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Englishnization in Francophone Africa? Insights into Workplace Language Use

Abstract: In this essay, the authors describe the results of a study that measured the use of English and French as perceived by one group of female managers and employees working in logistics and global supply chain management positions in Francophone Africa, Women in Logistics-Africa. The goal was to determine if “mandating English as the common corporate language,” sometimes called *Englishnization* (Neeley, 2012), has attained a significant presence within corporations operating in Francophone Africa. The 124 subjects from 94 companies in Francophone Africa, responded to a 14-question survey; 24 subjects participated in follow-up interviews. The results indicate that English is highly valued among the vast majority of respondents and is mostly used in exchanges between the French-speaking employees and their English-speaking bosses, clients, and suppliers. French, however, remains the dominant workplace language used overall as the 124 French-speaking professionals communicate almost exclusively in French with co-workers and French-speaking clients and suppliers. Consequently, English is not always the business lingua franca as claimed by Neeley (2012, 2017), and other Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) researchers (see e.g., Kankaanranta et al., 2015, 2018). Instead, the findings in the current study add to an increasing pool of evidence of multilingual workplace settings, even among multinational corporations where English is the official language (Ehrenreich, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 2014; Sacco, 2017, 2019a).

Keywords: global business, *Englishnization*, global supply chain management, logistics, Francophone Africa, multinational corporations, research methods, small- and medium-size enterprises, workplace language use, World Languages for Specific Purposes (WLSP)

Introduction

Englishnization, a term coined by Rakuten CEO Hiroshi Mikitani in 2010, refers to the practice of requiring employees to use English as the common language within a company or corporation (Neeley, 2012, 2017). Mikitani’s goal, according to Neeley (2022), was to mandate his employees on every continent, including Africa, to use English at work. Even in Japan, the home of e-commerce giant Rakuten, employees of the company who are Japanese native speakers are required to work in English. Mikitani gave his workers two years to demonstrate professional proficiency via the Education Testing Service’s world renowned Test of English for Intercultural Communication. Neeley (2017) describes being an ethnographer documenting Mikitani’s mandate and she points out that “[g]lobal companies from nearly all the major industries—Audi, Atos, DB, IBM, Lufthansa, Microsoft, Nokia, Nestle, Samsung, SAP are already REQUIRING employees to use English” (p. 61). The present study calls into question Neeley’s contention in perhaps the two most global of international business disciplines where the use of English is expected: logistics and global supply chain management.

Despite the dominance of English, mixed language use (e.g., English and the employee's native language) has existed within overseas operations in most multinational corporations (MNC) for decades. Many researchers including Angouri (2014); Fredriksson et al. (2006); Grandin and Dehmel (1997); Hinds et al. (2014); Lønsmann (2014); Lüdi et al. (2016); Neeley and Kaplan (2014); Sacco (2017); and Vigier and Spencer-Oatley (2017) have studied mixed language use within large multinational corporations, including many US-owned MNCs. Grandin and Dehmel (1997), for example, report that German workers undercut the lingua franca mandate at the US-owned company TRW by reverting to their native language or another language other than English when communicating with TRW colleagues in other European countries. Operating in two or more languages in the corporate workplace is a phenomenon that Janssens and Steyaert (2014) call the *multilingual franca* workplace. The multilingual franca workplace enables nonnative English speakers to use their native language to facilitate the completion of their work activities. It is the only occasion where nonnative English speakers do not operate at a disadvantage vis-à-vis native English-speaking colleagues.

Kelm (2014), in a study on workplace language use in Peru, found an example of Englishization in Latin America within a small and midsize multinational company. In a departure from the usual BELF research focusing on multinational corporations, Kelm's study features a Korean midsize firm operating in Peru which mandates English only in communication between Korean and Peruvian managers. Kelm conducted the study to ascertain the role Spanish plays, if any, in daily workplace language use. Despite having lived in Peru for several years, the Korean managers never spoke Spanish with their Peruvian colleagues. Kelm did not study, however, whether the Peruvian colleagues broke the company's language policy by speaking Spanish among themselves when their Korean colleagues were not present.

Despite the apparent success of the Englishization policy at Rakuten (Neeley 2012, 2017) and the increased practice of mandating English at other MNCs, it is far from dominating business and industry in the United States. In the field of global agribusiness, for example, leaders such as Tyson Foods, Smithfield, Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, and ConAgra have accepted multilingual work zones due to the presence of thousands of Hispanic workers with limited English proficiency (Baker & Chappelle, 2012; Douphrate, 2014; Opatik & Novak, 2010). Maloney and Grusenmeyer (2005) found that 96% of employers identified English as their largest obstacle in working with their Hispanic employees. They also found that 94% of Hispanic farm workers admitted they either did not speak English well or could only speak some English. As a result, Spanish, not English, has become the *co-lingua franca* of business in many of these agribusiness facilities in the United States.

In a rice mill located in northern California, Sacco (2017) conducted a study to design a safety English program for Hispanic workers. The rice mill is owned by a corporation that mandates an English-only language policy in all of its mills worldwide. Despite the English-only mandate, the author discovered dual-language zones: managers typically speak English in the rice mill's office complex while Hispanic workers use Spanish almost exclusively in the rice mill. Over time, Hispanic workers at the rice mill have honed a well-crafted and compact Spanish as they struggle to communicate against decibel levels surpassing 130.¹ Sacco (2017) informed company officials that tampering with the code might end a perfect nine-year-long

¹ Rice, corn, wheat, and sorghum mills are among the most dangerous work zones in the United States. During my week-long research study, two workers died from accidents at other rice mills in town. Communication within the context of safety procedures is critical to success. The strict imposition of an English-only policy could lead to major injuries, even death.

safety record. Hispanic workers know, as many revealed in interviews, that they must improve their English while communicating with managers. In US agribusiness, where Hispanic workers dominate in mills and processing plants, dual-language zones are the norm, not the exception. Tyson Foods, for example, accepted this reality almost a decade ago by telling prospective workers that English is not required (Werman, 2013).

In the first major study of Francophone African workplace language use, Sacco (2019a) researched French-speaking engineers and managers employed at multinational corporations operating in five French West African countries: Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Senegal. Eighty-five percent of the corporations mandate English as the official corporate language. The 66 respondents represented 20 multinational corporations which included Nestle, General Electric, Cargill, Unilever, DHL, Deloitte, and Schlumberger. Despite the English-only mandate, all 66 respondents reported that they used French at work, ranging from 26% to 95% of the time (see Table 1). Engineers from Nestle, a corporation that Neeley (2017) listed as an Englishnization disciple, reported working in French 30% of the time. This revelation contradicts Neeley’s (2017) claim that English is now the global language of business. All 20 corporations are multilingual workplaces.

Table 1

Average Percentage of Time Speaking English Versus French (Sacco, 2019a)

Corporation & Headquarters	English	French
1. Ericsson (Sweden)	74%	26%
2. Nestle (Switzerland)	70%	30%
3. Schlumberger (France)	70%	30%
4. Caterpillar (USA)	70%	30%
5. Unilever (Netherlands/UK)	68%	32%
6. FrieslandCampina (Netherlands)	60%	40%
7. Aggreko (UK)	50%	50%
8. GE (USA)	45%	55%
9. Louis Dreyfus (Switz)	37%	63%
10. Olam (Singapore)	33%	67%
11. Yara Int’l (Norway)	30%	70%
12. MTN (South Africa)	23%	77%
13. Orange (France)	16%	84%
14. Schneider Electric (France)	16%	84%
15. Barry Callebaut (Switz)	13%	87%
16. Société Générale (France)	10%	90%
17. DHL	5%	95%

Note: Insufficient data from three companies (Cargill, Shandong, Deloitte) prevented the author from including them among the 20 multinational corporations.

Given the disjunction between the Englishnization policy and the reality of multilingual workplaces, the authors decided to examine workplace language use within, arguably, the two most global of business disciplines: logistics and global supply chain management. We hypothesized that the distribution of goods and services throughout a global network might demand the use of English, even if the companies themselves did not mandate it, thereby also limiting the use of French. For the current study, we had access to a large group of French-

speaking experts in logistics and global supply chain management: Women in Logistics-Africa (WILA) with its 261 members on LinkedIn.² Most are proficient speakers of English who could work exclusively or in large part in English. Many work for corporate industry leaders where English is the official corporate language. Would English emerge as the dominant workplace language or would French interrupt the trend of English workplace dominance?

The Study: Workplace Language Use Among Women in Logistics-Africa

Participants

Women in Logistics-Africa (WILA) is the group selected to participate in the study. According to WILA's profile description on LinkedIn, it is a group of professional women that shares experiences in logistics and global supply chain management. A total of 124 members (out of 261 members at the time of the study) responded to the survey. While WILA also includes native speakers of English, all study participants were native speakers of French and were educated in primary and secondary schools in Francophone Africa. Nearly all are mid-level or senior managers holding Master's degrees or MBAs. They represented 94 large, medium, small, and micro companies that are directly or indirectly connected to logistics and global supply chain management. The group's cohesive nature was conducive for a high participation rate.

The objective of the WILA LinkedIn network is to highlight women in the supply chain industry on the continent. It is a platform for sharing experiences, information, and creating opportunities, but above all developing actions and programs to make this sector better known among women who are still hesitating to enter this field because of prejudices and/or stereotypes. WILA's main mission is to contribute to the development of the continent through its personal and professional contributions in the supply chain industry (WILA, 2021).

Since its founding in April 2021, WILA has witnessed rapid growth in its membership: 261 members in four months. A total of 235 WILA members work in 12 Francophone African countries while 23 native English speakers work in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Liberia, Ghana, and Botswana; one Portuguese speaker works in Angola; the group also includes one Italian and one Spanish speaker. Fifty-three percent of the native French speakers participated in the current study.

According to its website, WILA's goals within the next three years include the following (WILA, 2021):

- Train 5,000 women (in different African countries) to enable them to access leadership positions).
- Train 8,000 women (in different African countries) to enable them to access managerial positions.
- Place 10,000 university graduates at the end of their cycle in company internships (in different African countries).
- Support 500 women who have chosen to retrain in the supply chain, shipping, transport, logistics professions.
- Participate in 300 open days with 200 schools (in different African countries).

² Christiane OHIN-TRAORE, one author of this article, is the founder of WILA.

- Organize 200 webinars of information, information sharing, knowledge and success stories (both on logistics solutions in Africa and the development challenges of the African continent).
- Enlist 3,000 women in the project (in different African countries).
- Benefit from solid partnerships of private and public companies.

The Survey Instrument

The authors created a 14-item survey and distributed the survey by email to the 235 French-speaking members. In the first part of the survey, we asked respondents to identify their company, the size of their company, the economic sector in which the company operates, and the country in which they work. In the second part of the survey, we asked respondents to identify their perception of the following:

- The importance of English within the company.
- The percentage of time they use English versus French.
- The activities they conduct in English.

In the third part of the survey, we asked them to:

- Estimate their English proficiency level using the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR).
- Speculate whether enhanced English skills would lead to a promotion or a salary increase.
- Determine if their company encouraged them to study English at a local language school.

The authors then conducted follow-up interviews with 24 voluntary respondents. The authors designed the semi-structured interviews to determine how English and French are used in the “front stage,” where employees work with clients, customers, and colleagues and in the “back stage,” where employees have little or no contact with customers (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). According to the survey data, all 124 survey respondents were “front stage” employees. The authors also sought input from respondents on their weaknesses in English.

Findings

A total of 124 participants represented nine Francophone countries from Tunisia to Togo and including Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Seventy-nine percent are mid-level and senior managers; their positions, which range from Downstream Leader to Regional Marketing Manager, can be found in Table 2. Eighty-six percent hold a Master’s degree or an MBA as their terminal degree. One respondent holds a Ph.D. in global supply chain management. Most importantly, 83.6% self-reported either intermediate (B1, B2) or advanced (C1, C2) English skills.

Table 2
Examples of Respondents’ Managerial Positions

• Downstream Leader	• Logistics Planning Specialist	• Purchase/Transit Coordinator
• Supply Chain Manager	• Business Development Manager	• Accountant

• General Director	• Procurement Manager	• Purchaser
• Key Account Manager	• Regional Marketing Manager	• Chef de Service
• Senior Product Manager	• Inland Operations Assistant	• Logistician

Respondents from a total of 94 companies participated in the study. Company sector and size are listed in Table 3. Table 4 presents a list of examples the companies of the respondents. Large companies (250+ employees) make up 52.5% of the participating companies. Among them are the leaders of the logistics and global supply chain management industries: A.P Moller-Maersk (Denmark), Bolloré (France), APM Terminals (Netherlands), CNR International (USA), and CMA CGM (France). Medium-size companies (50-250 employees) represented 25.4%. Many of these companies, such as AGS Movers, TC Afrique, and ISYBAT SARL, are headquartered throughout Francophone Africa. Small companies (10-49 employees) comprised 13.1%, while micro companies (0-9 employees) made up 9%. Other companies such as Unilever and Barry Callebaut, which, while not primarily logistics companies, feature large logistics departments. Nine respondents work for Maersk, followed by six for APM Terminals and Bolloré, two for CMA CGM, one each for Unilever, Danone, and Barry Callebaut.

Table 3

Survey Respondents: Industry Sector, Country of Operation, Employer Size

Industry Sector		Country of Operation		Size of Employer	
First	13.3%	Ivory Coast	67	Large (250+)	52.5%
Second	20%	Cameroon	18	Medium (50-249)	25.4%
Third	66.7%	Senegal	8	Small (10-49)	13.1%
		Morocco	7	Micro (0-9)	9%
		Togo	6		
		Tunisia	3		
		DRC	3		
		Burkina Faso	1		
		Benin	1		

NOTE: Industry Sectors: The first consists of agriculture, fishing, forest, mines, etc. The second: manufacturing, transformation, construction, etc. The third: commerce, transportation, banking, services, etc.

Table 4*Examples of Respondents' Companies*

Company	Headquarters	No. of employees	Industry
A.P. Moller-Maersk	Denmark	83,625	Shipping
Bolloré	France	79,000	Transport
Unilever	UK	169,000	Consumer goods
APM Terminals ³	Netherlands	22,000	Container terminals
CNR International	USA	Not listed	Trucking/Forwarding
Win Logistics Group ⁴	UK	9,850	Logistics/forwarding
CMA CGM	France	29,000	Container shipping
Barry Callebaut	Switzerland	10,000	Agribusiness
Jumia Group	Nigeria	5,200	Ecommerce

Part 2 of the survey queried two points concerning workplace language use: (1) their perception of the importance of English within the company (see Table 5); and (2) their estimated percentage of time that they use English versus French (see Table 6).

Respondents overwhelmingly viewed English as important or very important (see Table 5). Among respondents a total of 60.5% viewed English as very important, followed by 28.2% who viewed English as important; only 11.3% of respondents considered English as unimportant. When the authors broke down the responses according to company size, there was little difference between companies of all sizes: English is overwhelmingly considered important.

Table 5*The Importance of English: Overall Responses & Breakdown by Company Size*

Overall by respondents		Breakdown by company size*	
Very important	60.5%	Large companies	92.5%
Important	28.2%	Medium companies	80%
Not important	11.3%	Small companies	91.7%
		Micro companies	100%

* Percentage refers to combined responses of "very important" and "important."

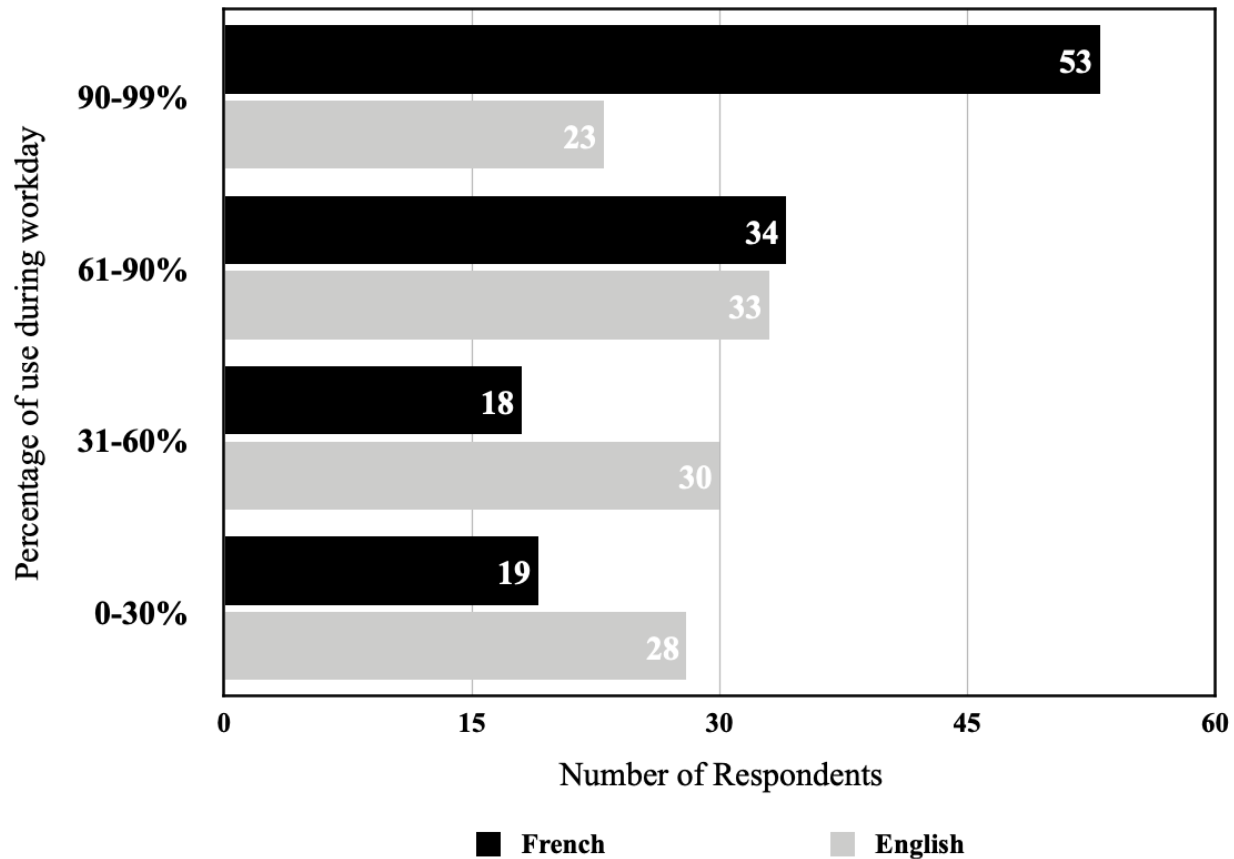
Part two of the survey also addressed the percentage of time respondents use English versus French in the workplace. The authors offered four possible ranges of workplace language use (0-30%, 31-60%, 61-90%, and 90-99%) to assist respondents in their best estimate of language use. Table 6 illustrates that the use of French significantly surpasses the use of English. For example, 55 respondents (44%) reported using French 90-99% of the workday while 23 respondents (18.5%) used English 90-99%. When combining the top two ranges, 61-90% and 90-99%, 71.8% of WILA respondents reported using more French than English during their workday. Looking at individual companies tells a more precise story: At A.P Moller-Maersk, a Danish company, eight of nine respondents reported working predominantly in English; at APM Terminals, a Dutch company, six of six claim to work mainly in English. However, at French

³ APM Terminals is owned by the MAERSK Group.

⁴ CNR International comprises a network of independent forwarding and logistics companies.

industry leader Bolloré, five of six respondents reported working primarily in French. Despite the predominant use of English at A.P. Moller-Maersk and APM Terminals, all respondents reported working in a multilingual workplace where French is also used.⁵

Table 6
Respondents' Reported Use of French Versus English during their Workday



In the final part of the survey, respondents rated their English proficiency according to the CEFR guidelines (Council of Europe, 2021). None possessed an official language proficiency level certification. As seen in Table 7, most respondents (63.9%) rated themselves as “independent users” of English (B1, B2); at the bottom end of the scale, 17.2% are only “basic users” of English (A1, A2), while 18.9% identified themselves at the highest level as “proficient users” (C1, C2).

⁵ In Senegal, one respondent revealed that Wolof is spoken along with French and English at her company.

Table 7

Respondents' Self-reported English Proficiency (according to CEFR)

A1	3.3%
A2	13.9%
B1	26.2%
B2	37.7%
C1	18.9%

The respondents were then asked if enhanced English skills would lead to a promotion or a salary increase. Table 8 shows that a total of 45.2% respondents answered in the affirmative (i.e., they selected true, very true, somewhat true); 39.4% were unsure if enhanced English skills would lead to a promotion or a salary increase, while 15.4% chose totally false, false, rather false.

Table 8

Respondents' Perceived Potential for Salary Enhancements/Promotion

Yes	45.2%
Unsure	39.4 %
No	15.4%

In the final two questions, the authors asked whether the respondent’s company encouraged them to enroll in ELL classes and if the companies would be interested in a follow-up study. According to respondents, only 5.7% of companies made the recommendation to enroll in English classes. Several respondents mentioned that their company had already expected them to begin their employment with adequate English proficiency. A total of 38.7% are currently enrolled or have recently enrolled in Business English courses.

Discussion

The goal of the present study was to determine if Englishnization (Neeley, 2012, 2017) had attained a significant presence within corporations operating in Francophone Africa. The results indicate that English is highly valued among the vast majority of survey respondents. French, however, remains the dominant workplace language used overall as the 124 French-speaking professionals communicate almost exclusively in French. Based on the study results, we begin to see that English may not always be the business lingua franca as claimed by Neeley (2012, 2017) and Kankaanranta et al. (2015, 2018). Furthermore, the findings point to an increasing pool of evidence of multilingual workplace settings, even among MNCs where English is the official language (Ehrenreich, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 2014; Sacco, 2017, 2019a).

Despite the global nature of logistics and supply chain management, where English is the lead language worldwide, respondents from WILA reported working significantly more in French than in English. This seems to run counter to Neeley’s (2017) assertion that global companies from all major industries have adopted an English-only mandate for employees. At A.P. Moller-Maersk, a Danish corporation, managers in the present study speak the most English, but French was also widely spoken. French industry leaders Bolloré and CMA CGM will likely continue to work primarily in French while in Francophone Africa, English in other

countries. Englishization, the “all English all the time” mandate coined by Rakuten’s CEO Hiroshi Mikitani, is far from taking root within logistics and supply chain management in Francophone Africa. Unaware of Mikitani’s English-language mandate, 200 million French-speaking customers will likely continue to purchase goods and services in French. Based on an examination of the company’s website designed for Francophone Africa, even Rakuten recognizes this linguistic reality as it conducts direct sales in Francophone Africa in French.

The use of English in logistics and supply chain management is strongly present in Francophone Africa. According to respondents in follow-up interviews, English proficiency is the most important skill for companies. In one example, a respondent described how top-quality graduates equipped with a master’s degree in logistics at a highly respected university were rejected by companies because of weak English skills. One manager reported that the lack of strong English skills kept several colleagues from promotion and assignments in English-speaking countries. Our data showed that nearly all of the respondents, regardless of the size of their company, emphatically stated that they viewed English as important to the company. Nearly half of the respondents see enhanced English skills as key to salary enhancements or promotion.

In the present study, respondents reported a perception that English and French co-exist without conflict whether their company’s ownership is African, European, Asian, Middle Eastern or American. Steyaert et al. (2011) describe this type of harmony as “linguascap” to illustrate how different languages simultaneously exist within the company’s everyday reality. In the 94 companies in the present study, language choice may be selected not by policy, like at Rakuten, but in the communicative situation in question. Based on interview input from WILA members, typically French-speaking customers receive customer service in French; English-speaking customers in English. French-speaking managers communicate in English with their English-speaking colleagues in house or via videoconferencing. We posit that senior leadership in the 94 companies may have little desire to imitate Rakuten’s Englishization policy as long as “front stage” employees and managers possess strong workplace English skills. English is not forced upon respondents in the present study as it was at Rakuten. As a result, language use may not serve as a point of contention.

Limitations of the Current Study

Survey responses and a limited number of follow-up interviews comprised the data collection in the current study. These two sources of data alone do not meet the triangulation standard in a traditional qualitative study or a hybrid quantitative-qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As noted earlier, the data provided in the study are solely respondents’ perceptions, taken from survey and interview responses. Limited data collection capability was due to the pandemic which prevented the researchers from embedding within a corporation or corporations. Thus, there was no opportunity to confirm the percentage of time WILA respondents work in French and English through direct observation or input from immediate superiors, or examine WILA respondents’ written communication to confirm claims of language usage. We were also not able to interview human resources directors or immediate superiors to gain their perspectives on workplace language policy and use in their respective companies⁶. Despite these limitations,

⁶ The authors are currently contacting a group of human resources directors to participate in a future study.

the survey and interview data in the present study revealed interesting insight into workplace language usage and confirmed the respondents' perception of working in a multilingual setting.

Conclusion

Africa is experiencing explosive economic growth that will continue unabated into the next decades: French president Emmanuel Macron calls Africa “the continent of the future” (BBC News, 2019); the Brookings Institute, Goldman Sachs, McKinsey, and the Council on Foreign Relations concur (BBC News, 2019). French blankets the entire African continent from Morocco to Madagascar and from Senegal to Djibouti. In Africa, over 200 million French speakers live in 21 of 54 countries (World Atlas, 2020). Economists predict that the number of French-speaking Africans will surpass 800 million by 2050. This prediction is based on birth rates that are growing at a rate twice that of other Africans (BBC News, 2019). Despite Africa’s economic ascendance and its abundance of native French speakers, workplace language researchers have largely bypassed Africa, focusing instead on Europe and Asia. Workplace language researchers such as Crystal (2003), Feely and Harzing (2003), Kankaanranta et al. (2015, 2018), and Neeley (2012, 2017) have declared English to be the world’s language of business. “Ready or not, English is now the global language of business,” Neeley (2012) announced in a *Harvard Business Review* article. Contrary to Neeley’s claim, multilingual workplaces still dominate global business, as the study presented here indicates and as others have found (Angouri, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2009; Janssens & Steyaert, 2014; Lüdi et al., 2016; and Sacco, 2017, 2019a).

Englishnization has not made significant inroads within corporations operating in Francophone Africa. Despite the absence of Englishnization, the authors predict that the use of English will increase, even surpass French in the next decade or two. However, for English to become the primary workplace language in Francophone Africa, ELL teaching methods, materials, and curriculum will have to improve. Test takers from Francophone African nations, except Tunisia and Morocco, averaged the lowest English scores vis-à-vis any region in the world: between 61 and 70 on the TOEFL iBT (Magoosh, 2016). Outdated teaching methods and overpopulated classes (45 to 60 in the average class) are among a host of factors to blame (Sacco, 2019b). Changes to the current system under the auspices of national ministries of education have proceeded and will continue to proceed at a glacial pace (Sacco, 2019b).

We recognize that even with improved English skills, the multilingual workplace will most likely continue to exist for decades. To begin with, studies like Sacco (2019b) indicate that many companies condone the use of French among coworkers and between employees and French-speaking customers. Companies would need to actively insert an Englishnization policy to end the use of workplace. Further, speaking French allows native French speakers to work together in their dominant language. Numerous researchers (Bono & Vey, 2005; Feely & Harzing, 2003; Grandin & Dehmel, 1997; Harzing, Köster & Magner, 2011; Neeley & Kaplan, 2014; Neeley, 2017) cite anxiety, exhaustion, discomfort, and unfair competition with native English-speaking colleagues when nonnative English speakers are forced to work completely in their second language.

There is a natural connection between workplace language research and World Languages for Specific Purposes (WLSP). WLSP educators prepare courses in business, engineering, science, medicine, law, and others, most often within the walls of academia. Yet WLSP researchers have yet to fully explore the need for and benefits of workplace language

research. Conducting research *in situ* provides WLSP practitioners with firsthand knowledge of the workplaces they are preparing students to join after graduation. In addition to helping us understand workplace language practices, such research can have a positive impact on the work environment, such as in Sacco (2017), where being embedded in the workplace (e.g., observing mill operations, interviewing workers, managers and corporate officials, and collecting documentation) resulted in knowledge that led to the creation of a customized Safety English curriculum for the company and its Spanish-speaking workers. In a post-pandemic context, being embedded within a workplace (e.g., a company, hospital, or courthouse) will again provide researchers with the opportunity to learn more about workplace language use in Francophone Africa and beyond.

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