

Re-Engineering the Importance of French Language to Diplomatic Practices and International Relations

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Abstract: *This study examined the, relevance and connection of the French language to the practice of diplomacy and international relations. It has been argued severally that French Language seems not only an instrument of communication but part of the very essence of diplomacy. The reason for this assertion is not far-fetched; it was adduced that diplomats engage in negotiations, persuasion, presentation and communications, all of which necessitates language skills for the effective conduct of diplomatic works. French Language is one of the languages that is used to achieve the vital needs in diplomacy, likewise its antecedents in the world of diplomacy in the past and present day. Therefore, this study essentially argues that the French language remains relevant for the conduct of the relations generally and the necessity of its study by the students of Arts and Language Education, Language and Literary Studies and History and International Studies. Some of the major points highlighted in this work include origin of French language and its growth; History of Diplomacy and International Relations - Growth and Relevance; The Relevance and Interconnectedness of the Language and Diplomatic Practices and the Relevance of the Study of the French language to students of International Relations. In conclusion, the use of French laid emphasises on how beneficial it is to foster understanding and cooperation in this international community. The work further recommended that it is necessary for students to learn and understand French language so that they can function well in the global world.*

Keywords: diplomacy, French language, history and international relations, interconnectedness, relevance

INTRODUCTION

The major way our people express themselves is through language. Human beings distinguished themselves from other animals through language and humans are able to communicate and express their emotions within cultural standards both in written and spoken. French fulfills all the roles that human languages do, including those of communication, interaction, diplomacy, and information. Language is also an essential tool or method for comprehending concepts, feelings, and experiences. The nation's sustainable human development is positively impacted by these functions. The term “language of diplomacy” can be interpreted in several ways. It is not a simple tool but it is a vehicle for transmission of thoughts, or instrument of communication. French Language, being the second most widely used Language in the world after English, has left people with no choice than to study it; due to its importance, which cannot be under-emphasized.

Indeed, individual’s knowledge of French language will really help in other disciplines and fields of academic endeavour, among which is diplomacy and international relations. In the world of today, which is more or less a global village, Onyemeluke and Karo (2020) opine that bilingualism is the ability to speak or write more than one foreign language which has become a great asset for individuals especially millennials of today. Multilingualism or polyglotism makes room for easier and better communication with others in the ecosystem as well as the realization of individual and professional goals within and outside the person's country of abode. Being able to speak more than one foreign language cannot be over-emphasized for Nigerians; considering that Nigeria with her 514 native languages make it a multilingual country apart from 7 immigrant languages, among which are English and French.

In the same vein with the above assertion, Sala and Posner (2023) assert that French language is the most internationally significant Romance language in the world. They continue by saying that at the beginning of the 21st century, French is an official language for many African countries; more than 25 countries speak French as their official language. In France and Corsica, about 60 million individuals use it as their first language, in Canada more than 7.3 million, in Belgium more than 3.9 million, in Switzerland, more than 1.8 million, in Monaco, some 80,000, in Italy; some 100,000, and in the United States (especially Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont) some 1.3 million (Purevdorj, 2020).

Proficiency in the French language is essential for promoting effective international relations. “In international relations and diplomacy, Saliu (2015) asserts that, French is an important language. It is the official language of 32 states and governments, including many African states. It is the working language of many multilateral organisations including the United Nations and the European Union. Closer to home, the African Union and the South African Development Community, among others, have adopted French as both official language and working language.”

Furthermore, more than 49 million Africans in such countries as Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Kinshasa), Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, and Tunisia. French is their first or second language and millions of inhabitants of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia use it as her principal international language. Many creole French speakers too use standard French in formal situations. The above exposition shows that beyond reasonable doubt, French language is very important and pivotal to international relations among various people worldwide.

Historical Roots of French Language in Worldwide Diplomacy

By the 13th century French language started to gain popularity and was widely spoken across Europe (Akinterinwa, 2013). In order to increase their riches and social standing many people decided to learn the language because they believed it to be sophisticated and connected to high society. French, was used for diplomatic purposes between various nations, it was the most widely spoken language in Europe by the middle of the 14th century. Both French and English nationalism were impacted by the Hundred Years' War, which ended in the year 1453. French remained the language of diplomacy throughout Europe, even after English authorities attempted to outlaw it.

In the year 1539, the Villers-Cotterels law mandated that all administrative records in France must be in French language (Bély, 2016). It was declared the nation's official language by this decree. It became global language among the few nations and people across the world started learning French. French became a lingua franca, language that transcends the bounds of its speakers' community; it becomes widely used for communication among groups that now speak the same language. French emerged as the global language of diplomacy and international relations by the 17th century. The language of international relations and diplomacy and nations' political representatives from all over the world have attempted to learn and speak it.

Diplomacy, according to Marks and Freeman (2023) is the established method of influencing the decisions and behaviour of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation and other measures short of war or violence. The conduct of formal, typically bilateral, relations between sovereign states is known as diplomacy. The diplomatic methods that were used in Europe had spread around the globe by the 20th century. Diplomacy had grown to include parliamentary diplomacy, summit meetings and other international conferences, the international operations of supranational and subnational organizations, unofficial diplomacy by non-governmental organizations, and the work of international civil servants.

Diplomacy is the strategy used by nations to employ non-violent means like communication and negotiation to sway the decisions of other states. Although diplomatic activities are overseen by the country, they represent and implemented by the country's ambassadors overseas. It involves proficiently handling a person or difficult situation in a way that finds a peaceful resolution without

upsetting or offending anyone. It is the art and practice of engaging in dialogues between nations, organizations, or individuals using various techniques in order to affect the choices, actions, and events of the international system. Its goal is to prevent a state of war or violence and to strengthening global peace and stability.

Ziegler (2023) defines Diplomacy as the art and practice of negotiation and conducting dialogues through different measures between states, groups, or people to influence international decisions, events, and behaviours. It is compulsory to promote peace among nations and avoid a state of war or violence. Diplomacy is the strategy used by nations to employ non-violent means like communication and negotiation to sway the decisions of other states. Although diplomatic activities are overseen by the country they represent and implemented by the country's ambassadors overseas. It involves proficiently handling a person or difficult situation in a way that finds a peaceful resolution without upsetting or offending anyone.

It is the art and practice of engaging in dialogues between nations, organizations, or individuals using various techniques in order to affect the choices, actions, and events of the international system. Its goal is to prevent a state of war or violence and to strengthening global peace and stability. According to Ziegler, diplomacy is the process of running international relations through dialogue and negotiation in order to enhance constructive relations between states. This has changed from a system of transform deals and conspiracies under monarchical authority to a transparent democracy and a confusing array of domestic and international politics. It secures a cooperative agreement in which each party's interests are treated in the best possible way.

Examining Diplomacy Typologies and their Interconnectedness to French Language

Diplomacy can be classified into categories and practices. These are some of the various forms of diplomacy:

Formal Diplomacy: Formal diplomacy is the official and formal channels of communication and negotiation between governments and other actors in the international system. It is usually carried out by professional diplomats and usually entails the use of embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic offices

Cultural Diplomacy: Cultural diplomacy comprises of various activities, such as the interchange of arts and culture with the goal of promoting mutual understanding between nations. They open libraries overseas, they provide language instruction, and award educational scholarships. These are few excellent instances of cultural diplomacy. Through enhancing a nation's reputation and promoting cultural ties, such actions help reducing conflicts between nations. By the means of diplomacy, secondary school students who studied French or post-graduate students who offered French have the opportunity by providing educational scholarships for them to continue their language studies.

Economic Diplomacy: It involves any kind of diplomacy that makes the economy to grow progressively and make the countries to succeed. This is an important part of international relations that is related to trade, investments and taxation. Trade is an essential part of international relations and French is an important business that requires sensitive handling in international relations. Money is a form of economic diplomacy that is used to demonstrate power to support a struggling nation in which foreign aid is provided. The opportunity to provide financial assistance to nations during natural catastrophe or conflict show other countries that some nations have the resources to defend herself from any unforeseen problems; to accomplish this, an interpreter is needed to facilitate French-language dialogue.

Dollar Diplomacy: Dollar diplomacy is an essential feature of diplomacy. This is very important for monetary gain and for this; the foreign affairs should be influenced.

Cyber Diplomacy: The use of electronic communication and technology for the advancement of diplomacy and foreign affairs is known as cyber diplomacy. It involves the use of technological tools such as: social media, websites, other online platforms to conduct diplomatic debates, develop connections, and advance global collaboration. Global provocations like data privacy, cyber security, and digital infrastructure can be solved through cyber diplomacy.

Public Diplomacy: Public diplomacy is one of the strategies used to communicate directly and openly with the press and other countries. It is of two types: branding and advocacy. Branding involves promotion of positive image of the country to the press and foreign nations and projection of ideas about the history of the country, culture and foreign policy in to make it look attractive. Positive branding is a reactive strategy to find solution to unfavourable stereotypes, particularly if a country has received negative publicity. Advocacy can be public strategies with specific goals. It succeeds in presenting a nation as worthy to the general public and other nations. Cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy have many similarities because having an excellent culture, music or art as a component of the country's branding; it enhances the nation's image to the outside world. (Arcana and Laksman-Huntley 2020)

Importance of French Language in diplomacy and International Relations

In the 17th century, preeminence of the Louis XIV (the sun king) consolidated the position of French. It became the language used for international communication. Government started to refer to it as the language of Diplomacy throughout the world. Its strict rules of syntax and its vocabulary supervised by the Academie Francaise allured speakers to produce discusses that were both precise and accurate. It took over the role of international language for diplomacy and plays important role in international relations. Presently, it is one of the United Nations official languages and it is the official language of many countries of the world (Fregonese and Sakai 2021).

Diplomacy is very important in international relations. It takes care of the interests of individual countries or governments and the result is having a more peaceful international community. Diplomatic activities maximize the position and power of different countries without bringing intense risk or repercussions, and this is the safest way to handle international business and relationships. Even though diplomacy cannot always satisfy friendships between countries, it can at least usually guarantee neutrality over hostility. According to Brown and Ainley (2005), International Relations means that the diplomatic-strategic relations of states, and the characteristic focus of International Relations is on the issues of war, peace, conflict and cooperation while others see international relations as being about cross-border transactions of all kinds, political, economic and social. International Relations is likely to study trade negotiations or the operation of non-state institutions such as Amnesty. International Relations as it is; talks about conventional peace and talks on the workings of the United Nations (UN).

Charles and Robert (2022) explain that International Relations is the study of the relationship of states with each other and with international organisations and certain sub-national entities (bureaucracies, political parties, and interest groups) It is related to a number of other academic discipline including political science, geography, history, economics, law, sociology, psychology, and philosophy.

French Vocabularies in Diplomacy and International Relations

French vocabularies are used in diplomatic discourse; French Language of diplomacy in the history of the hundred years of waging war, which ended in 1453, had an effect on both French and English nationalism. Stein Smith, (2023) opines that; most of these French vocabularies that were spoken; have been anglicized in the pronunciation of the words, certain words (mainly related to diplomatic titles) keep the same spelling. The titles and order of rank specify three (3) classes of heads of missions:

French

- Ambassadeurs
- Envoyés, ministers
- Chargés d'affaires (Chargés d'affaires accredited to ministers of foreign affairs)

English

- (Ambassadors)
- Envoys, ministers

The heads of missions are designated in English by the French words; ambassador, envoy and chargés d'affaires. The generic term diplomat is, of course, also French in origin (from diplomate). Just like the vocabulary of warfare and the military, vocabulary of diplomacy includes many words and expressions of French origin. This list defines words adopted directly from French into diplomatic discourse now dominated by English. (Sargsyan, 2023)

A

French

- Une ambassade
- Un ambassadeur, une ambassadrice

English

- Embassy
- Ambassador

• Un(e) attaché(e)commercial	Commercial Attaché
• Un(e) attaché(e)culturel :	Cultural Attaché
• Un(e) attaché(e)militaire :	Military Attaché
• Un allié :	an ally
• Un aide-mémoire :	Memory aid
• Un acte final :	Final act
• Une alliance :	Alliance
• Un adversaire :	Adversary
• Bilatéral :	Bilateral
B	
• Un(e) chargé(e) d'affaire, chargé d'affaires	Responsible Business
• Un consul :	Consul
• Un consulat :	Consulate
• Une conférence :	A conference
• Coopérer :	To cooperate
• Une conspiration :	Conspiracy
• La chancellerie :	Chancery
• Un communiqué :	Communiqué
• Une collaboration :	A collaboration
C	
• La défiance :	Defiance
• Diplomatie :	Diplomatic
• La diplomatie :	Diplomacy
• Un/e diplomate :	A diplomat
• Un(e) dissident(e) :	A dissident
• Une détente: (a relaxation of tension between nations)	A detente
D	
• L'espionnage :	Espionage
• Un/une envoyé(e) :	An Envoy
• Un embargo :	An Embargo
• Un émissaire :	An Emissary
• Une force majeure: (compulsion or coercion by circumstances, which one cannot control)	A major force
• La géopolitique :	Geopolitics
E	
• Une immunité diplomatique :	Diplomatic immunity
• Une impasse :	An impasse
• Intervenir :	To intervene
• L'inviolabilité :	Inviolability
• Une mission :	A mission

• Un ministre :	A minister
• Une nation :	A nation
• La négociation :	A negotiation
• Un négociateur :	A negotiator
• Négocier :	To negotiate
• La neutralité :	Neutrality
F	
• Le protocol:	Protocol
• Un pacte:	A Pact
• Proclamer :	To Proclaim
• Un rapprochement:	A Rapprochement
(A reestablishing of cordial relations, as between two countries.)	
• Un rapporteur :	A Reporter
• Une ratification :	A Ratification
• Un rapprochement: a reconciliation of interests of rival states after a period of estrangement	
• Ratifier :	To Ratify
G	
• Un souverain :	A sovereign
• Un sommet :	A summit
• Stipuler :	To stipulate
• Le service diplomatique :	Diplomatic service
• Les services secrets :	Secret services
• La surveillance :	Surveillance
• Un traité:	A treaty
• Un territoire :	A territory
• Une table ronde :	A round table
• Unilatéral :	Unilateral
• Un ultimatum :	Ultimatum
• Un veto :	Veto

It is also discerned through the resemblance of these words, that the French language specializes particularly in the field of diplomacy (Praher, 2014). Thus, the language teaching focuses on the area of International Relations. The French lessons for the diplomats are designed for representatives of international organizations and embassies, whose responsibilities involve effective engagement in diplomacy and international relations. More importantly; Hourquebie, (2023) says, the objectives of both French language and specialization in Diplomacy prepare the students to: acquire the specific vocabulary necessary for political and international relations field, understand formal speech; speak in highly formal speech, develop proficiency in major protocol and diplomatic rules and customs; reading and writing

diplomatic documents, prepare internal examinations from the Embassy and Represent, inform and protect.

French

English

Political Regime

la présidentielle
le socialism
referendum
un Parlement
un régime
un scrutiny
un suffrage
une Assemblée
une Constitution
une démocratie
une dictature
une dynastie
une élection
une monarchie
une République
une souveraineté
une tyrannie

The presidential election

Socialism
Referendum
A parliament
A regime
A vote
Suffrage
An Assembly
A constitution
A democracy
A dictatorship
A dynasty
An election
A monarchy
A republic
Sovereignty
Tyranny

War

des décombres
evacuer
nucléaire
un abri
un affrontement
un armistice
un arsenal
un assailant
un camp
un campement

Rubble
To evacuate
Nuclear
A shelter
A clash
An armistice
An arsenal
An assailant
A camp
A campsite

International Relations

international, international
national, nationale
s'engager

International
National
To get involved

un accord	An agreement
un chef, une cheffe d'État	Head of state
un convoy	Convoy
un discours	Speech
démocrate	Democratic
electoral	Electoral
élire	To elect
l'opposition	Opposition
la présidentielle	The presidential election
le Sénat	Senate
réélire	To reelect
referendum	Referendum

Re-engineering the Importance of French Language to Diplomacy

In essence, Fawole, (2016) highlights some points that scholars of History and International Relations require not just the basic knowledge of the French Language to excel in their professional callings but that it will also enhance their profiles and open up new vistas and opportunities for them as they graduate into the society. By having the opportunities of getting jobs in the Diplomatic circles, Embassies, United Nations, Agencies, such as: the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Court of Justice (ICT) the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organisation (WHO) or the World Bank. The ability to speak French will take them to greater heights of attainments and functionalism.

More importantly, it will give them variety of career choices in large organisations. This is because French is spoken in over 30 countries with a significant presence in Africa, the Caribbean and Europe. The linguistic and Cultural significance of the French language extends to other International Organisations such as the European Union, the International Olympic Committee, and several International Cooperation Programmes. French emerged as the lingua Franca of European diplomacy in the 17th century replacing Latin, due to France's political and cultural standing at that period (Lafenwa, 2016). If some of these students become businesspersons, the French language will be prominent for International business. It will open up many business opportunities to them in Paris, Francophone countries and far beyond their expectations, this will mean that they can combine both the English and French languages to their advantages and this will help them in disassociating themselves from anti-corruption struggle in our civil society and Nigeria as a whole.

Another important reason for re-engineering the language stems from the fact that French culture and history are deeply intertwined with International relations making language proficiency

essential for diplomatic understanding. This also goes to re-emphasize the career prospects in International Relations, diplomacy and global organisation. Learning French further provides students and scholars with improved cognitive skills and enhancing critical thinking, problem solving and improved analytical skills in addition to that general knowledge. Indeed, it must be emphasized that the knowledge of French language may even surpass the Arts and humanities and would be useful for Science Students as doctors, Nurses and Engineers because of the enhancement it can always bring to their career prospects in terms of geographical stretch and international exposure.

Therefore, re-engineering French language acquisition is an essential tool for effective communication, cultural understanding and practical applications in international relations. Even as some students find it difficult to cope with the requirement of proficiency in French language, those who aspire to gain the mastery of the language stands to be career leaders and future stakeholders in the administration and management of International Diplomacy of the World's most important organisations.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made by this work to examine the relevance, relationship and the historical origins of the interconnectedness of the French Language to Diplomatic practices and international relations. French remains an important language in many international organizations, serving as a key tool for communication and collaboration. This widespread use of French across various international platforms highlights its ongoing relevance and importance in fostering global communication and collaboration. It complements other languages to promote clear and inclusive communication. The use of French language highlights its value in encouraging collaboration and understanding in a connected world. French has long been synonymous with diplomacy, earning its place as one of the key languages in international relations. Its historical prominence, precision, and cultural influence have made it a cornerstone of global diplomacy. By this, it is necessary for students to learn and understand French language so that they can function well in the global world.

Recommendations

Given the research outcome, this study makes the following recommendation to enhance students' productivity and interest. Firstly, students must understand that Studying French is highly necessary for their future survival as diplomats. Secondly, lecturers of the French language should endeavour to teach French with simplicity and through other learning instrumentality. Finally, students studying History, Economics, Arts and language Education, International Relations and Diplomacy, should crave indulgence and interest in the French Language, as it remains the key language used in many international organizations, including the United Nations, NATO, the European Union, and UNESCO, making it crucial for effective communication and engagement in global affairs.

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