on campus. The American Corner, funded by the US Embassy in Abidjan, is the ESL resource center designed to attract students and faculty to its substantial library and video collection. The Director, a veteran ESL professor, knows the English abilities of most faculty on campus. He also comes in regular contact with hundreds of students. He made his assessment as well as a senior ESL instructor who has worked at INP-HB since 2001. Both place the range of both faculty and students at CEFR A2 (elementary) to B1 (intermediate). Some exceptions exist among the faculty who were educated

in the United States or the United Kingdom. They possess skills that would enable them to teach their courses partly or completely in English.

The author's experience with faculty expertise emanates from a 10-week seminar involving two cohorts of INP-HB faculty. The first cohort consisted of mechanical engineers and the second comprised a mixed group of faculty representing other fields of engineering, and agronomy and mining. The seminars were designed to be taught in English, but faculty in both cohorts requested that the author teach it in French. "Social English" did not challenge them, but the technicalities of grant writing and strategies in pursuing contracts was too challenging for them.

The second group consisted of graduate students in optics who were strengthening their English to teach at Virginia Commonwealth University. During the first day of class, we tested the oral skills of each student. The students successfully described a variety of social topics: families, their school schedules, their likes and dislikes, and so on. Then, we asked each student to describe the field of optics: total silence. They were unable to describe their research, their laboratory, the challenges facing the field of optics, and other technical topics. Our students were A2 (elementary) to B1 (intermediate) in everyday social topics but A1 (beginner) to A2 (elementary) in their professional fluency. In other words, they were not prepared to "work" in English. This test helped us shape our course so that by the end of the course, they showed off their professional English skills to their professor who had just returned from Virginia. Total shock was his response to his students as they gave us a tour of the chemistry lab in English, described their current research projects in English and answered any questions we asked in English.

## DISCUSSION OF PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

In the near future, it will be difficult to implement the advice suggested from respondents. Their ESL courses from elementary school to the university are crammed with 40 to 60 students in small classrooms where three students share a block desk designed for two students. Large classes make oral and written communication or a focus on ESP or workplace language instruction highly challenging. High school and university students that the author interviewed during his three-month stay in Ivory Coast could only complete simple communicative tasks; one PhD candidate could describe his family, for example, but could not describe his research field—a field that a multinational corporation will expect him to show fluency.

Various pedagogical strategies exist to narrow the gap between corporate expectations and ESL performance among INP-HB students. Long-term study abroad is the author's first choice, but it is not economically viable for students to study in countries like the United States, Canada, or the U.K. Leaving French-speaking Ivory Coast to study English in an English-speaking country is a viable option in only one country, Ghana. Located next to Ivory Coast, Ghana offers English instruction at several universities which have partnerships with INP-HB. The director general is making the study option in Ghana almost free of charge as INP-HB accepts an equal number of students from Ghana who come to strengthen their French. Qualified students can then complete engineering courses in English as these same universities in Ghana. An internship with a firm in Ghana is also a natural step to strengthen English skills.

Adding ESL courses to an already-packed curriculum is not feasible, but inviting native-speaking students from the U.S. and elsewhere is feasible. INP-HB is the perfect venue for ESL internships where students can teach or co-teach classes and live on INP-HB's beautiful and

spacious campus. INP-HB's strong ties with the University of Brighton in the United Kingdom and Virginia Commonwealth University in the United States will make program this possible for ESL interns. During the author's four-month stay at INP-HB, there were only two Americans or Brits on campus.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

The author recommended a comprehensive plan to eliminate the gap between industry expectations and INP-HB English levels. Eliminating the gap means increasing ESL skills from A2 (beginner) / B1 (elementary) to B2 (upper intermediate) / C1 (advanced). Creating a campus *parfaitement bilingue* is not feasible in the near future.

To eliminate the gap, INP-HB's first step is to implement an ESL graduation proficiency standard to alert students and faculty of the importance of working proficiency in English. No proficiency standard currently exists. To raise the level from A2 (beginner) / B1 (elementary) to B2 (upper intermediate) / C1 (advanced), INP-HB must insert 1,000 and 1,500 hours of English within its current curriculum. The only strategy to make the increase is via content-based language learning, which entails converting a significant number of engineering, agronomy, and business courses from being taught in French to English. The goal is to teach at least 25% of INP-HB's courses completely in English by 2020.

Second, INP-HB should formalize a month-long summer English-language immersion program with its partner universities in Ghana. The program would consist of 160 hours of instruction and interaction with Ghanaian students on campus.

Third, INP-HB should collaborate with multinational corporations operating in Ivory Coast to establish ten-week summer internships for INP-HB students having completed the study-abroad program in Ghana. The internship program, which the multinational corporations would welcome, would consist of 400 hours of work in English. This partnership provides students with work experience in English and multinational corporations with the opportunity to evaluate potential future employees.

Fourth, INPHB should establish an official Cambridge English testing center to provide students and industry with official CEFR scores. Table 1 provides the proposed student plan to reach B2 (upper intermediate) / C1 (advanced) proficiency.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1. *Projected Student Plan*

1. Five completed INP-HB engineering, agronomy or business courses in English
2. One required month-long immersion study-abroad program in Ghana, the United Kingdom, or the United States
3. One required 10-week summer internship in English with a multinational corporation
4. Passing Cambridge English exit exam at a B2 (upper intermediate) or C1 (advanced) level

The most complicated step to eliminate the gap between industry expectations and INP-HB English proficiency is the conversion of a significant number of INP-HB courses from French to

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<sup>4</sup> INP-HB has recently received approval to become a Cambridge English testing center.

English. The conversion will comprise three staggered steps: E1, E2, and E3 to make the transition from French to English.

## WHY CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION

Content-based instruction (CBI) can potentially solve several problems for INP-HB. First, it would provide a working context for the study of English as students become immersed in the discourse and lexicon of the field in which they will work (Brinton, 2003). For example, an electrical engineering student would, upon graduation, be prepared to participate in a job interview, create presentations, and generate proposals for multinational corporations like General Electric, Unilever, or Cargill. Second, content-based instruction would provide students with hundreds of hours of English without recourse to adding formal ESL courses, which cannot be added to an already packed curriculum. Third, content-based instruction would prepare students for corporate internships, a necessary prerequisite to employment. CBI provides a real-life context for professional education taught partly or completely in English.

INP-HB has recourse to numerous success stories for content-based instruction. Content-based instruction is the model used in European professional schools, which INP-HB administrators and faculty have witnessed first-hand. The University of Rhode Island's International Engineering Program requires a one-year study and an internship abroad in one of five countries where the engineering courses are taught in the target language (Grandin, 1992; 2011). San Diego State University's Undergraduate (SDSU) International Business Program requires an international experience, one of which is the completion of three business courses taught in the target language of the foreign business school. Many SDSU IB students add a summer-long internship which yields a C1 (advanced) rating for most of its students. SDSU also features transnational dual-degree programs, which range from one year to two years of study at a foreign business school (Adler & Sacco, 2003, 2004; Sacco & Earwicker, 2003).<sup>5</sup>

## CONTENT-BASED OPTIONS

### E1 COURSES

E1 entails teaching a current INP-HB engineering, business, agronomy, mining, mathematics or science course completely in English. This comprises class lectures, course readings, research projects, and exams. Online courses or MOOCs emanating from the United States, the United Kingdom<sup>6</sup> or any other English-speaking nation would also qualify as E1 courses. Teaching an E1 course requires an instructor possessing advanced-language English skills and a class equipped with the ability to understand class lectures and course readings and to communicate effectively in English. This model is prevalent in European professional schools where English is the second language of students. It is also the model used at the University of Rhode Island's international engineering program where several courses are taught in German or French. Currently, only a handful of INP-HB instructors would qualify to teach an E1 course and few

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<sup>5</sup> SDSU has ranked among the top 10–15 undergraduate international business programs every year since 2001 according to U.S. News & World Report.

<sup>6</sup> Examples include: *Statistical Molecular Thermodynamics* (Coursera) from the University of Minnesota & *Technical Report Writing for Engineers* (FutureLearn) from the University of Sheffield.

INP-HB students could successfully complete an E1 course. Offering E1 courses, in this case, is not feasible for the present.

## E2 COURSES

E2 courses would inject a dimension of English into current INP-HB content courses. In the E2 model, an INP-HB instructor, equipped with advanced-level English skills, would present class lectures and course readings in English, while student would continue to complete research projects and course exams in French. This intermediate step would provide students with vast amounts of comprehensible input in each course without the pressures of production during research projects and exams. E2 courses are feasible now for two reasons: most students possess at least intermediate-levels listening and reading skills and INP-HB boasts several faculty who have been educated in the United States or the United Kingdom.

During the author's time on campus, an informal study was conducted in an experimental class *Introduction to Biotechnology*. The course, taught by an INP-HB professor possessing a Master's degree from Texas A&M, provided the class with a Texas A&M-style course syllabus, along with readings and course presentations in English. During a break in the two-hour class, the author quizzed the 70 students without the instructor. Most of the 70 students claimed they understood at least 80% of the course lectures and readings; conversely, five students admitted that they felt lost understanding less than 50% of the lectures and readings. Most of the class, minus the five students, enjoyed the class being taught in English and hoped for more classes partially taught in English in the near future. All recognized the importance of English in their future jobs in Ivory Coast.<sup>7</sup>

## E3 COURSES

E3 courses would be the logical first step to transforming content courses from French into English. It is the recommended dominant activity in the quest to develop a bilingual campus. E3 courses would enable students and faculty to receive massive amounts of oral and written comprehensive input. E3 courses would be taught in French except for the insertion of English-language activities such as the course syllabus, YouTube videos, e-course readings, and comprehension checks such as multiple-choice quizzes and exams. The goals of the E3 courses are:

1. to enhance listening and reading comprehension skills
2. to acclimate students to US and UK accents<sup>8</sup>
3. to increase the knowledge of future work-related terminology
4. to introduce OSHA safety standards used by MNCs in French West Africa

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<sup>7</sup> Despite this success, content courses taught in English at INP-HB would have to be formally approved by the Ministry of Higher Education because French is the official language of Ivory Coast.

<sup>8</sup> Accent acclimation is needed as most INP-HB students are used to hearing Ghanaians speak English; One student thought I was from London despite my heavy Chicago accent.

5. to acclimate students to US teaching and testing methods.<sup>9</sup>

The preliminary look of an E3 courses would include the insertion of:

1. a syllabus in English based on the US university model<sup>10</sup>
2. 10 YouTube videos and multiple-choice comprehension checks (100 total questions)
3. 10 short e-course readings and comprehension checks
4. 5 multiple-choice quizzes
5. 2 multiple-choice midterm exams.

YouTube videos would serve as the key course component in the E3 course. The ideal E3 YouTube (10–15) minute video would simultaneously teach course content and expose students to multiple native or near native accents (US, UK, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, etc.). As faculty and the author search for YouTube videos, we select videos based on relevant course content, speed of elocution, and the availability of subtitles. Khan Academy, funded by the Gates Foundation, offers hundreds of YouTube presentations in many areas of engineering, mathematics, agronomy, and computer science. Khan Academy videos also provide English subtitles to assist comprehension.

To ensure comprehension and to offer students even more comprehensible input, each of the 10 YouTube videos in the E3 course are accompanied by a series of 10-item multiple-choice questions. Below is a sample multiple-choice item from CareerRide.com:

1. Which of the following is an intensive property of a thermodynamic system?
  - a) mass
  - b) temperature
  - c) energy
  - d) volume

#### THE ROLE OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT IN CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION

Content-based instruction needs the involvement of INP-HB's English Department. Fortunately, INP-HB recently became a Cambridge English Testing Center which will provide employers official scores for every graduating student. Specifically, INP-HB is certified to offer B2 Business Vantage, one of three Cambridge English Qualifications. The B2 Business Advantage shows employers that graduates are ready to conduct business at an international level.

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<sup>9</sup> The introduction to US teaching and testing methods would prepare INP-HB students for Master's and PhD study in the United States.

<sup>10</sup> We have been collecting syllabi from US engineering, agronomy, and business professors to use as models.

Unfortunately, the English Department seems divided in its goals and teaching methodology. During the author's four-month on campus, he worked exclusively with only one ESL instructor as per the wishes of the director general. This ESL instructor focuses on ESP in her courses. Her courses include training in CV creation, the application letter, simulated job interviews, oral presentations and the use of case studies to solve business problems in a class of 45 students. Success in eliminating the language gap will require a complete buy-in by the English Department.

In the creation of E1, E2, and E3 courses, ESL instructors would play an important role in the creation of comprehension checks for YouTube videos, and the creation of multiple-choice quizzes and tests. When the courses are launched, ESL faculty should participate in evaluating the English-language student research projects. This is a task that future ESL interns from US and UK universities might assume.

### REALITY CHECK: GETTING STAKEHOLDERS ON BOARD

When the author approached faculty about converting their courses gradually from French to English, a rare faculty member was totally on board without any incentives. However, a recurring question was, "How can I possibly add this time-consuming project when I'm already overloaded with teaching load and research expectations?"

Then, these INP-HB faculty explained the realities of academia at a national institution, evidenced in sample quotations and questions posed by faculty below:

- The bilingual campus is the dream of a director general who is close to mandatory retirement. Nothing moves quickly in Africa! The Ministry of Higher Education, not the director general, sets both national educational priorities at the macro level and the criteria for tenure at the micro level.
- Will participation in the proposed bilingual campus be included as a factor in promotion and tenure?
- Will research expectations be reduced if they take the immense amount of time to convert their courses from French to English?
- Who will defray the costs of faculty to improve their English to an advanced level where they can teach mechanical engineering in English?
- What if the next director general does not share the same enthusiasm of the current director general?

The keys for a successful completion of a bilingual campus include the following:

1. Will the bilingual campus become a national priority of Ivory Coast's Ministry of Higher Education?
2. Will Ivory Coast's business community (multinational corporations, regional and local business) contribute to the costs to be incurred in upgrading faculty English skills, in providing study-abroad scholarships to INP-HB students to upgrade their English skills in the United States, the United Kingdom, or in Ghana?
3. Will INP-HB's English Department assume a leadership role in the bilingual campus project?

We currently do not know the answer to question number one, but we have a sense for question two. Multinational corporations stand to benefit from an uninterrupted flow of engineers, agronomists, managers, etc. who possess the ability to work effectively in English. General Electric has shown its support by providing INP-HB with an upgrade of language lab facilities worth \$70,000. With closer collaboration between INP-HB and industry, funding will be available to upgrade workplace English skills of INP-HB faculty and students. Linguistically prepared INPHB graduates will eliminate the need to send recently hired engineers to Ghana for six months for language upgrades (Kouassi, 2017).

Industry will provide faculty incentives to increase participation in course conversions. Below is one possible incentivizing scenario.<sup>11</sup> For each course, the faculty member would receive:

- E1 = subsidized summer at a US or UK university to enhance English and professional skills
- E2 = subsidized one-month intensive ESL study in Ghana
- E3 = subsidized conference in an English-speaking country<sup>12</sup>

#### AN ADDITIONAL OPTION

The general director has recently decided to pursue a transnational dual-degree program between INP-HB and in The Ho Technical University, Ghana.<sup>13</sup> A transnational dual-degree program involves an extended study-abroad experience culminating in the reception of a foreign university's degree in addition to your own home institution's degree. At the author's home university, an international business major may spend two years at a Mexican university in addition to two years at the home institution. In this model, the student completes half of his or her general education at each university coupled with international business courses at both. The student graduates with two degrees coupled with workplace proficiency in two languages, and knowledge of two business cultures. In a second model, international business students complete 16 months of international business studies in Brazil, Chile, or Quebec and is awarded a second degree from a university in one of those countries (Sacco, 2014).

Developing transnational dual-degree programs is a complex task. First, both nations involved in this case, Ivory Coast and Ghana, must approve the awarding of their national degree to visiting students from another country. The complication lies in the considerable philosophical differences between Ghana, whose university system is based on the British model, and Ivory Coast, which emanates from the French model. Second, both universities must decide the number of courses completed at each other's university for the dual-degree program. Is a year or three semesters the threshold for awarding the foreign university's diploma? Will an internship or two internships be required? How will exams be determined as each nation requires passing of national exams? Third, how will INP-HB and The Ho Technical University ensure that their students possess the foreign language skills to succeed at each other's universities?

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<sup>11</sup> The English word "incentive" has no direct French translation. Faculty are expected to do new projects for free.

<sup>12</sup> Subsidized incentives will be provided by multinational corporations who hire INP-HB graduates.

<sup>13</sup> The author has considerable experience implementing transnational dual-degree programs involving international business majors.

A fourth concern arises from the selection of a transnational dual-degree program as the means to create a campus that is *parfaitement bilingue*. Will all 3,000 INP-HB students be required to complete the transnational dual-degree program? At the author's home institution, only a select few complete a transnational dual-degree program. That figure is around five percent.

## CONCLUSION

English is the dominant language of multinational corporations operating in French West Africa and English will continue to stand atop the pedestal of workplace languages (Sacco, 2018). Even when French is the official language of certain MNCs like Orange and Société Générale, French West African engineers, IT experts, agronomists, managers, and technicians will not get hired without some level of English.

There is a significant gap between the expectations of corporations and firms and the English skill levels of French West Africans graduates. In Francophone Africa, we do not yet know the minimum level of English required by either multinational corporations or local and regional firms; however, we do know that, worldwide, Cambridge English has revealed that nearly 50% of corporations require advanced to native ability in English.

INP-HB's director general recognizes the importance of strong workplace English skills and has called for the development of a bilingual campus. A more realistic goal may be to eliminate the gap between industry-wide expectations and current English levels of INP-HB graduates. The challenge for INP-HB, an elite polytechnic, then is to take students and faculty from A2 (elementary) / B1 (intermediate) to B2 (upper intermediate) / C1 (advanced).

We have identified several pedagogical strategies to eliminate the gap. First, INP-HB should implement an ESL graduation proficiency standard to alert students and faculty of the importance of working proficiency in English. INP-HB has identified B2 (upper intermediate) as its metric, which is the level of its new Cambridge English B2 Vantage test certification. Second, INP-HB should formalize its month-long intensive English program with universities in Ghana and require this immersion program as a graduation requirement. Third, INP-HB should collaborate with its industry partners to create a required 10-week summer internship in English for each student. Fourth, INP-HB should convert a significant number of existing professional courses from French to English.

INP-HB courses conversions from French to English should progress gradually from courses taught partly in English to courses taught completely in English. E3 courses insert selected e-readings and YouTube videos accompanied by multiple-choice comprehension checks. E2 courses are taught completely in English except for tests which require more sophisticated writing skills. E1 courses are taught completely in English.

Significant political challenges remain for INP-HB. The bilingual campus requires buy-ins from the Ministry of Higher Education, the business community, INP-HB academic departments, the INP-HB English Department, and partner universities in Ghana. The business community, which has already provided financial support to the project, will add funding in terms of faculty stipends to strengthen English skills and study-abroad scholarships for students.

The payoff for INP-HB graduates? Cambridge English's "English at Work" survey (2016) discovered that "around half of all employers offer a better starting package to applicants with good English language skills, which can also lead to faster progression through job grades and higher salary increases (in countries and territories where English is not an official

language).” Even more important, qualified INP-HB graduates will have the opportunity to work anywhere in the world where English is the business language. This is an opportunity that many INP-HB students are not yet aware. Taking INP-HB students from humble beginnings to the heights of the global economy is a noble venture and well worth the effort.

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