



## HOW TO PROMOTE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN A BILINGUAL UNIVERSITY - A CASE STUDY OF UEA/ BUKAVU, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (2015-2018)

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### Abstract:

This paper aims at writing some strategies to promote the English language in a bilingual university. It has focused its study on the Evangelical University in Africa (UEA). This choice is justified by the fact that UEA, one of the major universities in Bukavu, organises important activities to take in account as it tends to become bilingual. Methods and techniques were mainly: a documentary analysis and class observations. A table and a graphic were also used to illustrate the data. Findings showed that UEA's techniques and method to promote the English language were mainly: a Placement Test followed by a one-month Intensive General English Course (144hours) for G1fresh students from all faculties at UEA. Others attended scientific, academic and practical English. For all of them, the emphasis was on improving listening, speaking, writing and reading skills. It has organised the Language Resource Centre with various activities (training students and the personnel of UEA, translation and interpretation, etc.), several Research Centres and English Clubs in each faculty, and a Sunday English Programme. Instruments available were notably, English books downloaded and shared with students freely by their teachers of English; audiovisuals, sound amplifiers and the Internet access. Finally, heuristic method was used to allow students to learn by discovering things themselves. Nevertheless, the gap between the French (90%) and English (10%) languages is still big at UEA. Normally, bilingualism requires 100% for both languages.

**Keywords:** promote, English language, bilingual university, UEA

### Résumé :

Cet article vise à rédiger des stratégies pour promouvoir la langue anglaise dans une université bilingue. L'auteur a concentré son étude sur l'Université Evangélique en Afrique (UEA). Ce choix est justifié par le fait que l'UEA, l'une des plus grandes universités de Bukavu, organise d'importantes activités en anglais pour tenter de

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devenir bilingue. Les méthodes et techniques consistaient principalement en une analyse documentaire et en des observations de classes. Un tableau et un graphique ont également été utilisés pour illustrer les données. Les résultats ont montré que les techniques et méthode de l'UEA pour promouvoir l'anglais étaient principalement: un test de classement suivi d'un cours intensif d'anglais général d'un mois (144 heures) pour les nouveaux étudiants de G1 de toutes les facultés de l'UEA. D'autres apprenants ont étudié l'anglais scientifique, académique et pratique. Pour tout le monde, l'accent était mis sur l'écoute, le parler, l'écrit et la lecture. L'UEA organise le Centre des Ressources en Langues avec diverses activités (formation des étudiants et de tout son personnel, la traduction, l'interprétariat, etc.), plusieurs centres des recherches et clubs d'anglais dans chaque faculté ; - des instruments disponibles étaient notamment : un bon nombre des livres en anglais téléchargés par les formateurs de cette langue cible; audiovisuels, amplificateurs et l'accès à Internet. Enfin, une méthode heuristique a été utilisée pour permettre aux étudiants d'apprendre en découvrant d'autres réalités eux-mêmes. Néanmoins, l'écart entre le français (90%) et l'anglais (10%) demeure grand à l'UEA. Normalement, le bilinguisme exige 100% pour les deux langues.

**Mots-clés :** promouvoir, langue anglaise, université bilingue, UEA

## 1. Introduction

Globalisation requires mastering two main languages, Global English and French (cf. website <https://www.globaethicsnetwork.org/profiles/blogs/the-influence-of-globalization-on-learning-languages>, consulted on February 13, 2019). This requirement is a tough task for most people all over the world.

A growing number of universities require English for admission or graduation, and many now offer degree programs entirely in English to compete with the top ranked institutions in the U.S. and the U.K. In addition to all the young people learning English through public education, the private English instruction sector is an estimated 50 billion dollar industry. Indeed, it has been proposed that within the next decade as many as two billion people will be learning English at any given time. ([www.ef.com/sitecore/\\_/~/media/efcom/.../pdf/EF-EPI-2011.pdf](http://www.ef.com/sitecore/_/~/media/efcom/.../pdf/EF-EPI-2011.pdf), downloaded on March 14, 2016)

English is the main language of science and technology in the world and its spread is advancing in many countries and regions where it has not been traditionally spoken as in DR Congo.

The DR Congo Government also decided to enhance learning and teaching of English by publishing on September 30, 2015 an Academic Instruction (N°017/MINESU/CABMIN/ TMF/ SMM/2015, p.10 paragraph 1.10). The latter aims at reminding the Heads of Public and Private Schools involved in Higher Academic Institutions and University Education to teach English systematically in all classes from the Undergraduate to the Graduate Cycles.

Some universities of the DR Congo are making efforts to become bilingual. For examples, [Christian Bilingual University of Congo](#) ([Université Chrétienne Bilingue du Congo](#)) / UCBC in Beni, [American University of Kinshasa](#) (Université Américaine de Kinshasa ou Université Franco-Américaine de Kinshasa), and others. (Cf. the following website

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_universities\\_in\\_the\\_Democratic\\_Republic\\_of\\_the\\_Congo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_in_the_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo), consulted on February 11, 2019). UEA should follow their examples.

In June 2018, the author was asked by the English Club of the Faculty of Agronomy (C.R.E.A.) to hold a conference about “How to promote the English language in a bilingual university. A case study of UEA/Bukavu, DRC”. Consequently, a decision was taken to conduct this research and publish its results. The latter would be shared in this way with other French speaking country universities in need of becoming bilingual.

Then, how to promote the English language in a bilingual university? This is the research question of this study.

### **1.1 Hypothesis**

Strategies and instruments are needed to promote the English language in a bilingual university, such as a Placement Test, by teaching fresh students an Intensive English Course for one month and Practical English for the rest of students, by organising an English Language Training Centre for the welfare of students and the personnel of university, with incentive for students and others to practice English in an English Club.

Instruments to make available are notably: English books, articles, novels, etc.; audiovisuals, sound amplifiers and the Internet access.

### **1.2 Purpose**

This paper aims at writing some strategies to promote the English language in a bilingual university. It has focused its study on the Evangelical University in Africa (UEA). This choice is justified by the fact that UEA, one of the major universities in Bukavu, organises important activities to take in account for becoming bilingual. Apart from this reason, UEA is not only the writer’s business, but it is also visited by French and English speaking Professors.

### **1.3 Methods and techniques**

Methods and techniques were mainly a documentary analysis, class observations and a table and a graphic uses. A documentary analysis of ambient written documents was necessary to enrich this investigation. Class observations were made during teaching the English course and students’ practice and activities. Finally, a table and a graphic were used to illustrate the data.

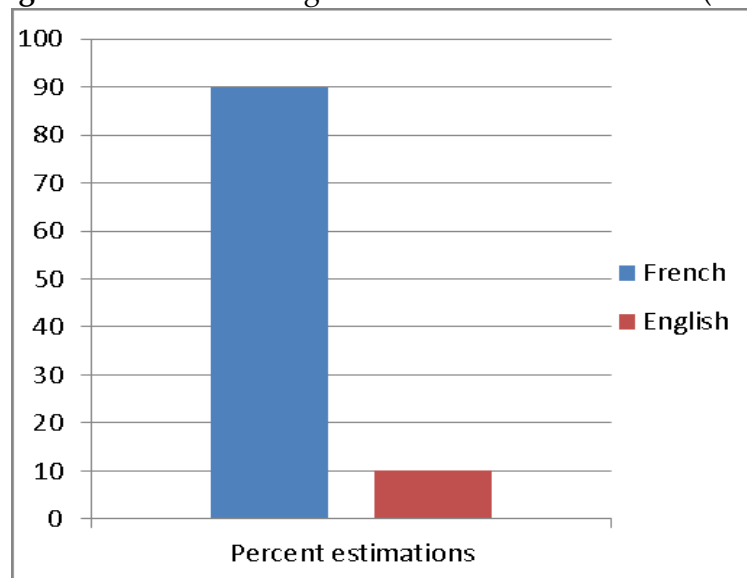
## 2. Results

Let us look at the meanings of “to promote” and a “bilingual university”. According to Michael Agnes (2003, p.516), “to promote” means “to further the growth of” the English language. It means to develop the extent of the English language. And “bilingual” means “able to speak two languages equally well” or “using two languages” (Joanna Turnbull et al., 2010, p.131). For examples, A few students and teachers of UEA are bilingual in English and French. A bilingual university uses two languages to teach and publish.

On their side, Michel Langner and Ruedi Imbach (2000: 467) develop two principles for a bilingual university establishment, namely: (i) sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic situation of the region, and (ii) developing a concept of bilingualism. For Theo du Plessis (2006), these two principles are the essential requirements of a bilingual university.

Indeed, the following histogrammes illustrate the need of teaching and learning English language at UEA.

**Figure 1:** French and English level estimations at UEA (2018)



Comment: These percentages are estimations only. Pretend with a number of 3200 persons (students and the staff) of UEA, there would be 320 bilingual members. Therefore, this figure highlights a huge gap between the French and English languages at UEA. So, the journey is still long for the English language (10%) to reach even 90% estimated by the lecturer as the French rate at UEA.

In the following lines, it will be shown how the Evangelical University in Africa tends to become bilingual. It is possible to open the next section by quoting Tite Tienou (1982), “If a journey is a thousand miles, it starts with the first step.” - UEA did not stand with folded arms towards the present topic. On the contrary, it has developed various strategies with a view to promoting the English language.

## **2.1 Activities so far carried by UEA to promote the English language**

### **2.1.1. UEA's techniques and method to promote the English language**

With a Placement Test, fresh students of the first undergraduate classes were placed at different levels of English. Because of a big number of students enrolled in these classes, only written exercises pertaining to *Identification, Vocabulary words, Grammar* and *Composition* were given them for two hours maximum.

Identification exercise consisted of identifying students' names, nationalities, places and duration of studying English. Vocabulary words were in relation to numbers, gender, school materials, giving directions. Grammar section was related to the use of comparative and superlative of adjectives, conditional clauses, prepositions and past tenses. The composition exercise was based on vocabulary knowledge, grammar, spelling, content or the substance, style and length (of three to six full and correct sentences). The topic given them was about the "*importance of English*" in their town or country. The placement test was invigilated by Assistant lecturers and done by these students in six classrooms at the faculty of Agronomy.

Thus, it was expected that students could be placed at different English levels according to the following grading scale: Beginner one level: 0 - 29% marks; Beginner two: 30 - 49% marks; Intermediate one: 50 - 69% marks; Intermediate two: 70 - 89% marks; Advanced level: 90 - 100% marks (cf. The Language Resource Centre Archives/2018).

By teaching English course:

- General English was taught as an Intensive English course (144hrs for one month) to the first undergraduate students from all faculties at UEA.
- Scientific, academic and practical English for the rest of students.
- By attending the Language Resource Centre activities organised at UEA (ut infra 2.1.2.)
- By attending English Clubs (CREA, CREG, and others).

Instruments available were notably : over 18,000 English books, articles, theses, novels, etc. were downloaded and shared with students freely by their teachers of English at UEA; audiovisuals, sound amplifiers and Internet access.

Finally, heuristic method was used to allow students to learn by discovering things themselves by reading books and accessing the Internet in order to do their practical assignments.

### **2.1.2. The English Language Resource Centre of UEA**

The Language Resource Centre of UEA was created in May 2015 under the initiative of its Rector, Prof. Gustave Mushagalusa Nacigera. Six levels of training were organised at the UEA Language Resource Centre, including Beginner I, Beginner II, Intermediate I, Intermediate II, Advanced I and Advanced II. The number of trainers was five: 1 Professor, 1 Chief of Works and 3 Assistants.

The Language Resource Centre was intended for the training of administrative, academic, scientific and technical workers, and students; as well as the translation and interpretation work of the UEA. Thus, its activities were mainly:

- The teaching and learning of English: administrative, academic, scientific, technical workers were interested in this education.
- Teaching and learning general, academic and scientific English: students of UEA involved.
- Translation and interpreting.
- Supervision and monitoring of the English Clubs of UEA.
- Research and publications in the various training areas organised by UEA.
- Supervision of teaching assistants of English.
- Preparation of teaching materials

Note. Every teacher of English had to do his best to help learners to improve the four English language basic skills below: listening, speaking, writing and reading.

Sometimes, English learners were asked to listen to natives as they have sound tone and accent, to BBC London, to the Voice of America and other media and to make a short ad hoc presentation in their classroom. They also used audiovisuals to improve the listening skill.

As for speaking skill, English language should be spoken clearly and correctly through dialogues, conversations, discussions, debates and answering text comprehension questions orally.

In order to improve their style in writing, English learners at UEA were taught the following: Typical features of academic and scientific English from interesting guide books. For examples:

- Guide to Academic Writing (by Nelleke Bak, University of the Western Cape, 2003), an important book for students to know how to reference correctly and avoid plagiarism; Academic Writing Handbook-Guidance for students (published by London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2015). This book offers (on its page 10) some referencing styles to use notably, Harvard system, Vancouver system, Chicago style, Turabian system, etc. Actually, choosing the referencing style to use depends on the fields of training organised by the institution;
- General Guide for Academic Writing and Presentation of Written Assignments, suitable for postgraduate level in the arts, humanities, business, education, the social sciences and built environment (by Dr. Anne Murphy, 2009);
- Academic Writing for Graduate Students-Essential Tasks and Skills-For Nonnative English Speakers (Anonymous, ND) with its attractive vocabulary shift, flow and this + summary word, etc. ;
- Successful Scientific Writing. A step-by-step guide for the biological and medical sciences (by Janice R. Matthews and Robert W. Matthews, 2008);
- Check your Vocabulary for Academic English, Third Edition, which aims to help students learn a common core of vocabulary which will be useful for almost any

subject studied at college or university. (David Porter, 2007). Those guide books and others were very helpful for UEA's finalists especially as they wrote their Dissertations.

In addition, students were interested in the use of collocations, meaning "*a pair or group of words that are often used together in order to help English learners to speak and write English in a more natural and accurate way*" (see Michael McCarthy and Felicity O'Dell, 2008, p.4). They liked compound nouns and adjectives, proper use of vocabulary words and grammatical structure for concision too.

For the reading skill, materials used were, especially: English books, articles and magazines related to different domains of training organised at UEA are necessary for readers. For novels, there is a website offering "9 great novels to help improve your English" (cf. <https://www.english.com/blog/9-great-novels-help-improve-english/>, consulted on February 14, 2019).

But it seems that English documents were not read regularly at UEA. Normally, 20 new words might be learnt by bookworms daily. (see <https://www.lingq.com/fr/forum/open-forum-in-english/what-is-the-average-number-of-words-you-can-learn-a-day/>, consulted on February 13, 2019)

As results, since its inception to 2018, the UEA Language Resource Centre has realised the following:

- 51 scholars (of whom 1/3=17 were female and 2/3=34 male ) were trained at the Centre before pursuing the Master's program in various African and European countries;
- 20 members (50% men and 50% women) of academic, administrative, technical and workers personnel: some trained at Beginner levels; the others at Intermediate levels;
- 3153 students, including 968 girls and 2185 boys, attended the English course at UEA: the general English intensive course was taught in the first undergraduate years for a month while practical and scientific English was taught in other promotions.

It should be noted that the teaching of English is done in all faculties organised at the UEA, namely:

- Practical English comprises: English for animal technicians (Zootechnics),
- English for Phytotechnicians (Phytotechnics),
- English for Peacemakers (cf. Peace and Development,
- Peace and Conflict Transformation Departments),
- Theological English (cf. Faculty of Protestant Theology),
- Medical English (cf. Faculty of Medicine), Business English (cf. Economics Faculty) and Social English (cf. Social Work Department).

Students in upper-classes (Graduate and Engineering levels) were taught typical features of academic and scientific English as well.

Moreover, the Language Resource Centre teachers often delivered some presentations in English Clubs of UEA. They have also translated works of researchers,

academic, scientific and administrative staff and some finalist students from UEA. Another task of this centre’s staff has been the interpretation whenever UEA was paid visits by English speaking guests.

More than 18,000 downloaded English books related to different domains of training at UEA (cf. their list above) were shared freely with students by their teachers of English. Some publications were done and researches are in progress in International Journals. (Source: Archives of the Language Resource Centre of UEA/2018).

On Sundays, English-speaking people gather together to praise and worship the Lord Jesus Christ. This activity also offers the church attendees an opportunity to speak English language (as it was observed at the UEA’s chaplaincy/2018): the English language was used to pray, to sing, to welcome visitors and the church members, to praise and worship the Lord God, to preach, to minister at the Lord’s supper, to give a testimony and for announcements.

### 2.1.3. Research centres

Apart from the Language Resource Centre, UEA’s faculties comprise different Research Centres, such as:

Students’ Research Centers	School & Department
Research Center for Medicine Students /Centre de Recherche des Etudiants en Médecine (CREM)	The school of Medicine and Community Health
Research Center for Agronomy Students / Centre de Recherche des Etudiants en Agronomie (C.R.E.A.)	The school of Agronomy and Environment
Cercle de Recherche des Etudiants en Sciences sociales (CRES-UEA)	The school of Social Studies
Center for Statistical and Management Research / Centre de Recherche Statistique et en Gestion <a href="#">[WU2]</a> Economistes Conscients et Unis (ECU)	The school of Economics and Management
Interdisciplinary Research Centers	
Interdisciplinary Center for Ethics Research / Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche en Ethique (CIRE)	The school of Protestant Theology and the Department of Peace and Development;
Institut de Recherches en Statistiques Appliquée (IRSA)	The school of Economics and Management
Centre de Psychotraumatologie et Résilience/Center for Psychotraumatology and Resilience (Still to be created)	The school of Social Studies with two Departments which are: Social Work and Conflict Transformation.

**Source:** UEA’s report to “Education Congo” (2017).

Comment: The table above shows 5 Research Centres run by the students of UEA. There are two Research Centres for those in Economics faculty whereas others have one each, except the faculty of Protestant Theology whose Research Centre (CRETh.) was still a draft. As for the Interdisciplinary Research Centres, three (=CIRE, IRSA and ICART) were operational while the Centre for Psychotraumatology and Resilience is not created yet.



Obviously, two English Clubs were attractive: English Club of Economics students and another one of Agronomy and Environment students. This happens because others should restructure theirs.

## **2.2 Challenges to tackle by UEA in order to efficiently promote the English language**

In order to efficiently promote the English language, challenges to tackle by UEA are notably:

- Teaching English from the first to the last year in all Faculties. This training will help UEA to perfectly meet the Instruction given by the Ministry of Higher Academic and University Education of DR Congo (vide supra introduction).
- This challenge begets another one which requires increasing the number of teachers of English and their salaries.
- Large classes should be divided in small groups of at least 20 students each.
- To start the American Corner as soon as possible.
- UEA should embark on an English Kindergarten School Project to motivate its English learners. This new programme could allow the Congolese to learn English from bottom to top, following the example of French language teaching in the D R Congo
- To seize French language opportunities. As most UEA's learners of English are French speakers at a high rate (90%), they should take advantage of this capacity to develop the English language also. Most bilingual people in French and English admit it is easier to learn the French language before learning the English language than the contrary. Of course, there are more than 30% French words in English. Therefore, seize the opportunities.

## **3. Conclusion**

To sum up, by using methods, human and material instruments as it was examined through this investigation, the English language might be promoted at UEA, which tends to become bilingual. This effort was made through Placement Tests, - by teaching fresh students an Intensive English Course for one month and scientific, academic and practical English for the rest of students, - by organising an English Language Training Centre for the welfare of students and the personnel of the university, - with incentive for students and others to practice English in an English Club, - by freely sharing a lot of various English books with students; - by providing teachers and learners of the English language with audiovisuals, sound amplifiers and the Internet access. These findings meet the writer's hypothesis according to which strategies and instruments are needed to promote the English language in a bilingual university.

Both other methods to cope with challenges faced by UEA trying to promote the English language and constructive remarks should be welcome to improve the quality of this paper.

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