

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF ENGLISH TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF COTE D'IVOIRE

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**Abstract:** Côte d'Ivoire is a Western-Africa country using French as official language. This language is used as the main medium of instruction and interactions. However, currently in the world, English is known as the main international valuable medium of exchange and business. In the world economy, English is recognised as an added-value that has favoured the socio-economic development of countries like China and Pakistan (...). The main purpose of this paper is to conduct an investigation in order to pinpoint how English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may contribute to its socio-economic development. In the trends of this analysis, our focus will be based on the economics of language theory. Resorting to a qualitative data approach to lead this study, the results underscores that English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may be advantageous and contribute to this country's socio-economic development because this global language is endowed with valuable healing assets at social and economic levels.

**Key words :** asset, contribute, development English, promotion, socio-economic.

**Resume :** La Côte d'Ivoire est un pays Ouest-Africain utilisant le français comme langue officielle. Cette langue est utilisée comme principal moyen d'instruction et d'interaction. Cependant, l'anglais est connu comme le principal moyen d'échanges et de business au niveau international. Dans l'économie mondiale, l'anglais est reconnu comme une valeur-ajoutée ayant favorisée le développement économique des pays tels que la Chine et le Pakistan (...). Le principal objectif de cette étude est de mener une investigation en vue de montrer que la promotion de la langue anglaise peut contribuer au développement socio-économique de la Côte d'Ivoire. Cette étude sera basée sur la théorie de l'économie du langage. Recourant aux données de l'approche qualitative pour mener notre étude, il ressort que la promotion de la langue anglaise en Côte d'Ivoire pourrait contribuer au développement socio-économique de ce pays car cette langue est dotée de valeureux atouts au niveau social et économique.

**Mots clés :** Anglais, atouts, contribuer, développement, promotion, socio-économique.



## **Introduction**

Generally speaking, the concept of ‘language’ is not taken into account while dealing with a country’s economic and development realities. For G. P. Djite (2021, p.135), a suitable language promotion and development constitute a link which may result in economic growth and sustainable development. That is why, he sensitises the African developing countries to adapt their language skills to the world common one, through a language policy implementation. This language planning may enable their countries’ graduates to have access to productive employment and decent job opportunities.

Such a goal may be reached by promoting the world current global language which is English. This language should be promoted in most of the African developing countries as achieved in countries like China, Bangladesh and Pakistan in order to foster their countries development. However, what may be the socio-economic advantages of English language promotion implementation in Côte d’Ivoire ?

The main purpose of this investigation is to examine the socio-economic assets that English promotion may favour in Côte d’Ivoire. Accordingly, this work is conducted into three main parts. The first part reviews literature about the link existing between English promotion and development. The second part examines what may be the social assets of English promotion in Côte d’Ivoire and the last one, tackles the economic assets of English promotion in Côte d’Ivoire.

### **I- Link Between English Promotion and Development**

In the world, all the languages have not the same values, some languages are used for ‘lower’ communication while other are used for ‘wider’ one. In other items, a country’s specific local language can be called a lower language because it is only spoken by a single tribe or community while some languages like Spanish, German, French and English are for wider communication because they have speakers in various parts of the world.

With globalisation, a significant link exists between language and a country’s advancement and development. This concept is taking a valuable extent in the world. According to R. Lee (2006, p.3) : ‘‘Globalisation can be generally taken to mean the trend toward a single, integrated and interpreted world. ‘’ It means that globalisation is a movement that favours the worldwide economic and cultural system interconnection. The aim of globalisation is to permit the world interdependence and integration.

W. Zhang and G. Grenier (2012, p.1) underlines that according to the economist Jacob Marschak, the key main features of language are elements such as ‘value, utility, costs and benefits’. These characteristics of language make necessary for any country to adapt its citizens’ linguistic realities to the one of the world dominant language given that, the existence of a valuable relationship between a dominant language and economics appears as an asset that may tremendously contribute to any country’s development.

To lead our investigation, we resorted to the ‘economics of language’ theory. This theory deals with the relationship between ‘economics’ and ‘language’. For J. M. Torres and M. L. Santos (2021, p.3), ‘language economy’ which is also known as the ‘economics of language’ is a field of research in the disciplines of economics. They mention that there is difference between these two notions because ‘economy’ is a human activity while economics is a means of examining human behavior based on the standard economic variables such as interest rates, earnings and prices, or related process including levels of production, consumption, and exchange. This theory investigates the determinant impacts of a specific language proficiency through economics tools

According to that theory, the first source of a community or a country’s economic value is its human capital. This theory underlines that human capital and economics are closely related and can play a key role in a society’s development. As a proof, for W. Zhang and G. Grenier (2012, p.8), a researcher like F.Vaillancourt (1983) stated that the main reason of this theory’s genesis is the fact that researchers noticed that a specific language proficiency may be more beneficial for people in Canada at several levels. They accounted for this viewpoint by stating that in Canada, : ‘’ researchers began to notice that language skill is one of the determinants of earnings, and a great deal of empirical research was done to study wage differentials between Anglophones and Francophones as well as their socio-economic status’.

This assertion underscores that language is a human capital that may favour consistent benefit in earnings for people and a whole country. According to the defenders of this theory, a specific language proficiency may be source of income and socio-economic status improvement for individuals speaking various languages since, a specific language skills proficiency may have positive effects on economic outcomes and allow to evaluate cost-benefits of a specific language choice (F. Grin, 2002).

Since in the world, all the languages have not the same value, the current international dominant language which is also called ‘lingua franca’ is English. This language is known as

a dominant language because it is spoken all over the world. It is the main language used in the domain of diplomacy, science, technology, economy and education. According to G. P. Djite (2021, p.135), the link between language and development constitutes ‘a bridge’ which results in language skills, economic growth and sustainable development. He emphasises that a consistent language for a given country represents a valuable human resource that can allow people in that country to communicate and interact with the outside world. It is the reason leading H. Coleman’s (2010) to underline that these contacts and exchanges may be valuable for any developing country at the level of tourism, employability, international education opportunities and migration. All these advantages drawn from language, show that human activities depend largely on the use of relevant medium of communication between human-beings.

Language is one of the main nexus of development because a strong link exists between ‘linguistic capital’ and ‘human capital’ (M. R. Moninoor, 2018, p.3). That is why, numerous countries in the world have focused on promoting the dominant languages that can contribute to their socio-economic development. Thus, the language policy or planning implemented in countries like : Rwanda, China, Japan, Bangladesh and Puerto Rico Island (...) have resorted to the choice of English as a main medium of international communication and interaction.

For R. Fasold (1987, p.246): “Language planning is usually seen as an explicit choice among alternatives. This in turn, implies an evaluation of alternatives with the one that is chosen having been evaluated as the best”. A language policy or planning is also conducted to allow all the people from various native languages in a multilingual country to communicate or interact with the others in their country and in the world.

B. R. Chiswick (2008, p.4) corroborates this viewpoint by adding that the choice of an appropriate language, that is a common<sup>1</sup> and international language of wider communication is a valuable economic tool for a country’s growth. Such a language appears as beneficial for individuals and a whole country because it is an important ‘human capital’ which represents a precious resource that is essential for a country’s sustainable, harmonious and coherent development.

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<sup>1</sup> Common language : is a language which is used by almost all the countries in the world.



Moreover, the English language enormously impacted the development of foreign nations considering its relevant economic value. As the main language of the world, English is the language used in various countries mainly in global trading and global relation for exchanges at economic, diplomatic and educational levels. This language is known in the world as the suitable language with various economic value.

To be linked to the frame of this research study, through English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire, the English skill addition to the French official one may allow this country's citizens or graduates to easily interact or succeed in exchanging with the world other countries through a common language and favour a multiplication factor in global trading, economy, diplomacy and education.

Furthermore, this language skills' promotion may contribute to the socio-economic development of this country, since for D. Crystal (2003, p.5), English is known as the current "dominant language" in the world because English is the powerful and skilful language at cultural, economic and technological levels. This language is for him the language par excellence of intercontinental communication in the service of globalisation.

Further research were conducted to show English value in the world, however, no research pinpointed whether English promotion may contribute to a multilingual French-speaking country like Côte d'Ivoire's social and economic development or not. That is why, our investigation main objective is to check whether English promotion may be source of socio-economic development in a multilingual and French-speaking country like Côte d'Ivoire.

Before tackling this investigation, it is worth mentioning that the data of this study were collected through a qualitative research approach. This qualitative method of data collection is mainly based on documentary research and interviews with Ivorian participants. The main goal of this qualitative research is to select the suitable variables in order to underscore the importance of English current promotion in Côte d'Ivoire at social and economic levels.

## **II- Social Assets of English Promotion in Côte d'Ivoire**

At social level, English skills' promotion through a language planning may appear as a social asset for Ivorian graduates and their whole country. This language promotion in this country may allow to solve numerous social troubles like the 'high rate of unemployment' preventing the development of Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, according to some governmental



agencies and ministries of Côte d'Ivoire that we met during survey, this language proficiency is a necessary tool that the Ivorian should acquire so as to allow their whole country to succeed in attracting more new international investors in the country because their skills for the linguistic barriers may be improved, given that English is the current global language of communication.

In addition, interviews with some human resource managers during a seminar organised by the human resources managers allowed us to have their viewpoint about whether English promotion may be valuable in Côte d'Ivoire. From interviews with them, one may retain that most of the human resource managers think that English promotion in this country could allow the country's graduates to benefit from job opportunities in the country and be better-paid than other workers not proficient in English. In that respect, they mentioned that they prefer recruiting graduates from polytechnic and vocational higher education institutions (like INP-HB<sup>2</sup>, ENSEA<sup>3</sup>) where most of graduates benefit from a better training in English in addition to French. They also mentioned that this practical training provided in these higher education institutions is adapted to the companies' management and makes easier their integration in any company in Côte d'Ivoire and all over the world. Accordingly, English promotion through a language planning in Côte d'Ivoire may allow numerous graduates in Côte d'Ivoire to benefit from job opportunities not only in the country, but also in the world.

Moreover, English promotion allowed numerous countries to benefit from international investments by favouring significant resources for these countries' economic activities development. As evidence, a report of Euromonitor International (2010, p.8) states that a world well-known company such as 'Microsoft' judged a country like 'Pakistan' suitable to 'offer a more attractive business environment than many other countries' because of English proficiency's advantages in this country. If this country benefited from investment of an international companies like 'Microsoft', English promotion may allow a French-speaking country like Côte d'Ivoire to profit from various advantageous investments from other international companies like 'Microsoft'. These investments may be relevant for this multilingual French-speaking country and favour its socio-economic development.

This contribution points out English as a valuable asset that may permit Côte d'Ivoire to benefit from the opportunity to attract more foreign investors and increase this country's

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<sup>2</sup> INP-HB is a country's National Polytechnic Institute Houphouët Boigny.

<sup>3</sup> ENSEA : National Institute of Statistics and Applied Economy.



economic growth by enhancing business and trade cooperation with other developed countries. As a consequence, this country's graduates will succeed in benefiting from several job opportunities all over the world. This situation may allow the Ivorian country to solve the crucial problem of unemployment that the country is currently facing.

By the same token, English is known as relevant dominant global language in the world. This language is considered as a significant prerequisite for individual success in their society. It is a so crucial socio-economic tool for a country's evolution, D. Graddol (2010, p.110) underlines that English promotion's completion may be a powerful social and economic asset for a multilingual country like Côte d'Ivoire, since;

In multilingual countries like India, a language policy is almost always a contest about power and identity, not just an issue about which forms of education are most effective from an economic or pedagogic point of view. Decisions about the medium of instruction, and which languages are taught, provide an important gatekeeping mechanism-determining who gains access to the best jobs and to the future cultural, Economic and political power.

This assertion pinpoints that English promotion may be a key element of any country's welfare. In the case of India, the choice of the global best medium of interaction represents an access to cultural, economic and political advantages. This statement of Graddol portrays English importance in people's life; this situation shows through India that English promotion may be advantageous in any other country. It attests that this language promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may represent a suitable valuable asset for this country's social development because it may contribute to this country's citizens social welfare..

By the same token, according Euromonitor (2010, p.78) , English promotion in Rwanda provided this country the opportunity to create a modified national identity that contributed in eliminating local languages ethnicity troubles and inserted Rwanda into the global market. This language promotion in Rwanda has really permitted Rwanda to become a member of the Commonwealth. This situation contributed to reinforce this country's unity given that this country's rulers have managed so as to be always suitable with the world international rules that turn around democracy and stability. English language promotion in this country has contributed to its people social life improvement.

This situation in Rwanda attests that English language promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may also contribute to this multilingual country's social unity because it may allow this country's people to be proficient in both French and English global languages. These international





language of wider communication skills acquisition may contribute to Ivorian's unity because they may eliminate their local languages social and political troubles like in Rwanda.

In short, considering the benefits of English global language promotion in various other countries of the world at social level, such a language promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may be advantageous for this multilingual developing country at social level. This bilingual status may allow them to benefit from more job opportunities in the country and in the world. Such a situation may permit them to benefit from more job opportunities in order to decrease the high-rate of jobless in Cote d'Ivoire. If the rate of jobless impediment is reduced in the country, more Ivorian citizens' daily life will be improved. English promotion may also be advantageous in this country at social level because it may favour the country's unity like in Rwanda. This situation may tremendously contribute to this country's citizens welfare and enhance these new bilingual French-English speakers' self-esteem and respect. Apart from the social level, one of the main assets of English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may be at economic level.

### **III- Economic Assets of English Promotion in Côte d'Ivoire**

Currently in the world, the English dominant and global language is known as a valuable language that has been source of several countries economic assets leading to these countries' sustainable development. Accordingly, this language promotion through a language planning in Côte d'Ivoire may be relevant for this country's economic development. This viewpoint is expressed by most of the higher education institutions' teachers taking part to our survey. Indeed, they accounted for their standpoint by mentioning that the current global language of the world is English. In that respect, this specific international language promotion may allow Ivorian graduates to become bilingual French-English speakers. This status may allow this country's diplomats to fluently and harmoniously interact with other countries' authorities in the world. They may personally succeed in exchanging with them and convincing them to invest in Côte d'Ivoire, since the lack of English skills that compelled them to only interact with other business partners through interpreter will be solved

In that respect, The English global language promotion is portrayed by most of the country's higher education teachers taking part to our survey as a powerful resource for this country's economic development. It may be source of economic development to the extent that the English skill's promotion may enable most of Ivorian graduates to become French-English bilingual. This global language proficiency may be advantageous for this country's



development because this language is a ‘treasure’ ( J. M. Torres and M. L. Santos (2021, p.2). They share this standpoint since for them, English proficiency’s promotion may represent an economic added-value for economic any country’s development.

By the same token, taking into account English global language value, F. Grin (2002, p.30) revealed that English language skill promotion is a gainful investment for any country. This reality of English made him underline that any country aiming at benefiting from the current world economic advantages at many levels should manage so that their citizens be proficient in English through a language policy implementation. This language proficiency’s development is a powerful investment that he pointed out as source of several economic resources by stating:

English language skills are correlated to other determinant of income, particularly education, and that higher earnings accruing to those who speak English may simply reflect the fact that, having a higher education, they can hold better paying jobs and this may have nothing competence to do with the fact that they have some competence in English. F. Grin (2002, p.30)

This assertion of Grin pinpoints English relevance at economic level for any country. It underscores that if Ivorian graduates are proficient in English, they could benefit from more job opportunities that may be ‘better’ paid. This conception of English proficiency’s assets is shared by the higher education teachers and the human resources managers of Côte d’Ivoire who participated in our survey. In fact, they mentioned that English skills development may be advantageous in this country, given that this language promotion may allow the country’s authorities to achieve more business communication with others developed countries in order to benefit from more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

In addition, they think that English proficiency’s promotion in Côte d’Ivoire may contribute to this multilingual French-speaking country’s growth because English skill acquisition in Côte d’Ivoire could contribute to empower business in this country and allow its economic development. As evidence, they sustained that English language proficiency may be an added-value for Ivorian graduates given that it may provide them with gainful opportunities such as jobs, position and better paid salary in the country and in other countries in the world. These advantages could contribute to this country’s economic growth given that it may favour the decrease of poverty’s rate in the country.

Moreover, this language is so relevant that P. Plonski et al. (2013, p.3) sensitise the African developing countries like Côte d’Ivoire about this global language promotion in their



country because English language is so important at business level, the Harvard Business Review states that English is ‘‘the global language of business.’’ This assertion of P.Plonski (2013) shows that English has been adopted in the world as the language of the global business, so it may be a valuable asset for any country’s economic perspectives.

English is the suitable language that any developing country may adopt in order to take part in the global marketplace competition. Such a necessity may allow this country to negotiate, promote and plan business achievement in their country. English in business is a meaningful economic variable. This language is so relevant at this level, D. Crystal (2003) presents English as an indispensable business asset which is used as main medium of communication by about ‘85%’ of the world international organisations. This may account for the reason why numerous countries in the world are currently implementing this language promotion through a language planning in their country.

English proficiency appears as the current dominant language for any community. Thus, for H. Coleman (2010), there is a meaningful link between the English language proficiency and any country's economic growth. English use as means of interaction appears as benefit resources for any country, since this global language may enable any country to increase its economics by allowing this country to exchange and succeed in communicating with other people from different boundaries. This exchange may allow a country like Côte d’Ivoire to make business negotiation with buyers and suppliers all over the world. This situation could permit this country’s companies and authorities to have the opportunity to negotiate their agricultural resources like coffee and cocoa price with more partners in the world.

Furthermore, the English global language is a so known as a powerful economic tool in the world, this language is the one selected in bilateral trading as the main working means of communication in the European Union (EU). This language adoption as a common second language in European Union has been achieved in order to make easier the mobility of goods and people in the Euro-zone (D. Crystal, 2017). Thanks to the economics value of English language, the European Union discovered that English adoption as second medium of interaction appears as a relevant human capital investment given that, this language use for interaction in business may allow people to easily be in touch with the world dominant market labor. It underscores that English promotion in Côte d’Ivoire may allow this country to easily exchange with other countries at economic level because the French-English bilingual status may increase this country’s human capital level.

Besides, Globalisation has led many countries in the world to implement strategies to improve and adapt their competitiveness to the global economy's environment. These strategies have been planned by some countries' rulers in order to permit their country to face the world business marketisation, corporatisation, commercialisation and privatisation. All these strategies related to globalisation achievement have been possible thanks to the adoption of a specific education system. The process of globalisation has got a serious impact on several countries of the world educational system. It has permitted countries like China, Japan and Australia to maintain and adapt their country's national competitiveness to the global marketplaces through the improvement of their countries' economic competitive systems. It attests that English skills promotion in Côte d'Ivoire could also improve this country's economic system competitiveness.

In the world, English promotion is a requirement for any country wishing to have access to the world marketplace and business because this language may allow the country to benefit from economic asset to the extent that for F. Grin (2002, p.37) English is known in the world as the language source of valuable labour market. F. Grin (2002) shows the correlation coefficient between the English language skills and salary's income in Switzerland (1994/95). His investigation pinpoints that a significant relationship exists between English language proficiency and earnings difference in Switzerland. Actually, he stated that English competence permits people in this country to benefit from more income benefit than people who are not proficient in English. This situation attests that English proficiency may allow Ivorian graduates to profit of better-paying job opportunities and favour this country's growth. It testifies that English language promotion may be also source of a French-speaking country like Côte d'Ivoire economic prosperity of individuals and favour its whole country's development.

### **Conclusion**

This study led a sociolinguistic investigation in order to examine the contribution of English promotion to the socio-economic development of Cote d'Ivoire. Our investigation made us discover that English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may be relevant in this multilingual country because this global language is endowed with valuable social and economic assets that may favour this country's development.

This research study's findings underscored that English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire through a language policy implementation may allow this country's graduates to acquire the

status of bilingual French-English speakers and permit this country to benefit from various economic investment that could contribute to decrease the high rate of jobless in the country and favour its growth at the socio-economic level. Hence, English language needs to be used as second medium of instruction in this country's higher education institutions so as to promote this relevant language.

The tentative outcome of this study may eventually contribute to understand why English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may be beneficial for this multilingual French-speaking country. Thus, we hope that this study aiming at investigating English promotion in Côte d'Ivoire may serve as an invaluable reference for further research in the economics of language.

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