

May Drc Shift Into An English-Speaking Country Someday? – A Brief Sketch Of Favourable Justificative Factors

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Abstract: The Democratic Republic of the Congo, DR Congo or DRC counts nearly 400 tribal tongues or dialects, by origin. In addition to four prominent Kikongo, Lingala, Swahili, and Tshiluba regional or vernacular languages inherent to large ethnic community entities and the official French language, these tribal tongues or dialects make of DRC a great multilingual country.

However, the present tendency is to raise English to the point to hold its own against French and of even overtaking it, given that the Congolese people currently use English more and more in many real life situations.

This article attempts to unveil some of the factors that are favourable to DRC to shift really into a furthermore multilingual country someday by adopting English as official language, on par with the French language.

Key words: DRC, shift, English-speaking, multilingual.

1. Introduction:

The DR Congo or DRC is the well-known world second French-speaking country after mother France land, introduced and imposed in heritage by the Belgian colonialists as the country's official language for administration, education, etc.

The teaching of English in the entire DRC's educational system, the surge and prestige prevailing among the Congolese people to learn English constantly, the daily active use of English in public particularly in Kinshasa City, the country's intensive co-operation and business exchanges, and the increasing flow of manufactured products and technological devices on the local market, and the supremacy and growing importance of English as an international language, and the advent of globalization are a few reasons that militate in favour of this observation.

The status of the English language in DRC has improved so much over time by changing into a major school subject at all levels of DRC's entire educational system and, then, failed to move into official language, on par with French in a 1990s Constitution Project that failed to be promulgated.

The present article attempts to sketch some of the factors likely to enhance the change of DRC into an English-speaking country and to acquire, thereby, the prestigious status of a great and, maybe, first multilingual country of the world in future time.

2. Methodological Approach, Data Presentation, and Research Findings:

2.1. Methodological approach:

A short survey was conducted that involved a very little sample of 15 people selected randomly. It included Primary and Secondary school teachers, students, an architect, and a few unemployed individuals to answer one question only. They had to give their opinion about DRC's future language situation, with reference to the supremacy as international language and one of the main tools of globalization and to people's craze and preference to learn English and use it for communication.

The only question administered for survey in view of this short article reads,

'Do you think that DRC may shift or change into an English-speaking country someday? Give your reasons for or against it.'

2.2. Data Presentation:

The processing of the views collected in answer to the survey question show as follows:

-12 people answered, *'Yes, DRC may become an English-speaking country.'*

-2 people answered, *'No, DRC cannot become an English-speaking country.'*

-1 person did not say anything.

The statistical interpretation of the above survey data shows as follows:

-positive answers or favourable opinions: 80 %;

-negative answers or unfavourable opinions: 13 %;

-non-participation or abstention: 7 %.

Thenceforth, it can be well admitted as obviously true as possible that DRC may become an English-speaking country in the future as the 80 % of positive answers or favourable opinions can illustrate it.

2.3. Research Findings:

The analysis of survey data collected has enable to unveil only reasons or arguments in favour of the change of DRC's language policy that were provided by the large majority of respondents recorded here above, for the sake of trust.

Those arguments or reasons include the different facts presented here after, in their order of appreciation and importance, as follows:

-the supremacy of English as a famous international language: 40 %;

-the technological progress through the computer and internet: 30 %;

-the need for co-operation: 20 %;

-the position of the USA as World super power: 10 %.

It follows that the supremacy of English as international language and the use of the computer and internet for Information and Communication are the main factors likely to enhance language policy change in DRC in the future, as enlightened in this little discussion to deduce more other factors on behalf of the change of language policy in DRC.

3. Interpretation of the Research Findings:

3.0. Introductory note:

The favourable opinions or arguments collected from the survey, which support the possibility for DRC to change into an English-speaking country, represent valuable cues that allow to unveil two types of factors as signs that induce the possible change of DRC's language policy or linguistic status. They are 'internal' and 'external' factors.

3.1. Internal factors:

Internal factors are some political, educational, cultural, economic, and social assets likely to encourage the potential shift of the country's language policy.

3.1.1. Political assets:

A few political factors or assets to be noted as distant signs for DRC to change its language policy include the following three legal measures of DRC's Government that institutionalize the use of English in the country.

a) *The 1980s Educational Reforms:*

Educational Reforms of the 1980s decade have the merit of extending the ELT indistinctly and raising English to the position of an important major language subject in the entire DRC's educational system.

b) *The 1990s Constitution Project:*

Although it was not adopted nor promulgated, this Constitution Project includes an attempt of the Congolese Government to upgrade English as official language of DRC in the 1990s.

c) *The 2018 Decree of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education:*

This political measure contributes in the change of DRC's language policy by recommending the introduction of English Language Teaching in Primary school, as already consecrating the active use of English for communication, at a medium scale.

d) *The close proximity with neighboring English-speaking countries:*

DRC shares border lines with nine neighboring English-speaking countries as Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia that offer an advantage for DRC to adopt a new language policy, through inclusion in sub-regional economic and political organizations like COMEXAS, SADEC, UEAC, etc.

3.1.2. Educational assets:

The educational assets ready to make DRC turn into an English-speaking country include the following:

a) *The Teacher Training Colleges:*

DRC counts many Teacher Training Colleges the first of which is the IPN Pilot Teacher Training College, created in 1961, followed by many others known as '*Instituts Supérieurs Pédagogiques*' or ISP, to provide locally trained skillful EFL teachers for the entire Secondary school level.

b) *Latest Educational Reforms:*

This asset consists of the recent 1990s Educational Reforms that contributed in strengthening the English ELT curriculum at the Higher Education or academic level to develop skillful communication abilities and encourage research undertaking in the particular field of English Language Teaching or ELT.

c) *The 2018 Decree of the Primary and Secondary Education Ministry:*

This decree of the Primary and Secondary Education Ministry favours the advent of a new language policy English in DRC by recommending the introduction of ELT in Primary school.

d) *English Language Schools:*

These are a worthy educational asset that helps satisfy immediate EFL learning needs for, namely, travelling, education, business, job, etc. purposes.

In this connection, it is interesting to mention the ‘*Congo American Language Institute*’, and the ‘*Kinshasa Language Centre*’ as they have inspired many other local initiatives.

1° The Congo American Language Institute - CALI:

The Congo American Language Institute, CALI in short, is a language laboratory to prepare Congolese Government’s officials and other needful people for training or holiday in the USA through an English Teaching program of the ‘*US Government’s Agency for International Development Programme*’ -USAID- and the ‘*Programme des Nations-Unies pour le Développement*’ -PNUD-.

2° The Kinshasa Language Center - KLC:

The Kinshasa Language Center or KLC is set up by the British Embassy to offer English learning and training seminars for English teachers on ongoing ELT topics.

So far, a KLC’s contribution worth remembering is a seminar held, in January 1989, on the topic ‘*Communicative Teaching Techniques in the Classroom*’, for Congolese English teachers of the humanities cycle. It meant to vulgarize ‘*pair work*’ and ‘*group work*’ as teaching techniques, which relate to the ‘*Communicative Language Teaching*’ method or approach.

3° English Language Centres:

The English Language centres are a system of private initiatives that broke out particularly in Kinshasa City and some centers of population, in 1980s-90s, that contributes in backing up the public secondary school ELT instruction, with regard to its inability to cover EFL learning needs and the country’s high rates of demographic growth and school enrollment.

3.1.3. Cultural assets:

The few factors worth mentioning as cultural assets likely to prompt the DRC’s Language Policy change include, namely, the following:

-Fast Exchange of Information and Communication:

The development of Communication and fast Exchange of Information in modern world, marked by the prominent use of the computer and the internet, work towards the easy shift of DRC into an English-speaking country. In fact, modern network of Communication and Information Exchange brings far distant parts of the world closer and closer to one another, making them look actually like one single small village, said ‘*global*’ or ‘*planetary*’ village and giving rise to ‘*Globalization*’, or ‘*Mondialisation*’ in French.

-Easy understanding of notices or instructions for accurate interpretation:

It is about the effort to understand well and interpret accurately indications or instructions stated in English for most manufactured articles or products as medical appliances, technological devices, pharmaceutical drugs, etc. that are increasingly flowing on the local market, for safe consumption and efficient use.

-Need for information:

The intended audiences of local radio stations, television channels, and newspapers need to be well equipped with English knowledge in order to process programmes broadcast and news columns issued in English.

-Congolese people’s personal pride and excitement:

Congolese individuals show very positive attitude through feelings, motivation, pride, and excitement to learn English on their own.

3.1.4. Economic assets:

Modern world technological progress, the intensification and increasing diversification of bilateral and multilateral transactions, high in-flow and consumption rates of manufactured devices and products from English-speaking countries, etc. constitute a true that increases the opportunity of language policy change for DRC.

3.1.5. Social assets:

Contacts with foreign English-speakers moving into DRC, for business and other purposes, can be pinpointed as a social incentive likely to encourage the shift of DRC into an English-speaking country, though happening at a very slow rhythm and limited low scale.

3.2. External factors:

The true and strong impetus for DRC to change eventually into an English-speaking country someday originates actually from external factors described here above as internal factors in terms of cultural, economic, educational, political, and social factors or assets including key elements as '*information exchange and communication*' through the '*use of the computer and internet*', '*consumption of manufactured articles or devices and pharmaceutical products*', '*issue and broadcasting of news and programmes by English-speaking countries*' and, above all, '*the supremacy of English*' as modern world main international language.

4. Some important remarks:

After being adopted both for educational purposes, French established as official language, while English is intensively used for communication due to its '*practicability*' and '*adaptability*'.

The '*practicability of English*' refers to its grammatical and syntactic '*flexibility*' does not subject speakers, be them foreign and native, to respect strictly rigorous rules like in French, nor do they develop any complex nor negative attitude when communicating.

Whereas, the '*adaptability*' of English results from its great lexical and structural or syntactic power or '*elasticity*' through its easy inclusion of new terms from other languages, to the extent that it includes countless varieties or variants worldwide, and speakers' '*stylistic freedom*' to produce meaningful lexical combinations or word strings, depending on contexts.

CONCLUSION

The present article has attempted to sketch factors likely to enhance DRC to change into an English-speaking country in the future by raising the question,

'May DRC shift into an English-speaking country someday?'

that was formulated in the following way for the purpose of a very little survey undertaken to that effect, which has allowed to pinpoint several factors that strongly support this thesis,

'Do you think that DRC may become an English-speaking country, someday? Give your reasons for or against.'

The obvious answer to the key issue raised in the question contained in the title of this article is,

'Yes, DRC may change into an English-speaking country, soon or later.'

In fact, it is right to answer this question positively that DRC is well in a position to become an English-speaking in its history. Several factors pinpointed as internal and external factors enable to strongly support this thesis, basing on the arguments or opinions from the little survey conducted in this specific framework.

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