



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to:

✧ The Lord Almighty for His protection and His inspiration.

✧ My father, my mother and all my friends for all their support.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The achievement of the present work would not have been possible without the support of people I would like to thank very much here.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The modern world is overwhelmed by deep movements of economic development. More and more, nations are bound with relations of economic cooperation. In this process of modernization, international institutions and organizations spread and multiply. The same way, languages are subject to technological and industrial pressures and demands throughout the world. In West Africa especially, the languages of the former colonial masters continue to play important roles.

Indeed, the twentieth century favours a faster influence of English on the overall economic world. Here and there, it is becoming strongly the vehicle of communication in commercial activities; such is for instance the present day situation of our country despite the official use of French.

Actually, the Republic of Benin is a French-speaking West African country bounded in the South by the Atlantic Ocean; in the North by the Republic of Burkina Faso and the Republic of Niger; in the West by the Republic of Togo and in the East by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Apart from Porto-Novo its capital city, Benin has other important cities among which we have Cotonou, the commercial centre records the bulk of the economic activities.

Formerly, English was very little used as a means of communication inside Benin. In fact, apart from the diplomatic community, the international agencies and a small number of foreign English-speaking expatriates, the use of English was confined to teachers of English and University students of English.

Today, English remains the principal foreign language studied. Moreover, its use is steadily increasing in communication and business thanks to the new role assigned to the language in general and to the developing commercial relations Nigeria, which is an English-speaking country has with Benin in particular.

Indeed, an up growing consideration is being given to the language in the commercial field; that is why I have chosen to study how it serves people in this arena especially in Cotonou, the cosmopolitan city of the country. Obviously, it cannot be fair to examine rightly the detailed aspects of the topic without resorting to a number of useful data. From this point of view, the dissertation will cover four main chapters:

- Chapter one is about the early linguistic situation of Benin before the arrival of "foreign invaders" and the integration of the English language with its steady influence up to now. In this part, reference will be made to the factors which favour the " birth" and the spread of this language in Benin.
- Chapter two presents the effective use of English at different levels of commercial transactions in Cotonou and makes an assessment of the whole situation.
- Chapter three suggests that people be taught English, but for specific purposes as a result of the various areas of activities it is needed for.
- Chapter four considers the necessity to learn formal commercial English because of the increasing place of the language in international trade.

The above presentation sums up the outstanding points to be developed in the dissertation. Undoubtedly, I would like my work to satisfy the deepest expectations of my readers, but the multiple difficulties to which I had been faced during my investigations may limit my chances of reaching this objective.

# **CHAPTER ONE: THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN (EX DAHOMEY) BEFORE AND AFTER THE COLONIAL PERIOD**

## **1-1-MULTILINGUALISM IN PRE-CONQUEST DAYS**

Multilingualism results from a diversity of linguistic groups in a country. Broadly defined, this concept includes not only the national languages of a given country but also all other linguistic elements which it receives from various foreign sources. Otherwise, it is impossible to understand multilingualism fully without understanding something of the historical patterns that lead to its existence. Among others, some of those patterns are: migrations, colonialism and border area problems.

Virtually, each of these factors and their associated consequences contribute greatly to a multilingual society. It seems then obvious that a multilingual country is the efficient result of the step by step settlements of its multiple socio-linguistic groups.

Thus, a more or less appropriate meaning of the phenomenon of multilingualism in Benin should be viewed with those data. But here, the term will not be taken so widely. It has to be limited to the pre-conquest days. Now, one cannot deal with language without referring to its speakers. That is why, before I consider properly the linguistic situation of Benin in pre-conquest days, I think it is necessary to bring out the progressive migrations of the earlier people and the successive stages of their settlements and detailed accounts will be left out as an outline story of this period.

To a wide extent, the period lying roughly from the origins of Dahomey (now Benin) until the nineteenth century can be regarded as the pre-conquest period. In many ways, it has been characterized by massive movements of people from diverse horizons either for social reasons (tribal wars, dynastic quarrels, diseases...) or economic factors (research of fertile lands for agriculture, hunting, fishing, etc). There still exist divergent views on the exact origins of those immigrants; nevertheless much is said about the diversity of their sources, the multiplicity of their socio-cultural groups as well as the heterogeneous nature of their languages. In this respect, two types of migrations will be considered.

The first one concerns people who migrated on "virgin" lands once inhabited in remote times.

The second one consists of peoples who expanded their former territories by moving into contiguous areas where they take control over socio-cultural groups already established there.

On the basis of the former type of migration, historians made suppositions about the existence of "so-called native" people in the Northern and Southern parts of Benin. Explicitly, they were taken as landowners namely the very first occupants. On this score, three important linguistic groups are distinguished in the North:Paragourma, Mossi, Groussi whereas in the South, there are the Aja-Ewe and the Yoruba.

The Paragourma consist of the Gourmantche -probably the backbone of the northern populations - The Gangamba, the Berba, and the Somba just to mention these.

The Mossi consist of the Boulba (from Burkina Faso), the Yoabou, the Taneka, etc.

The Groussi are represented by the Lokpa, the Kabye and soon.

The Aja-Ewe people constituted the most important elements in the central and southern regions. Their migrations are said to be prior to the sixteenth century. Historical accounts favour their coming from the tablelands of Tado. They originate such socio-linguistic groups as: the Houela, the Houla, the Fon, the Gun and so on. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, their kingdoms were among others Allada, Ouidah, Popo, Danxome.

As for the Yoruba, their relation with Benin (Ex-Dahomey) goes far back into history. In fact, there seems to have been strong cultural contact between the Aja people under the leadership of Allada and the Yoruba people under the leadership of Ife;this contact was so strong that by the early seventeenth century, the Yoruba language was said to be the lingua-franca of both the Aja and the Ewe. The Yoruba were mostly scattered in the south- eastern part and the mid-Dahomey (Benin). Apart from those early settlements, there have been other groups of people whose migrations were more or less gradual. Among them, those occupying the northern part include the Baatombu, the Dendi, and the Zerma, the Fulani (Peulh) just to mention these few and the Gen or Mina on the Coast.

From these massive migrations came multiple socio-linguistic groups scattered all over the country. There are for instance in the South, the linguistic group Aja-Fon comprising on one hand the Languages of the lexeme "gbe" such as Fongbe, Ajagbe, Mahigbe, Xwedagbe, Gengbe, Xwlagbe etc and on the other hand the linguistic group Yoruba gathering the speakers of Yoruba, Nago, Tchabe, Idasha....Similarly in the north, such languages as Baatonu, waama, Ditammari, Gulmanceba, Dendi, Zerma, Ani, Hausa... are spoken.

It is worth reminding that by these early times, there was not one kingdom or State in what is now the Republic of Benin. The territory was a number of small city States; therefore, each of those languages was used in the areas of settlements of their speakers. Moreover, some from the South were spread as well over the North (i.e.: Nago - as a consequence of the Yoruba's early settlements in this part of the country).

In a whole, successive migrations, mutual assimilation of people and mixture of languages have favoured in pre-conquest days a heterogeneous linguistic context. In other words, on linguistic ground, this period was characterized by a genuine local multilingualism, that is the coexistence of specifically local languages. Unfortunately, this purely "native" linguistic situation will receive foreign contributions through contacts with Europeans / most specifically during the colonial period.

## **1-2-THE COLONIAL PERIOD: LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE**

Benin, like most African countries has gone through phases of slavery by European powers. Indeed, the earliest contacts were largely limited to the economic sphere. Trade was indeed the main reason why white men came first to the Dahomean coast. Thus, for a long time, the Portuguese maintained the monopoly of advantages accruing from their discovery. But, from about 1530 onwards, the French, the English and the Dutch came one after the other in search of gold and slaves.

Near the last decades of the nineteenth century however, the Europeans move on to assert political control. This was the period of the conquest formally run by the French whose goal was to control and rule the whole country. At that time, frequent negotiations for territories acquisition were made between French representatives and local sovereigns: in the same way, there were intense rivalries between the French and the English. Nevertheless, the colonial period will start only in 1892.

Indeed, by this year, the French, having conquered the kingdom of Danxome set up definitely in the southern part of the country. As a result, trading activities and military raids increased. Gradually, Benin (Dahomey) became a French colony; hence missionaries played a much more important role during this period of foreign exploitation. Very soon, their activities upset traditional values and substituted a wholly different culture. The missionaries were mostly concentrated on "faith" teaching that is the introduction of new ideas in matters of religion.

In fact, some Dahomeans as well as most Africans are animists; therefore, they were considered as pagans and uncivilized peoples who worship God through multiple natural phenomena. As an obvious consequence, they were to be "civilized" and for their new masters, Christianity was the only human way to worship God; and schooling, the symbol of "civilization". For these reasons, churches and schools were built for formal education and frequent catechism courses were organized. Furthermore, the white masters were specifically French speakers and therefore their goals could only be achieved through this language. It was then used as well for educational, administrative and commercial purposes as in any other field of activity controlled by the white colonists.

In the long run, French language became established as the operational and official language all over the country up to now. But language contact did not stop there and it would be altogether too one-sided to view only French language whereas there was contact as well with the English.

This leads immediately to think that some English words might have been infiltrated in the native languages since their early encounter with Dahomey. Moreover, one could hear more and more spoken English in Benin everyday though history makes no account of a formal English colonial period in this country. It would then be of a great interest for me to ask by which process the English language became a part of the "heritage" of Benin people. To show this, a number of processes are to be followed:

First, it would be helpful to look briefly backwards at the implantation of English in the nearest neighbor country, Nigeria.

Secondly, I will look at the issue of the contact which formerly took place between Dahomey and the English people so as to underline its possible contributions to the integration of the English Language in Benin.

Third, the widespread growth of English in this country will be considered with migrations and border areas problems. Finally, questions of lexicalization will be discussed.

### **1-3-A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE INTEGRATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN BENIN LANGUAGES**

Under this title, two main parts are to be developed:

- 1- English colonization in the nearby African countries: the case of Nigeria
- 2-Benin (Ex Dahomey) and English people.

#### **1-3-1-THE ENGLISH COLONIZATION IN THE NEARBY AFRICAN COUNTRIES : THE CASE OF NIGERIA**

Around the Middle of the fifteenth century, European exploratory activities started along the western coast of Africa. Portuguese, English, Dutch and French have been merely fleeting visitors to the coast. From the sixteenth century however, each group established flimsy settlements, forts and trading stations in areas favorable to prosperous "Business". It is in this respect that Nigeria became among others the headquarters of the English people. Nevertheless, the colonial period has not begun until the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Indeed, by the year 1553, English ships had reached the Bight of Benin in Nigeria. Very soon, English people established as in Ghana, trade companies for slave trade. Goods and immaterial products were exchanged for slaves. At once, Negroes mostly slaves were expressly and regularly sent to England where they were trained in English and brought back to serve as interpreters. Similarly, the "civilizing mission" of missionaries started efficiently. Nigerians were thought to venerate "false gods" and thus ought to be christianized.

In the meantime, slave-trade expanded to appalling dimensions over the world. Such a situation brought about the prohibition of this trade. Unfortunately, Britain has taken so great a leading part in the slave trade that they decided to stop it completely unless they annexed the island of Lagos; which they did in 1861. From that moment on, the Englishmen occupied formally many fields of activities in Nigeria and the missionary activity which has led in reality to colonial settlement increased.

Then, English became a language of salvation, education, administration and Business; in short a language of civilization. In this respect, when a missionary was reporting to the CMS (Christian Missionary Society) headquarters in London about the progress of education at Abeokuta in Nigeria in 1862 wrote of English as:"A language which seems of itself to raise the person who is acquainted with it in the scale of civilization"<sup>1</sup>

This displays that from the entire heritage left behind in Nigeria by the British at the end of the colonial period, English language seems to be the most important. In fact, beyond its use for state purposes, it is still in a predominant position in the mass-media whether television or radio and moreover widely used as a medium of social communication between Nigerians of different linguistic backgrounds.

Nigeria is in reality a heterogeneous linguistic country including at least four hundred different local languages. The fact that English goes along with such multilingualism, favours the development of some varieties of English yet with varying degrees of standard forms. As a matter of fact, the most commonly variety includes:

- The onitsha market fiction variety: a sub-standard English often used for literary works. Leading writers such as Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe provide excellent sample of this form in their publications.
- The more standard type is found at higher levels such as government reports, sophisticated novels.
- Other kinds include the market women's patois; a peculiar form proper to these women selling in markets.
- The pidgin English ; a kind of semi-official language commonly shared by Nigerians of different linguistic backgrounds; but which has a good many varieties respective of the localities where they are spoken.

By reference to this previous analysis, it appears clearly that the English colonization has weighed heavily on the linguistic context of Nigeria up to today. On pragmatic ground, its influence has as well been felt by its neighbour Benin; that is what I will try to show in the next point.

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<sup>1</sup>John Spencer (1971), The English Language In West Africa the school of English, University of Leeds. Longman (Page 13)

### 1-3-2-BENIN (EX DAHOMEY) AND ENGLISH PEOPLE

Investigations made by eminent historians about the period of contacts between the English and Dahomey people, revealed roughly the end of the sixteenth century like in Nigeria and Ghana.

Here too, commercial exchanges were the main motivations of the early frequent visits made by English people to the coastal areas of Dahomey. According to sources of information, the establishment of their first settlers goes back to the seventeenth century. In fact, Djekin-probably the actual region of Godome; Ouidah the formerly big seaport for "slave trade" and Sahe known today as Savi were among others, their most important areas of settlement.

N.B.:Let me emphasize that Cotonou, though on the coast received virtually no presence of white settler during the pre-colonial period. It was just a slight hamlet in comparison with Djekin, Ouidah, and Savi - inhabited especially by fishermen, speakers of xwla and perhaps Tofin and Aizo.

Generally speaking, it required the colonial period to notice a real influence of English language in Benin. Indeed, the English people have not colonized this country but as mentioned above, they formally occupy Nigeria, the neighbouring state with which Benin shares 750 km in the Eastern part. Such a geographical proximity has favoured early inter-states relations; that is prosperous commercial exchanges between the British colony of Nigeria and the French colony of Dahomey. As an immediate result, denominations of English currency were rapidly adopted by Dahomeans to supply monetary needs. Thus, some of the most commonly used still now include: pound, dollar.

Hence, Kponwun

i.e: Kponwundokpo (25 f)

dolà

i.e :*do* làwe (10 f) . Kobo Which was not in frequent usage but is now in Nigeria.

In the same way, contacts between ethnic frontier groups facilitated a greater influence of English on the local languages through the channels of communication. Most importantly influenced are among others Yoruba, Gun, Mina, Fon. As a matter of fact, there exists a considerable amount of English lexemes so much assimilated that it is difficult to tell immediately

whether it is from an English origin or not. The following list presents a few typical examples of these lexical items.

English

Fon

Motor	Moto
Flower	f lawa
Chop	cofu
Cup	ko fu
Lawyer	layà
Bread	bledi
Kerosene	kaloz i

English

Gun

Church	coci
Cook	kuku
Rubber	loba

English

Mina

Sister	sista
Lorry	loriion
Driver	dreva
Carpenter	kapinta
Tailor	tela

Such sentences as:

**a no manyi** Which means: (I don't mind),

**a no wall** which means:(I don't worry),

**yi Keya a** which means: (I don't care).

**N.B.**: It should be noted that most of these English lexical items are common to the local languages such as Gun.

One more important means by which English integrated Benin is the policy of foreign language teaching initiated by the colonial powers chiefly the missionaries on account of the establishment of a formal education in the middle of the nineteenth century. By the way, French and of course English were already taught in primary schools founded at Agoue, Grand-Popo and Ouidah in 1862 by Thomas Birch Freeman an English missionary.

From these above data, one can jump to the conclusion that the English language has just been introduced in our country to achieve some purposeful goals ; however,its influence seems not yet outdated for, not only it continues to be a source of enrichment for the local lexis but also it spreads to considerable dimensions. In reality, beyond the learning of English at different levels of training in Benin, it has become customary today to hear vast proportion of spoken English here and there.

This can largely be appreciated by a mere observation of the present linguistic situation of Cotonou, the melting pot "par excellence" of multifarious nationalities. The possible criteria of this exemplification are worth examining. In this scope, migrations and border areas problems will be tackled.

#### **1-4-MIGRATIONS AND BORDER PROBLEMS**

As discussed previously, Benin is one of the French-speaking African countries to "inherit" the English language. Therefore, while its rise lies historically in the earlier contacts between Englishmen and Dahomeans, its development and spread are due to a number of factors among which the problems of migrations and border areas.

Migration, for what is to be dealt with here refers to the advantages taken up by substantial number of people from border areas to move into a near-by country and this mostly for economic purposes.

Indeed, opportunities for trade or employment are more often than not the reasons which provoke great movements of people from their country to areas inhabited by other ethnic groups and across Anglo-French boundaries in the world. In some cases, such movements are purely economic response to opportunities for profit.

Typically, the movement of Yoruba and Hausa traders as well as the spreading of the Ibo and many other immigrants from Nigeria and Ghana to Benin as traders chiefly dealers in Junks: shoe-makers, old-cloth sellers on bargain terms; in a nutshell hawkers, just to cite these are obvious examples of movements incited by predominantly economic motives and facilitated by the geographical proximity of the states.

Furthermore, whatever may be the reasons; these movements constitute either way a wealth, because they are potential means of transfer of languages. From this viewpoint, it can be asserted that migration:

- Contribute most of the time to the spread of a language to a new territory where it is generally held in the same esteem in which its peoples are held; that is, people who migrated maintain their own language to one degree or another and thus sooner or later add to the existing multilingualism.
- Favour the phenomenon of borrowing which will in the long run generate among the natives and their "hosts" a kind of familiarity with the new language.

The recent widespread integration of English in Benin is an obvious consequence of a similar situation caused by immigrants from English-speaking countries, especially Nigeria our nearest neighbour in which English, though a second language has a preponderant place with different varieties. Nigerians are thus supposed to be familiar by level of attainment to the English language; hence their important contribution to the larger integration of English lexical items in the Benin local languages.

Besides, Ghana and Togo had not less contributed to adding up the amount of the introduction of foreign English-based linguistic bodies. Like Nigerians, immigrants from those near-by countries are also in considerable number in Benin. In fact, the bulk of Ghanaians who migrated are either shoe-maker for the men and mostly prostitutes for the women.

Thanks to those elements so far discussed, a kind of transactional English began to be established by degrees in our country specifically in Cotonou, the cosmopolitan city. But how was this situation accepted by the society?

An adequate answer is to be given in the next development through the process of lexicalization.

## 1-5- LEXICALIZATION

### 1-5-1 DEFINITION

Lexicalization in the final stage is the reconstruction of the history of a vocabulary item. Explicitly, a lexeme-either coined for immediate needs or loaned- is said to be lexicalized when not only it becomes part and parcel of the current lexicon of the speakers exploiting the productivity of a language system but still it ceases to be productive. In this respect, Laurie BAUER emphasizes that a lexeme is lexicalized when: "Because of some change in the language system, it has, or takes on a form which it could not have taken if it had arisen by the application of productive rules"<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of fact, BAUER considered the noun "Warmth" composed of the adjective warm and the suffix - th - then, she made the point that though this noun is analyzed in this way, it is impossible to add synchronically the suffix - th - to an adjective to provide a noun, which she demonstrated by forming the following unproductive nouns.

The structure: Adjective + suffix        ----- (th) ----- \* noun

Examples: Funky + th -----\* Funkyth

Surreal + th-----\* Surrealth

Maxi + th-----\* Maxith

This demonstration shows that "warmth" has reached a final stage where any of its particle, prefix and mainly suffix cannot be used to provide words of the same type.

It should be noted that a lexeme can undergo many types of lexicalization: phonological, morphological semantic, syntactic and others. But here, we think it better not to tackle the concept in its broad sense. That is why, far from pretending to reconstruct the history of the borrowed English words, our work will mostly be concerned on one hand with a survey of people's motivations towards the loan-items, how they develop and become accepted by the society in the current lexicon. This leads us to take up the means by which words spread.

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<sup>2</sup>Laurie BAUER (1983) English word Formation  
Cambridge University Press (Page 48)

### 1-5-2- SPREADING THE WORD

Previously, we have mentioned that a considerable amount of English lexical items exist as loan - words in our local languages because, speakers at different levels feel a need, a lack of suitable words to communicate easily. In these cases, the new items are nothing but the result of the speaker's ability to use the productivity of the foreign language since the existing list of the lexemes of his mother tongue fails to give him immediate satisfaction in his search for an expression. In fact, what often happens is that the latter lacks the appropriate knowledge of the vocabulary of his mother tongue or rather this is of no interest to him.

In other cases, loans are due to a need evinced by society to find out a name for a new object or phenomenon. This can be traced back to the compound noun "Ghana boy" who was coined as a name given to a shape of "hairstyle".

It is equally obvious that speakers may borrow by conformity or blind imitation that is they copy bluntly new words whose meaning they probably never know but hear around them.

The current use of "shoe maker" /cumska/ and customer / /kosoma/ by speakers of Benin at the present time are glaring examples.

According to points mentioned above, it is obvious that many factors can motivate the borrowing of English lexical items.

A more exhaustive development could have been given but these few reasons are thought to be the most frequent.

Nevertheless, once the new items appear, people are rarely aware of their underlying motivations and just become satisfactorily familiar with their usage so much so that in the long run these loan-words not only spread among considerable amount of speakers but also are perfectly used in exactly the same way as other lexemes of the latter's local languages. Virtually, very few speakers and listeners are aware of their foreign origin. In such cases, the lexical items are said to be assimilated; that is to say they are thoroughly absorbed by the society. Typical examples of assimilation of English lexemes are current in our local languages ones. The following are a few. Illustrative ones.

change / cindji /  
coat / kotu /  
carpenter / kapinta /  
cup / kofu /  
church / coci /  
bread fruit / blèffutu /  
goldsmith / gosimiti /

kerosene / kalozi /  
glad / glad? /  
coal pot / klopoti /  
tea / ti / butter / bota /  
dollar / dolà /  
pound / kpowun /

By reference to the pronunciation of the words above, it is relevant to notice that the lexemes diverge by the sound change from their original phonological shape namely most of them no longer have the same spelling as in English. Thus, the English word bread is spelt in Fon / bledi" /. This modification is mainly due to the phonological system of the speaker's mother tongue. In fact, the phoneme /r/ does not exist in but rather /2/ is used.

As for the semantic change, it rarely occurs - at least in the case of the local languages -. Loans often integrate the target language (the language which borrows) with their original meaning and this for purposes mentioned earlier.

Thus, we have verbs like to mind, to care, to worry which are given approximately the same sense as in English. Example: a no many/ corresponds to I don't mind or it is not my problem.

Otherwise, it may happen that the process of spreading helps society to create ambiguous words that is; users give to the new items some meanings different from their former ones. An interesting example of this is the compound noun "shoe-maker". Etymologically, a shoe-maker is a person who manufactures shoes. Now in Benin, the concept includes a shoe-manufacturer meaning at the same time a cobbler, a shoe-shiner and a shoe-repairer.

We have a similar case for the nominal "customer". Commonly, a customer is someone who is accustomed to making supply from a seller. At present, a seller (supplier) is also called a customer in Benin.

In view of this analysis, it seems to be clear that whether or not new lexical items spread over larger number of users with or without semantic ambiguity depends prior to the extent to which the latter accept them in their

current lexicon. This means simply that a loan-word which is unknown to speakers cannot be institutionalized. What is then institutionalization?

### **1-5-3- INSTITUTIONALIZATION**

In looser term, a lexeme whether loan or coined becomes institutionalized once other speakers start accepting it as a known lexical item, which implies great positive change of attitude toward the new word. This means for instance that the semantic ambiguity of a compound is ignored and only one of its meanings is considered. For example, the compound noun «Ghana boy" can be understood as a "boy coming from Ghana" ; a "young native of Ghana", a "boy living in Ghana". However, of all these meanings, only the shape of "hairstyle" is frequently referred to as its meaning.

On account of the data discussed so far, we realize that beside the early integration of vast proportion of English-based linguistic bodies in our local languages, new items are and will continue to be borrowed since language contact is "endless". Unfortunately, we are afraid to notice that loan-words would be more adequately exploited had they been recorded in dictionaries. For this purpose we think it a pity that our country has no academy to take up such crucial problems.

For the time being, this can be but a wish. That's why we must be content with the oral spreading of the language; for either way it forms the basis of the English used today in the field of commercial transactions in Cotonou by different locuters. Hence, the necessity for us to elucidate the needs English serves to in this domain; the varieties of people who use it and how they use it.

## **CHAPTER TWO:THE USE OF ENGLISH OVER THE WORLD IN THE COMMERCIAL FIELD: THE CASE OF BENIN**

### **2-1-GENERAL SURVEY**

The uses which English serves all over the world are as various as the peoples and societies that use it. Whether in wealthy or underdeveloped countries, it is largely well-known as a means of communication. As a matter of fact, though we cannot assert bluntly that English is used by a greater number of speakers than any other language, it seems however obvious that it is by now the most international of languages.

In fact, apart from being a working language in several international organizations, English holds today an extremely dominating position in the bulk of world trade. Actually, the industrialization of the second half of the 19th century which brings to bear the prodigious discoveries in science and technology, the wonderful expansion of the commercial sphere on the international scale has assigned to it a new role as a world auxiliary language. Hence, English has become the world's main language of technology; the international language of communication in shipping, in aviation, in telecommunication, in computing and so to speak in "business".

Therefore, any country, hoping for economic welfare - at least in our time - cannot escape from its influence. In view of its undeniable necessity, one can even consider English as a key which gives access to scientific development.

All the above factors exhibit clearly the motivations which sustain the place given to English here and there throughout the continents of the world. Thus, some countries have it as their mother tongue whereas other learn or teach it as their important second language.

In the continent of Africa and more precisely in its western part, English remains widely a colonially imposed language which continues to be extremely useful, internally as well as externally despite the heavy background of high multilingualism in dialects and national languages. In reality, English serves as a powerful means of communication and exchanges with the rest of the world; Thence, its use in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Anyway, though only a tiny proportion of West Africans use English as their mother tongue, the vast majority consider it primarily as the language of

the westernized areas of their lives; that is a linguistic property suitable to break the bonds of traditional life so as to enter into the process of modernization.

The Republic of Benin is among others one of those French-Speaking West African states to adopt this universally requisite language.

Indeed, accepted very soon in our educational system as a second language to master, English developed rapidly in the course of years and arose to widespread domains. More recently, it has become of a particular interest in the commercial field not merely because it is the official language of our neighbour Nigeria and of near by Ghana, but chiefly because of the economic policy adopted by our country toward the outside-world.

Obviously, Benin wants to get at the world-Market. Therefore, important transactions and exchanges are carried on in English: the import of soft goods from the countries of South Korea, and that of Rice from Pakistan, Indonesia, and Mongolia are but some simple examples of commercial exchanges carried out in English.

For a more detailed apprehension of the problem, we think it helpful to lay stress on the use to which the language is put in the transactional field in Cotonou, the economic capital city of Benin.

## **2-2-THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS IN COTONOU**

The study of this part is to be divided into two important sections which are: the formal and the informal levels.

### **2-2-1-THE FORMAL LEVEL**

Cotonou, the economic capital city of Benin concentrates at about 75% of the overall commercial activities of the country. Various languages share its commercial field. Among the most commonly used rank: Yoruba, Fon, Mina, Gun, for the local languages, and of course French and English in the range of foreign languages. Actually, English is preponderantly used for commercial purposes.

The formal level to which we refer here involves the areas where the commercial activities are carried out with foreign countries engaged in International Trade. Obviously, the formal level is too wide and thus difficult to

be thoroughly surveyed. Consequently, it has been reduced to the following entities:

- Import / Export Companies
- Shipping and Forwarding Agencies
- Banks
- Hotels and Travelling Agencies

### **2-2-3-IMPORT/ EXPORT COMPANIES**

They are in greater number in Cotonou. The Republic of Benin is a country of heavy imports. At about 90% of its "businessmen" are importers. The Exports cover just a small percentage.

Apart from France and other French-speaking countries of Europe, almost all their other partners operate in English. Thus, both parties - either foreign suppliers of raw materials or foreign importers of the products manufactured in Benin - use English for correspondence and for all other documents relative to contract negotiations, enquiries, orders, replies, conditions of sale, quotation, delivery terms, payments term, proforma invoice...

Given the fact that Benin is a former French colony, most of the import-export companies use this official language to send their mail abroad. The latter are accustomed to dealing in English with their customers from nearby Nigeria and Ghana. In international trade, they work with bilingual secretary's office that is in charge of translating documents sent in English. Such is the case in the interstate (Nigeria- Benin) Cement Fabric of Onigbolo where nearly 60 % of the cement produced is sold to Nigeria whereas supplies of electrical spare parts and other items come from foreign companies located in countries such as Denmark, England, Deutschland, Austria... and Sweden.

Only a minority of the companies involved in Import/Export transactions tries to correspond directly through the medium of the English language. An interesting example is provided by CFAO-Benin where, in addition to negotiations with international diplomatic organizations, and customers from English speaking countries, English serves as a means of communication to suppliers from :

- England for the import of alcohol (Scotchwhisky),and Printed English wax.
- Japan for the import of spare parts of cars. China for the import of Engmelware, Battery,Glasses.
- Netherland for the import of Dutch wax.

At the local level, the users of English are the middlemen (wholesalers and retailers) who ensure the distribution and the selling of imported goods to consumers. Apart from the small number of natives, the great majority of them are Nigerians and Indo-Pakistanis chiefly Lebanese, Syrians, Indians who have travelled through the English-speaking world in general or stayed for a moment in Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia. . . or have a formal training in the language.

### **2-3-1-SHIPPING AND FORWARDING AGENCIES**

Their number is increasing nowadays. Some are private, others are public. Although French is the official medium of communication, the Shipping and Forwarding Agencies made more than 50% of their transactions in English. Generally speaking, they handle on negotiations and purchase of cars, customs clearance procedure and transport documents with Nigerians andGhanaians or with other foreigners accustomed to using the language.

In the big Danish Shipping Company MAERSK-LINE for instance, nearly 60% of the activities covering : Chartering of ships, Booking Freight space, Contract of carriage, Bill of lading, Freight rate... are carried on in English. This is possible because the company deals with partners from all over the world.

### **2-3-2-BANKS**

English is widely used in these institutions because they receive customers from various nationalities. Most of the banks located in Cotonou are of foreign origin. Some of them bear English denominations:B0A (Bank of Africa) ECOBANK, FINANCIAL BANK.

In order to deal efficiently with the amount of documents they are sent inEnglish someof their staff-members attend formal training in this field. Others work with translators.

### 2-3-3-HOTELS AND TRAVELLING AGENCIES

Although they are not formally concerned with commercial transactions, hotels and travelling agencies constitute important fields where English serves as the language of communication for customers and tourists who are not French speakers.

Very often, the people working in those agencies are competent in French. They can write correct English but are almost inefficient in speaking.

It must be added that English plays a role in trade names in our country. A good many shopping centres, department stores, hairdressing houses bear English denominations. We have for instance:

"Not so bad"	"World Nations trading Co"
"So what"	"computers services"
"Beautiful hair"	"Sunrise International"
"Lady beautiful"	"Gold Hill"
"Albarika store"	"Overseas" etc
"Nice Girl"	

N.B. :It has not been possible for us to present details on all the points mentioned at the formal level because the information and documents needed to foster such an exhaustive work have unfortunately not been handed on to us during our investigations.

### 2-4-THE INFORMAL LEVEL

Two main subdivisions are to be distinguished in this section. The category of sellers and customers in the markets and that of the hawkers (itinerant merchants) in the streets.

\* The first category consists of the sellers of Dantokpa and the dealers in junks of Missebo.

As already mentioned, Cotonou is a cosmopolitan city in which peoples of different nationalities meet. As a result,its biggest market Dantokpa welcomes important flows of foreign customers among whom the most common are Nigerians and to a lesser extent Ghanaians. The latter come mainly to lay in supplies of loin-clothes (wax-Bazin etc) In order to do well, the tradeswomen are compelled to deal with them in "English".

Generally speaking, the variety of English they speak depends on their own personality and that of the customers. In reality those who have an educational background express themselves in more or less adequate English but the vast majority who has never been taught English tend to pick up some current spoken words or phrases. As a matter of fact, they cope with their customers in a mixture of Yoruba and a kind of particular English which is often the result of their effort to learn the language through these market contacts. They will for instance call out such phrases such as:

"Hey, kosoma! Come buy here - come for my place. I sell very good price.

How much you give! Take twenty five thousand.

You no pay from me...

You de krez !

Olé, dzaguda, Ruffian...

Go away, bad kosomà, Nigeria Tif"

Beyond these swearwords and a few greeting expressions most of them know no English.

\* As for the dealers in junks of Missebo, they constitute the bulk of English speakers in Cotonou.

Indeed, the geographical proximity of Nigeria favours the massive movements of Nigerian immigrants who settle mostly for economic purposes. They are composed of Hausa, Yoruba, and Ibo. Unlike the tradeswomen, the latter use a very peculiar variety of English not only different in kind from the standard one taught in schools but also different as well in pronunciation as in intonation from one speaker to another. This variety of English they call "Pidgin English" is widely known throughout the market but varies most of the time because of the influence of the user's first language. Closer investigations reveal in fact that the vast majority of those sellers are Ibo immigrants who use this form of English as an intermediary language as well to deal with their customers as to favour communication with fellows since they come from different linguistic backgrounds.

The dialogue below is a sketchy illustration of this variety.

A : Hau nau.

B : I de rait.

A: Di market no be full rise, wetin you come buy.

B: I come buy shoes.

A: Mek na selet.

B: Give me di blue an red, hau moch.

A: I go selam fo you tu tausen fifty.

B: Hey! di prais you give me de tu moch.

I go take one fifty.

A: Na me! you be Tif!

Di blue an red no be di same, see dem well.

B: You no be betta, mek I go buy fo anada place.

A: Leave am. I de hia, you go come again.

Far from being a mere imperfect English, the example above shows a variety of pidgin reproduced in written English orthography. Though I amnot suggesting that all the sellers typically speak alike, I take this as a sample of the variety which is widespread.

In fact, except for the phonetic features, the lexical and grammatical features which characterize each speaker, there seems to be very close similarities between the varieties spoken by those sellers.

It must be emphasized otherwise that whether they have been to school or not is reflected through their speech. In reality, though not frequently, one happens to come across some "educated" sellers who speak a more or less appropriate form of English they call "grammar or Queen's English". In such cases, there is a wide range of pronunciation differences between their speech and that of their illiterate fellows. The sentences below are some of their common patterns."How are things my friend? What do you want? Come greet me na! Do you hear English! Whether you want to buy, I go sell it for you."

In short, the latter, tend to be more formal, then borrow vocabulary items from Standard English and try to "anglicize" their pronunciation.

The second category of English speakers is composed of those people who stroll daily through our streets. There are, on one hand the hawkers: those itinerant merchants, sellers of varied items and on the other hand, the increasing number of shoe-makers.

The former are for the most part Nigerian immigrants-mainly Ibo- like the dealers in Junks of Missebo whereas the second group is composed in majority of Ghanaians.

In many ways, the hawkers don't have adequate knowledge of English and therefore speak approximately like their fellows of Missebo. The following sentences are some of their current way of using the language.

“This watch no go brake fastNa original one,  
no be Nigeria made. Buy from me ...”

This displays that here too, pidgin is the variety commonly used; still there are exceptions and it would be dangerous to generalize.

As far as the shoe-makers are concerned, they refer very often to " Broken English" as to the variety of English they speak; for most of them are Ghanaians and Pidgin - they assert -is rarely used in Ghana if ever between " The educated master and his steward if they happen not to speak the same language; between labourers and artisans in a factory or workshop and between buyers and sellers in the market.”

In reality, Broken English is derived from a higher form that is it seems to be something very near Standard English and it is not as complex as Pidgin.

However, Should we accept that all those people speak this variety? Much research is still required to answer this question adequately.

Now, let us make the point about the use of the language in the commercial activities in our country.

#### **2-4-1-AN APPRAISAL OF THE TRANSACTIONAL ENGLISH IN BENIN**

Alongside the existence of French as the official language of communication in Benin, English is emerging steadily. Its use is considered important not only because neighbouring English-Speaking countries especially Nigeria develops good commercial relations with our country but chiefly because it is the worldly known language of Business.

In Benin, two main varieties of English are used in the transactional field.

First, commercial English: It is used to carry on formal commercial transactions at the international scale. Far from being purely literary, it is a

variety of standard English to which is applied each particular area of formal commercial activity.

Second, Pidgin English of Nigeria: It is becoming increasingly used for current affairs in the informal milieu thanks to the important number of Expatriates. Many people find it an easily spoken means of communication. Others even wish it became universally used for business purposes. Some other people consider it in the contrary as a "bastard Jargon unworthy of serious study".

What is pidgin? Can it be taken as a true language" or not? These questions will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

## **2-5-THE STRUCTURE OF PIDGIN ENGLISH**

### **2-5-1-WHAT IS A PIDGIN?**

A clear cut definition of the word is still a matter under discussion and dispute. Similarly, conflicting theories are held about its exact historical origin.

Very often however, a pidgin is described as the most common denomination given to a mixed language which arises from contacts between speakers of several mutually divergent languages and which serves to communicate easily about essential common needs.

Pidgins are said to have typically emerged from situations with slaves and traders. They have also developed as the language of communication for general everyday affairs in multilingual societies and countries in which the majority normally have little access to a standard language. Therefore, pidgins are the result of socio - linguistic factors.

To a wide extent, they are the interpenetration of two or more linguistic systems usually known respectively as base or prestige language and substrate languages that is an already existing language which will eventually be modified by one or more other languages, generally local ones. Hence, "pidgin English" rather than "pidgin Yoruba" or "pidgin Ewe" as a result of the contacts between English traders and African slaves from widely different ethnic communities.

Pidgins are languages in embryo which exhibit varying social functions as well as formal shifting from area to area, from language to language and from speaker to speaker.

In short, because they have most of the time particular features, Pidgins are considered as restricted language systems.

### **2-5-2- PIDGINS AS A SIMPLIFIED LANGUAGE**

Pidgins, as we have shown above derive their existence from one or more already existing languages. Thus, to speak of Pidgin as a simplified language means to refer to it as a reduced or restricted form of the base language.

From this viewpoint, a number of theories were held by scholars interested in the field.

Some think of simplification in terms of "imperfect learning" that is the attempts of someone to learn a language quite different from his own.

Others suggest the unconscious attempts of native speakers to simplify their language so as to make its learning easier for non-natives.

Anyway, a Pidgin appears to differ from a real language in that Pidgin has in general a smaller number of elements and lacks detailed features in structure compared with its base language. In fact:

\* Pidgin has fewer words, namely the bulk of vocabulary is not substantial and a single word can be put for many different meanings depending on the context. That is for instance the case in tok Pisin or Melanesian English where the single word "Haus" bears at least four meanings according to J. Aitchison:

- 1 . " Haus sik " = Hospital
- 2 . " Haus Pepa " = Office
- 3 . " Haus bilong Pig " = Pigsty
- 4 . " Haus bilong Spaida " = Spider's web<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore the word "mi" is put for "I" and «me" insingular, mi + Pela (I and other people) form the plural "we".

The word "bilong" replaces the English possessives "my, your, our ..."

E.g : Shoes bilong me = my shoes.

Radio bilong yupela = your radio (Second person plural).

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<sup>3</sup>Jean Aitchison (1981) Language change : Progress or Decay ?Universe Books New-York (Page 200)

In pidgin, embedding or the combination of potential sentences together by means of relative pronouns is nearly inexistant. As a matter of fact, the equivalent Pidgin sentence of the following English sentence would be:

E.S ----- " The woman who want to buy shoes will come back"

P.S----- " Di wuman wan na buy shoe from me.

She go kam back»

Similarly, Pidgin has generally very limited means of binding items together whereas English often use a large number of prepositions to express the relationship between words. Such is the case in the following examples of Cameroonian Pidgin where "fo" means " in, on, at, and, from..."

- E.g
1. ede fohaus = she is in the house
  - 2 . Di bag de *fo*di Tebul = The bag is on the table.
  - 3 . Papa go go fo five = Father will leave at five.
  - 4 . Give di moni *fo*me = Give the money to me or  
Give me the money

\* Pidgin has fewer sounds:

Pidgin English has in general a relatively simplified sound system. It must be remembered that since there exists at least sixty English-based Pidgins, the number of consonants and vowels may vary from one variety to another. In this respect, there are for instance only five (5) vowels in Melanesian Pidgin English; just the two (2) affricates / **tS** - dz / in Nigerian Pidgin English whereas their number is four (4) in standard English.

Moreover, in the range of consonants, there is in Tok Pisin, no distinction between [P] and [f] nor between [s], [S], [tS].

Examples: " leaf "----- lip.

" Keep "----- kip.

" Sore " and " Shore" are pronounced in the same way.

" Watch " is was.

In Nigerian Pidgin, the consonants th /**θ**/ and /**£**/ are reduced to /t/ and /d/.

Similarly, melanesian pidgin English simplifies many consonant clusters; so "cold" is pronounced "kol" "doubt" is pronounced "dat"

\* (3) One more way in which pidgin can be considered as a simplified language is that questions are reduced. Thus, we have the constructions:

- Qw + Pronoun (subject) + Auxiliary + Verbal instead of
- Qw + Auxiliary + Pronoun (subject) + Verbal Gerund like in Standard English.

E.g : - What are you eating ? - wetin yu de chop.

In the same way, the negative form is simplified. English negative "do not" and "not" are expressed by the simple morpheme "no".

### 2-5-3- LEXICAL ITEMS

In general, pidgins derive the bulk of their vocabulary from various languages. There exists in the world at about sixty varieties of English - based Pidgins. But here, we will simply deal with Nigerian Pidgin.

Nigerian Pidgin draws its lexicon from three main sources. First, Standard English, the potential base language provides a good deal of the words either directly, through reduplication or by calquing.

1. In the direct sense, words from English origin, once borrowed into NPE, either keep their original meaning or develop polysemy that is an only and same word covers several meanings.

E.g : chop.

- come chop (come to eat).
- di chop no be good (the food is not tasty).
- wetin yu chop wud *fO* (what are you cutting wood for ?)

2. Reduplication consists in doubling an original word to form a new one. It is a phenomenon of word-derivation or word-formation which gives different functions to words in NPE. In many ways, reduplicated lexical items may provide change, extension or intensification of meaning as in the following examples:

- bàd bad means good, nice.
- wàkà-wàkà (walk) means to wander about.
- kray-kray (cry) means to cry without stopping.

3. Calquing is a process of word-formation in which the deepstructure of the substrate is expressed by the words of the baselanguage. This serves very often to form adjectives.

E.g : Lànà-boy (learner-boy) *f*

big-ày (greedy)

strong-hed (stubborn)

\* Secondly, other European languages have not less added up the amount of loans into NPE. Undoubtedly, most of these words have undergone phonological modification, and are not easily recognizable.

Few typical examples include:

- Portuguese words: dàsh (to give a present or a gift to somebody).palava (which is nothing but quarrel).
- French word: boku translating an important quantity and meaning much, many, plenty etc.

Many other words could have likely been borrowed from Spanish, Dutch and so on.

\* Third, the native languages known as local constituents or substrates represent an important source of NPE Lexicon. At this level, differences are clearly understandable between the varieties of Pidgin spoken from one area to another since the substrates vary according to the region which is concerned. Typical cases are those of the Pidgins spoken in the western and Eastern parts of Nigeria where Yoruba and Ibo are respectively the local substrates. Nevertheless, there exist some loans from African languages which are commonly shared by a good many varieties of Pidgins.

## **2-5-4-PHONOLOGY**

Any language, whether written or spoken is expressed through the use of some minimal units of sounds which allow to make distinction between the different words. Such units of sounds called phonemes are divided into two broad groups: the consonants and the vowels.

Nigerian Pidgin English counts twenty four consonants classified as follow:

\*8 plosives: 2 bilabial / p,b /  
 2 Alveolar / t,d /  
 2 Velar / K,g /  
 2 Labio-velar / kp,gb /

\*7 fricatives: 2 Labio dental / F,V /  
 2 Alveolar / S Z /  
 2 Palato-Alveolar /Sʒ/  
 1 Glottal / h /

Here, the English dentals / θ / and / ð / are inexistent.

They are rather uttered / t / and / d / as in tif [ thief ]

dat [ that ]

\*2 Affricates: the Palato-Alveolar [ tf,dz ]

\*3 nasal: the bilabial / m /  
 the Alveolar / n /  
 the Palatal / ŋ /

\* 1 lateral / L /  
 \* 1 round sound / r /  
 \* 2 semi vowels : the palatal / j /  
 the labiovelar / w /

In NPE, the utterance of the sound system depends greatly on the linguistic habit of each social group. Thus, in some varieties the consonant sounds / v / becomes / f /

/ z / occurs as / S /

/J / is uttered /J/

E.g.: Instead of / plezé / it would be / pl5/~«S / Similarly, / tj~,dz / are represented respectively by ch and j.

As far as the vowels are concerned, they are 7 in NPE : / i,e,ɛ,a,ɔ,u /. Unlike in Standard English, they are shortened here. Thus we have:

- i ----- /lid/ instead of /li:d/ (lead).
- a -----/masta/ " /ma:st3/ (master).
- u-----/gud/ " /gu:d/ (good).
- 3----- /wok/ " /wo:k/ (walk).

It is important to notice that among the vowels, the sound /ɜ/ does not exist but is rather replaced by /a/.

E.g/**bota**/correspondstoEnglishword butter /bʌtə/. /lɔyɑ/"Lawyer" /lo:ɟə/.

The same way, the sound /ʌ/ occurs as /θ/ and /a/

E.g : NPE

S. English

/ bot /

/ bʌt / (but)

/ anada /

/ʌnʌə/ (another)

Nigerian Pidgin has as well diphthongs that are the combination of two vowels sounds. Phonetically, they can be presented as follow:

\*/ai/ as in dai "yu go dai" (you will die)

\*/ia/ " hia "kom hia" (come here)

\*/ea/ " "ede dea" (he is there)

\* /au/ " hau " hau moch" (how much)

\* /ei/ as in day

\* /oi/ " toil or spoil

\* /uo/ " poor.

In NPE, the meaning of words, sentences or any other types of speech is often determined by the tone system. There are two basic stress; a high stress) and a low stress ('). As a matter of fact, intonation depends on how stress is placed on syllables.

In a nutshell, the phonological system is characterized by a complexity due both to the influence of the local languages and the base language.

Now, let us look briefly at the grammatical features.



E.g: yu bedzaguda man means you are a thief.

I de goto haus = I'm going home.

Pipul go die moch = many people will die.

Imperative and subjunctive forms are introduced by "mek" . E.g : "mek you no krai agen" means "do not cry again" But the imperative occurs also in standard English.

E.g : "kom hia" means "come here" For the subjunctive, the use of "mek" is simply a misuse of the English modal "May"

E.g: mek a wet *fo* yu.

May I wait for you? As for the interrogative form, questions are asked either by a vocal inflexion giving the structure:

- Pronoun (subject)+ Auxiliary + Adjective. E.g: yu dey krez.

Are you crazy? or. By the use of interrogative particles at the beginning of the sentence.

E.g: wetin yu go bai = what do you want to buy? or Hau nau = How do you feel?

All the elements discussed so far show only some of the aspects of the phonological and grammatical features of Nigerian Pidgin English. Obviously, many important details have not been mentioned because we think that not only the topic has already been dealt with more than once but also much more research is needed for a fuller description of the Pidgin English structure.

In many ways however, this brief survey suggests that a Pidgin English is not a mere broken form of the English language but a separate system with its own identity and its own rules.

Generally speaking, Pidgin supplies for linguistic needs in heterogeneous societies. In many places of the world, its trade function increases. People use it for commercial transactions in markets, shops and for several other communicative purposes.

In the nearby Nigeria, Pidgin is undoubtedly a very important device in the advertisement of goods; the best means by which either literate people or not can be reached.

In Benin, it is becoming to some extent a communicative means in the informal areas of commercial transactions.

However, though Pidgin English plays such an important role in the economic domain, and though it features structural patterns as many worldly known languages, can Pidgin really be used like Standard English for formal commercial relations?

This question raises a number of problems.

- First, vast majority of educated people has not favourable attitude towards pidgin throughout the world.
- Secondly, there does not exist a standard variety of the language. In addition, it lacks a uniform orthography and up to now it has been written with the English orthographic conventions.
- Furthermore, pronunciation differences are highly noticeable. The above factors constitute some of the key difficulties for the emergence of Pidgin at the international scale.

Clearly then, Pidgin cannot be formally taught these days. Therefore, the ideal situation, from this point of view is the Teaching / Learning of Standard English.

Obviously, we must study English. But nowadays we need inevitably formal English that is appropriate to the specific requirements of our modern world. We then need such studies as:

English for Science and Technology.

English for Business and Economics.

English for Medical studies.

English for Secretaries.

English for Psychology just to mention a few.

Hence the necessity for Teaching English for specific Purposes.

## **CHAPTER THREE: NECESSITY FOR TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP)**

**"Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need" Tom Hutchinson & Alan Waters**

### **3-1-ORIGINS AND GENERALITIES**

The desire to teach English for specific Purposes (ESP) is not an innovation of our time; rather it had been felt some decades ago as a result of the new demands and requirements of the post world-war.

Indeed, the relentless progress of Science, Technology and Commerce at the end of the second world-war, the new role of English and chiefly the greater focus of interest placed recently on the specialized area of languages for specific purposes in the general network of Second Language Teaching and specifically in the Teaching of English as a Second Language have generated on the international scale the urging want to learn English, no longer for pleasure or in a vacuum but for practical and purposeful reasons ; that is, teaching or learning the language to supply necessary uses of communication and to achieve specific goals.

Therefore, English has become a subject matter to the practical wishes and needs of people. Thence, in the educational sphere for example, students have to study their textbooks and papers available in English; in the commercial field, businessmen and women need the language form adequate to business situations. In the realm of Industry, mechanics must read instruction manuals. Consequently, there has been a growing interest in the professional learning of the language at the disadvantage of the general learning of it. Thus, a particular stress was laid on the necessity of putting some shades in the process of the English Language Teaching especially in the courses concerning specific groups of learners since the language function varies accordingly.

Obviously, there is no longer any doubt that there exist flagrant differences between, say, the commercial English discourse and that of

medicine though the learner is supposed to master the language he is taught throughout, no matter the specific domain.

Furthermore, learners have various interests and motivations. Similarly, abilities and attitudes to learning vary from one individual to the other. Such factors contribute greatly to put a new emphasis on the central importance of the learner's needs and expectations as well as the relevance of his area of motivation in the language.

All the elements mentioned so far point out the urging need for an increased specialization in language learning ; hence the necessity for Teaching English for Specific Purposes. But, what is in reality English for specific purposes? How can it be taught? What can its learners expect? What role lies with the ESP teacher?

These are some of the main questions to be discussed in the next analysis.

### **3-1-1-DEFINITION OF ESP**

For a long time, there has been numerous interpretation of the concept of English for Specific Purposes.

Once known as English for Special Purposes, that is "Special Language Teaching", the term has changed its signification in the course of the years thanks to the greater attention focused on the learner's goals and the growing awareness that student's needs must be a key factor in the language teaching situation.

This new view on English Language Teaching was largely supported by eminent linguists like Ronald MACKEY who wrote: "ESP is generally used to refer to the teaching/learning of a foreign language for a clearly utilitarian purpose of which there is no doubt. By ESP is meant the teaching of English, not as an end in itself but as an essential means to a clearly identifiable goal"<sup>4</sup>

From this definition, it seems that the major concern of ESP is not to achieve fluency and accuracy in language use but rather it is orientated toward a target situation or a "utilitarian purpose" in which the English language plays an auxiliary role.

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<sup>4</sup>Ronald MACKEY (1978) Identifying the Nature of the Learner's Needs In Mackey and Mountford (eds) (95)

To learn English for specific purposes is then to undertake studies in a particular or specific discipline to acquire proficiency through the medium of the English language and to be able to use it in the subsequent execution of the professional duties. Thus, in ESP, English is but an aspect of a wider purpose. This points to the contrast which exists between the General Language Teaching which aims at a general education in which language itself is both the subject matter and the purpose of the course, and the specific field in which the student is reading English to acquire some quite different body of knowledge or set of skills in order to successfully reach his aim. Then, it is arguable that ESP is primarily orientated toward a specialism, meaning that far from being considered as the mere teaching of general English, it does refer to the whole range of the English Language structure, yet with some features inherent to the realm of Specialism.

e.g.: English for science where an intensive use of the passive voice is frequent.

In reality, each area of activity in ESP constitutes a specific register with its peculiarities, hence the necessity for the learner to become familiar with the forms and skills of the language adequate to his area of motivation so as to feel at home when performing in context. To illustrate this point, I will give an example: the success for students learning English for Secretaries or Business and Economics is whether they can act appropriately as Secretaries or Businessmen and Economists.

Actually, the fact of achieving a goal with proficiency in ESP is an answer to the learner's needs; for, any ESP learner ought to ask himself the basic question:

### **Why do I need to learn?**

An attempt to answer such a question will help him to be aware of what he really wants, so that he can express the reason why his study of English is specific.

In this respect, ESP can be defined as an approach to language learning or teaching based on the student's needs and directed by his specific reasons for learning.

A definition formulated in such terms reveals that the concept of ESP is typically concerned with "learning". But what is to be learnt and how will it be achieved?

## **3-2-CONTENT AND PEDAGOGICAL PROCEDURES IN ESP TEACHING**

It is not possible, of course, for a dissertation of this size to cover the subject matter exhaustively. I do not intend to present a detailed exposé on the question. I would rather concentrate on some outstanding points, namely courses, language and skills content, syllabus, materials and methodology.

### **3-2-1-COURSES**

On account of the fact that ESP is a field of English Language Teaching which aims to meet the needs of particular learners, the content of each "specialized variety" of ESP must be organized in such a way that it can satisfy the needs and expectations of the professional learner in the learning process and provide him with all that he requires for a successful training in his specific area of work or study. To this end, a few elements are worth considering:

- The student's awareness of his purpose that is his ability to express his or her deeper and greater need to communicate in English. Indeed, it is of utmost importance for the latter to formulate a realistic objective which is not restricted to linguistic competence alone but does involve the mastery of skills in which language precisely English is an integral component. Thus, English and the learner's purpose cannot be dissociated in an ESP course. An attempt to do so would correspond to training the student in something other than the language relating to his or her specific purpose. Hence, the general language knowledge is primarily necessary for any specialism.

But learners may succeed or fail in identifying their needs. Anyway, this depends mostly on their own experience. In fact, Learners may be either beginner that is they have almost no initial ability; post-beginners, people who have already followed a general English course at school and now wish to extend or adapt this previous competence to their particular area of work. From this viewpoint, whether the ESP student can provide information on his needs and feelings is relative to his previous education in the language. To my mind, one can rely on a post-beginner, for, he is supposed to be already familiar with the subject matter and may have a "good" grounding in the basic grammatical patterns and vocabulary of English within the framework of a technical vocabulary that is of interest to him either privately or professionally.

Clearly, it seems that if a preliminary analysis is made on the learner's needs and purposes, it could be easier to determine on one hand the suitable programme design of the teaching process; to make possible adjustments about the content of the courses, the materials and methods necessary and to produce on the other hand the linguistic features of the situation in which the learner will function later.

However, the identification of needs raise a crucial problem in ESP courses. There exist multifarious needs since in the same specific field; each individual student has different needs and goals which should be satisfied. If we consider for instance the field of English for Business Studies, a number of subdivisions can be distinguished; thus, there may be people aiming at marketing; some at accounting; others at business administration...

As we can see it, all those domains are included in the business field, yet they constitute its "inner specific purposes". Consequently, the English for Business course should not normally be a general course of business delivered in English but courses shaped specifically to fit the requirements and the expectations of the learners in each of those branches.

Virtually, one would think to plan the content of learning per student, but this seems to be rather difficult and say unreasonable. Thus, a more or less Utopian solution could consist in putting together a restricted number of learners with identical or nearly identical needs so that the courses either way achieve their specific aims.

### **3-2-2-LANGUAGE AND SKILLS CONTENT**

An ESP course will have to reorientate approaches to language content such as grammar, lexis and skills.

### **3-2-3-GRAMMAR AND LEXIS**

An ESP course should be learner-centred, especially different from one specific area to another in its selection of topics, skills and why not "language". This is just to say that the English language adapted to a specific field tends sometimes to become an idiom in itself. In reality, it tends to have its appropriate substantives, verbs, adjectives and even structure so that the same word or the same construction may change meaning from one field to another or from one context to another.

In addition, an ESP course can as well take into account the student's attitude to learning and makes him aware of some aspects of lexis, since part of the understanding of commercial texts depends on knowledge of their use.

### 3-3-SKILLS

Students and professionals need to develop aspects of the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Reading exercises for example should be included in order to help the student understand and express his own thoughts or opinions about a topic related to a lesson.

ESP courses will probably include note-taking and report writing as aspects peculiar to ESP situations. Thus, learners must be taught writing strategies

Similarly, listening and speaking must be in ESP situations worth of particular attention. Learners have to develop their listening skills so as to understand clearly spoken English. Moreover, they have to acquire a correct and fluent use of the language for communication purposes.

Each ESP course must normally be uniquely tailed to the learning needs, interests, and purposes of the learner taking part in it.

In this respect, J and R All Wright seem to urge ESP Teachers to pay meticulous attention to what they are in charge of teaching when they stated:

"ESP Teachers, in particular should be conscious of the dangers of generalizing from one learning/teaching situation to another."<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, any course in a teaching situation requires a skillful arrangement of its constituent parts and its features in patterns available for practical and easy usage. Such a patterning is frequently referred to as a syllabus. What is really a syllabus and what role should it play in the course?

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<sup>5</sup>Allwright, Jean(1977)An Approach to the Teaching of  
& Richard Allwright Medical English.In Holden (ed) (55)

### **3-3-1-SYLLABUS AND MATERIALS**

A syllabus can be taken as a written document which helps to define the constituent units of particular language knowledge by providing a more or less detailed scheme of what will or should be taught or learnt in a given linguistic context. In other words, a syllabus is a tool which makes the learning task more manageable to teachers by supplying their elementary needs in the organization of courses and evaluation, the choice and use of textbooks, the selection of materials, the planning of learning time.

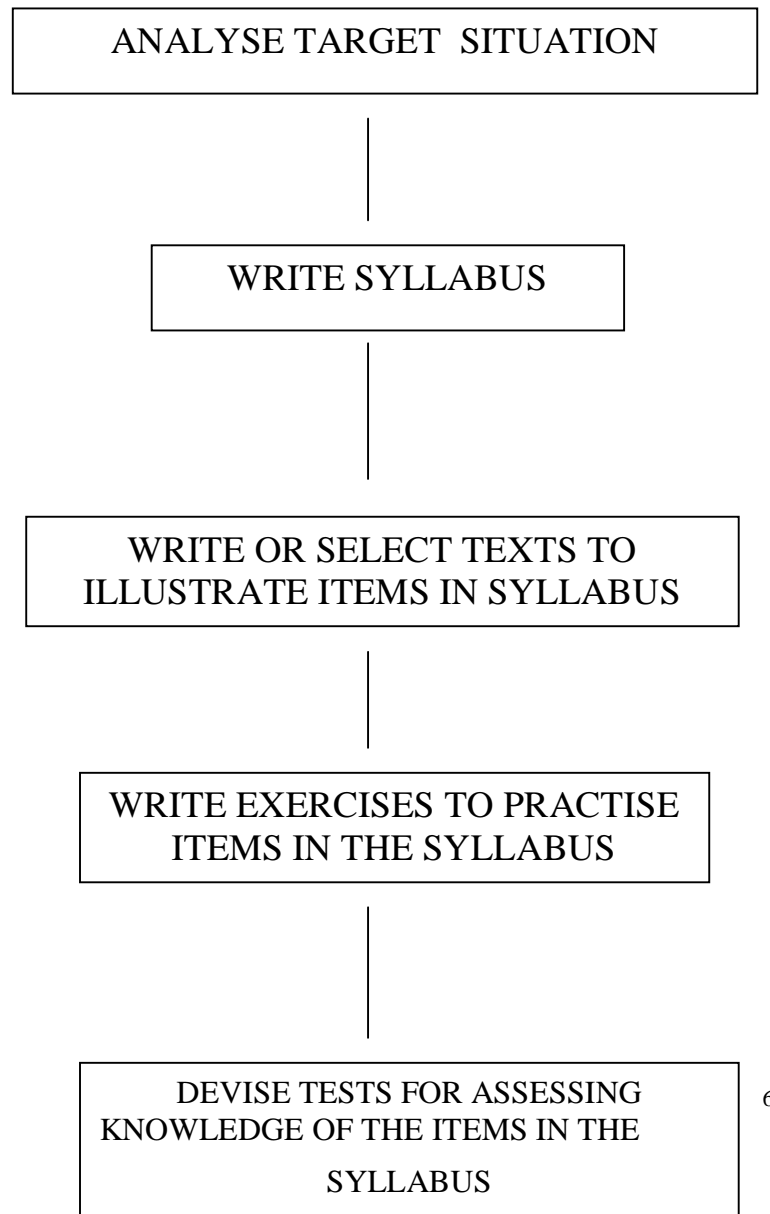
A syllabus thus serves as a "norm" out of which the state of knowledge of the learner is judged, that is his evolution or regression.

Nevertheless, a syllabus is but a model, an indicator for learning because it states just an ideal of what students ought to be taught.

In any Teaching/ Learning process, there exist a certain number of different syllabi, each relevant to one particular element involved in the process. Therefore, it is important to know the kind of syllabus one requires and the different role it can satisfactorily play.

In ESP, a syllabus can also be identified, in some respects, to a panel which displays the objectives to be gained and thus offers to both teacher and learner the opportunity to seek the means of their attainment. In this respect, the role that a syllabus can play in an ESP course is tied to the approach on which the course is centred. To understand this, I will consider two illustrative examples in the figures below.

FIGURE N°1

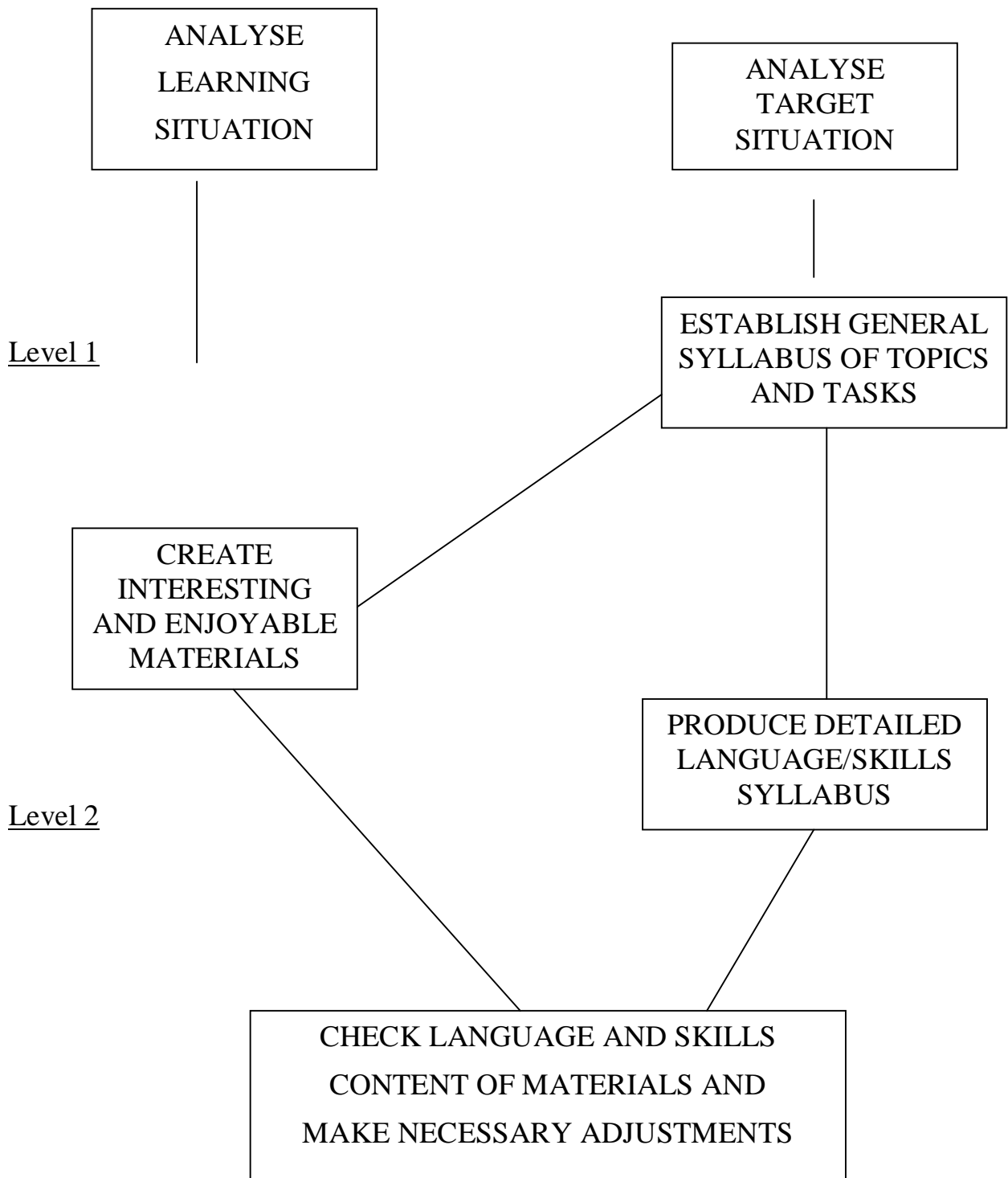


The above figure shows the role of the syllabus in a language-centred approach. Detailed explanations will be given in the next lines.

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<sup>6</sup>Tom Hutchinson (1987) English for Specific Purposes  
& Alan Waters A Learning-Centred Approach Cambridge (p.90)

FIGURE N°2



The two figures above show respectively the role of a syllabus in two different approaches.

The former is a language - centred approach and the latter, a learning - centred approach.

As we can notice it, in the first case, the syllabus is written from the analysis of the language features in the target situation that is on the basis of what will be fulfilled. Therefore, it patterns the course in its slightest details and so to speak determines greatly the choice of any item involved in the process ; whether the selection of texts and books ; the proposal of exercises, or even the norms of control and evaluation of student's competence.

The second case, unlike the first presents a picture of two levels not so much in a chronological order. Here in fact, both the learning situation and the target situation are analyzed at the very start in Level 1. But the language features of the target situation do not directly serve to write the definite syllabus, rather a general syllabus pointing forth the topics and tasks of the target situation is established. On its basis and with the factors recorded from the learning situation, texts and every other required materials and informationis collected. Only then, a detailed syllabus is produced.

At level 2, materials and syllabus are, say, juxtaposed, arranged to play a complementary role.

Through this second approach, we can notice a kind of progression from "generality" to "details" that is from broad concepts to detailed aspects of language features. Similarly, the syllabus seems to follow a sketch which takes into account not only the target needs of the learner but also his influence on the course design process.

A factor however apparently common to both cases is the writing of materials.

Indeed, materials constitute in ESP one of the most characteristic means by which the learning process is stimulated. They serve multiple purposes and are both useful for teachers and Learners. Materials may include:

- Interesting texts conceived and written by the teacher to satisfy his student's requirements since he is supposed to know what is most appropriate to them.

- Practical activities which engage the learner's thinking capacities such as exercises of stimulation.

- Materials consist also of productive skills such as video records, cassette recorders, language laboratories and other audiovisual aids, books, printed papers and journals, pictures etc.

However, the field of ESP is comparatively new and the number of textbooks on the market is small compared with the range of textbooks for "general service" English. As a matter of fact, it is likely that a group of Learners in a particular ESP situation cannot get their needs entirely fulfilled. In such cases, the teacher may have to write his own materials to fit the needs of his group.

In short, materials provide, say a practical support to the organization of the teaching/ learning process; yet their usefulness depends on the methods adopted by the ESP Teacher.

### **3-3-2-METHODOLOGY**

In ESP, like in any other form of language teaching or learning, it is necessary to know how the teachers teach and how the students learn. This supposes a survey of the methodological implications of the teaching/ learning process. Hence, teachers should question themselves about the methodology they employ.

As yet, there exists no full specification of what might constitute an ESP methodology. Indeed, because ESP is also concerned with language teaching or learning, it is argued that there should normally be no apparent difference between the principles which underlie a good ESP methodology and those that underlie general English language teaching. Thus, clearly stated, the classroom techniques and skills employed by a teacher of General English are worth applying to an ESP class.

It can however not be excluded that teaching ESP may emphasize certain aspects of methodology more than others. In fact, attention must be given to the learners and their specific fields.

Therefore, it is necessary for Teachers to adopt the suitable methods and techniques if they really want to achieve the desired goals. For example, it cannot be taken for granted that scientific English is the same thing as General English. Hence, it does not rest upon a teacher holding students in English for Science and Technology to teach just conversational and literary English through the classical or traditional grammar but rather to choose the adequate

means by which stress must be laid on the aspects of the specific field which learners desire mostly to develop for their future situation.

Besides, it could be helpful to give a careful attention to the learners' use of the English Language chiefly to the way they can organize their speech pattern so as to perform convenient and meaningful communicative acts through their discourse.

By all means, learners should be aware that though in specific fields, the language they are studying in is a vehicle of communication. Consequently, the kind of English in which they are taught should not be treated as an academic subject. Learners need to use English as much as possible ; so they can take the opportunity to practise their speaking when for instance they want to give their comments, ask for clarity or when discussing among themselves or with the teacher. Other helpful activities to stimulate communication may be work-groups and exposes, conferences, debates, interviews...

To achieve an efficient result, teachers must try to avoid switching to another language whenever they want to say something meaningful. This could actually help learners to think and to express their thoughts in the foreign language as the following quotation of DILLER suggests: "If the Teacher reverts to the students' native language every time he has something serious to say, then he loses his best opportunities to get the students to concentrate and to think in the foreign Language".<sup>7</sup>

In a nutshell, it is rather impossible to predict about methodology for, it proves to be - to a wide extent - classroom -guided. Therefore, each individual teacher and course planner bears the responsibility to decide or to shape in the light of their specific circumstances how to organize the teaching methods and techniques. To this end, teachers in general and ESP Teachers in particular have to use their sense of creativity for, they are, so to speak the heart of any successful learning programme. Anyway Finocchiaro and Bonomo emphasize that: "In order to teach effectively, it is important to learn as much as we can

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<sup>7</sup>Anne Covell Newton, et al (April 1988) English Teaching Forum

A Journal for the Teacher of English Outside the United States volume XXVII NUMBER 2 (P 38)

about our students, since some of our procedures will vary depending upon the students in our class»<sup>8</sup>

From such a point of view, we are led to look &.fc the role of the teacher in the ESP context.

### **3-3-3- ROLE OF THE ESP TEACHER**

Viewed in the context of General Language Teaching, an ESP Teacher is identifiable to his colleague of general courses, since both are in charge of imparting knowledge.

However, the fact that the former is called upon to deal with specialist subjects adds some elements to his range of functions and assigns to him a good many requirements.

- Because the origin of ESP lies in the satisfaction of needs, the ESP Teacher must work on students needs. Clearly he may try to detect the individual or collective necessities, wants and purposes of the professional learners so as to endeavour for their satisfaction. He has then to design the courses according to the specific fields of study; design the appropriate syllabus and write required materials.

Besides, the ESP Teacher has an important role in the realm of evaluation. To some extent, he must care for the learners' assessment by selecting and emphasizing the varieties of texts which can tell about learning needs. Moreover, he will evaluate his own work mainly his courses.

Unfortunately however, most of the ESP Teachers are not formally trained to practise in specific fields and often seem to be outsiders. In reality, the great majority of them need to orientate themselves conveniently to fit the new requirements they are to meet, for they undergo a shift in their status of language Teacher. This is not so easy, for their role here will consist in coping with some crucial problems relevant to the world of ESP.

Generally speaking, some ESP Teachers feel uncomfortable and even frustrated when they move from the realm of General English to the complex field of English for specific Purposes. Anyway, this attitude due to a change in status compels them to assume a good many responsibilities.

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<sup>8</sup>FinocchiaroMary (1973)The Foreign Language Learner  
& Mary Bonomo New york. Regents [P.20]

Unlike the General English Teacher, ESP Teachers should not be mere eloquent linguists but ought to receive education in the sciences though their task is to help learners to master the linguistic code and not the science content of texts.

They should equally be receptive to specific subject areas, and have the ability to "ask intelligent questions" through which they may expect more respectable answers from the learners.

A teacher holding; say, professional learners of commerce may probably have to cooperate with all those who share or participate in any way to the learning process in that field (advisers, sponsors, subject specialists...). This could be a difficult task since we know that the relationship between human beings is not always sane. Consequently, the teacher has:

- To be tactful enough to ensure harmony and success by creating necessary conditions of work and cooperation.

- To be skillful in taking the opportunity to increase the awareness of the subject specialist about the language problems both ESP learners and teachers are confronted with, and at the same time benefit from the help of the latter to learn more about the learners objectives.

In reality, ESP teachers are called upon to deal with specialist subjects. As a matter of fact, their role is particularly delicate and noble. Thus, it is important that they devote themselves bravely to the teaching process and mainly that they have advisers to encourage and to help them. Anyway, it appears from the whole survey that unlike their colleagues of General English, the role of ESP teachers is a multipartite one because; in addition to their normal functions of classroom teachers, they will have to play adequately the roles in connection with their specific fields.

The English language must be taught and learned for specific purposes: Hence the necessity to learn formal commercial English.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:NECESSITY FOR LEARNING FORMAL COMMERCIAL ENGLISH**

### **4-1-WHAT IS COMMERCIAL ENGLISH?**

As the word indicates, commerce covers a wide range of human activities. Because of its diversity, many definitions have been advanced at different times.

Traditionally, it simply meant exchange of things people needed; or trade that is only the buying and selling of goods.

Today, the word has a more technical definition which includes trade plus the auxiliaries of trade:transport, banking insurance, warehousing, and advertising.

Indeed, commerce in its broad sense is the wide and complex field of economic activity concerned with the buying and selling of goods and their movement from producer to consumer.

Actually, trade is the essential part of commerce. It includes:

- Home or domestic trade which is carried on inside a country.
- Foreign or overseas trade which is carried on with foreign countries and which involves transit trade when goods cross one country on their way to another.

For the purpose of this work, commercial English may be defined as this English language concerned with the buying and selling of goods and services for a profit. In other words, commercial English is the kind of English particularly adapted to the domain of commerce.

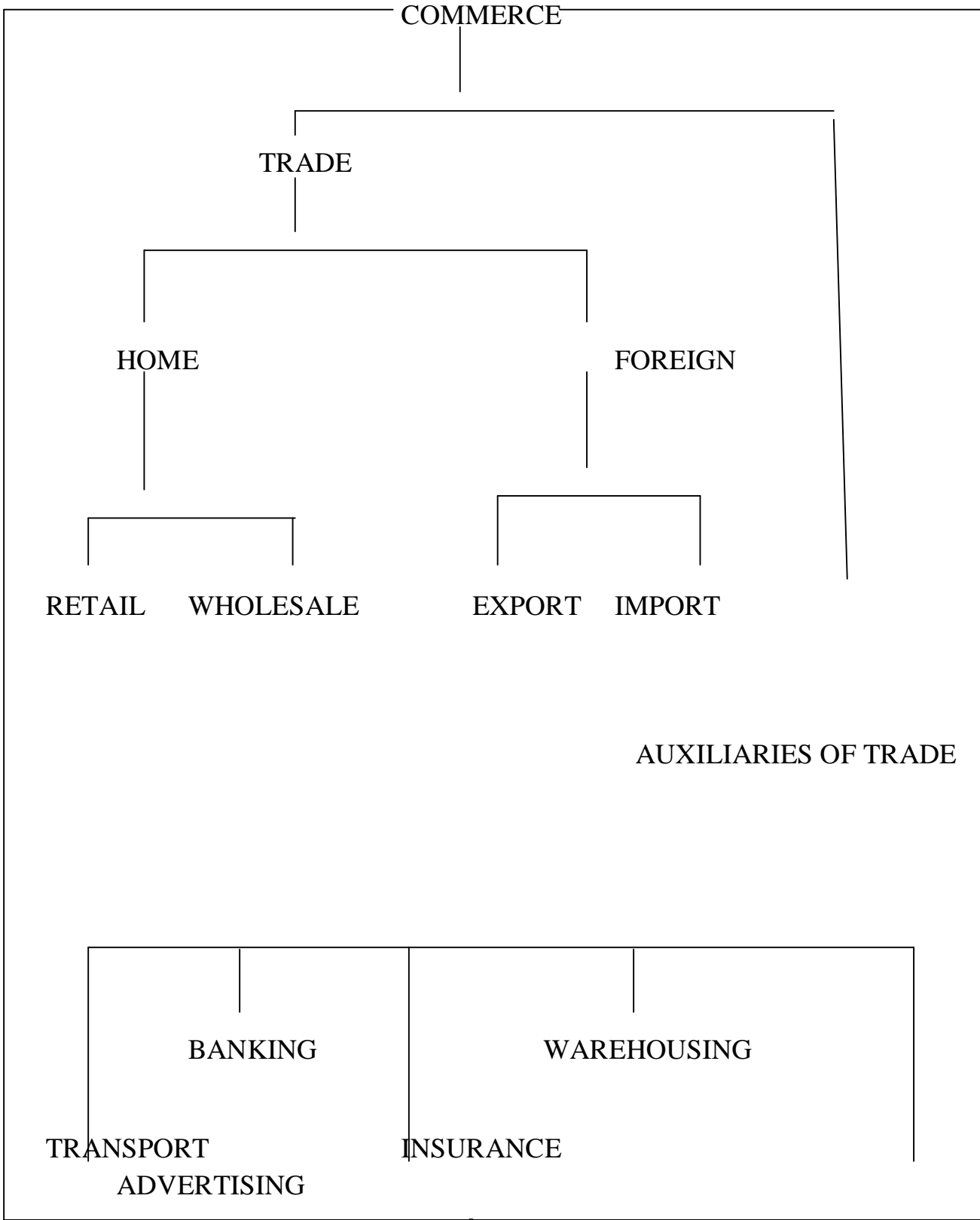


Figure on the definition of commerce<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Jacqueline CHARON et al (1971) Anglais Commercial Larousse (page 4)

## **4-2-REASONS FOR FORMAL COMMERCIAL ENGLISH LEARNING**

Many reasons can motivate the acquisition of the knowledge any human being requires.

As far as the learning of commercial English is concerned the reasons will be classified into two groups: the external factors and the internal factors.

### **4-2-1-EXTERNAL FACTORS**

- On the international scale, the whole world is undergoing gradually the pressure of the capitalists. The United States of America, one of the most powerful countries are dominating fast the economic world and chiefly the commercial sphere with wonderful discoveries in science and technology. Their language – English - is becoming more and more "colonizing".
- The countries of the third-world are increasingly looking for valid economic partners to subjugate their crises. Our lovely country-Benin gets decidedly involved in the policy of economic liberalization and exposes itself to the outside-world. A good deal investments of capital are supposed to be made in Benin hence the contribution or collaboration with foreign businessmen.

### **4-2-2-INTERNAL FACTORS**

- English is the first worldly known language of business. It is spoken in neighbouring countries. Moreover, trade relations are developing between nations and the local authorities want to promote Benin foreign trade. Consequently the role and use of English is increasing. Hence, it would be sensible that all the people involved either way in Business at the international level in our country learn how to communicate in English.
- All the activities in the Business world are based on communication. To communicate adequately in this field and to master the areas of activities, people need "the language of commerce".

The Businessmen should learn how to entertain Business communications; for instance how to negotiate contracts themselves without requiring the help of interpreters or translators.

- Most of the Businessmen of our country are importers. Thus, it would be important that they devote themselves to formal commercial English if they really want to be known as high -class Businessmen, for, they need to deal with their fellows of foreign developed countries. In addition, people who are willing to begin commercial transactions must be trained in order to acquire at least a basic knowledge in this field.
- Apart from a minority who has once learnt English, either at school, by correspondence or in training centres, the great majority of the Businessmen of our country have never attended formally an English course. They just prefer to cope with pidgin. Obviously, our neighbour Nigeria represents one of the most important economic giant in West Africa. But though its official language is English, this simplified code of the language is used at the internal level for mass communication and not for formal "Business".
- The commercial field in general is flourishing nowadays in our country with the emergence of a good many commercial institutions. It would be profitable for them that their staff be trained in commercial English for a better performance.
- The learning of English for formal purposes will contribute greatly to foster the place of Benin in international trade.

Taking into account all those ideas we have highlighted through our analysis, what kind of training in formal commercial English is necessary for our businessmen.

#### **4-3-SUGGESTED CONTENTS OF THE COURSES TO BETAUGHT**

Right from the start, it would be interesting to emphasize that I do not think to discuss the "purely academic" commercial English taught to students at colleges and university. Iam concerned with people who need this kind of training for practical purposes. My aim here is not to make a suggestion for a course or a syllabus design-we are just going to point out a number of guidelines.

The teaching of English for commercial purposes should be organized to satisfy three main objectives:

- 1 - Initiate people to the world of commerce
- 2 - Provide the essential technical vocabulary
- 3 - Initiate people to commercial correspondence.

#### **4-3-1-INITIATE LEARNERS TO THE LANGUAGE AND THE WORLD OF COMMERCE**

All activities in the Business World require communication. To communicate, people need language. Since learners must be trained through the medium of the English language, they need to be accustomed to its adequate use. Therefore, it would be beneficial for those involved in the learning process to acquire and to master a number of structures and skills which will facilitate their communicative interactions.

Learners must be given the basic commercial knowledge. The initiation to the world of commerce is a stage which will allow learners to keep in touch with say, the elementary components of commerce and its different branches just as the means of conducting business.

#### **4-3-2-PROVIDE THE TECHNICAL VOCABULARY**

Though typically based on general Standard English, commercial English is specifically of a technical nature by reference to its lexicon. It is the linguistic code appropriate to the field; a "jargon" which needs to be known for better performance in commercial English. The acquisition of this vocabulary is for instance necessary for the practice of the language skills needed for meetings, discussions, negotiations, telephoning, corresponding, handling data...

#### **4-3-3-INITIATE LEARNERS TO COMMERCIAL CORRESPONDENCE**

This is the written form of commercial activities. In addition to speaking, writing is a crucial element in Business. Consequently, learners should be taught to write their correspondence in English. The course must include a comprehensive gradual programme of exercises and tests designed to develop and practise the organizational skills needed for the writing of business letters and reports, letters of application, curriculum etc...

The above mentioned objectives need to be implemented through a workable strategy that is a programme design. In order to illustrate this point, let

us examine the programme of General Business English course in use at the "Centre Beninois du Commerce Exterieur"(CBCE).

Broadly worked out for all the people concerned with International Trade, the present programme is proposed by the teachers of Business English course at the CBCE. Designed formerly by a United Nation volunteer in charge of the Business English course, it has been renewed and improved.

The training lasts 2 years. The programme design of each year is divided into three parts.

Each of them comprises the topics to be developed.

## **PROGRAMME DESIGN (LEVEL 1)**

**PART 1:** General Revision of Grammatical Structures (Through selected commercial texts).

- Verb tenses (simple present, present continuous, simple past, past continuous... future perfectcontinuous...)
- Passive Voice
- Comparative (as... as, more... than...)
- Reported speech
- Conjunctions (though, although... because... neither...)
- Modal auxiliary verbs (may/might, can/could...must, needdare...)
- Revision

## **PART 2 : Basic Commercial knowledge + Translation**

- The different Branches of Commerce
- Banks and Banking
- Transport
- Incoterms
- Advertising et Publicity
- Warehousing
- Channels of distribution

- Types of Business Concerns
- General organization of a firm
- Personnel of a firm
- Revision

### **PART 3: Business Correspondence + Translation**

- Structure and Presentation of a Business letter
- Content and style of a Business letter
- Making Enquiries
- Reminding
- Apologizing
- Replying to Enquiries
- Placing orders
- Dealing with orders
- Revision.

### **PROGRAMME DESIGN (LEVEL 2)**

#### **PART 1: Telephoning in English + Translation of texts**

#### **PART2: International Trade + translation**

- The organization of shipping
- Loading and Unloading
- Export orders
- Export documents
- Payment in International Trade
- Incoterms

#### **PART3: Business correspondence + translation**

- Packing and Dispatch

- Invoicing, Accounting and Settlement of Accounts
- Complaints and Replies to complaints Apologizing
- Applying for a job and Resume writing
- The game of negotiations

As mentioned before, the programme of both years aims at improving the performance in English of specific groups of civil servants, Businessmen, Industrials... It can however be especially applied to Businessmen or people specifically engaged in Business transactions.

In the first year (level1): a general commercial basic knowledge is necessary for the learners' initiation.

The general revision proposed at the very beginning is a review of some of the basic outstanding grammatical aspects which will facilitate understanding and practice of Business English in general and especially better mastery of the language forms Businessmen mostly need within the framework of their transactions. It must be pointed out that the revision of grammar should be in relationship with Business and be carried out progressively along with the programme. This is to say that illustrations must be based on words drawn from the world of commerce.

Eg : This company is still doing Business with us.

Furthermore, emphasis should be laid on the communication skills, for, despite the fact that the course participants may have different needs, these skills are necessary for them as well during and after the training. Thus, Reading, Speaking, Listening and Writing strategies must be taught and this, in connection with requirements of each level of study.

During the 2nd year (level2) the training could be furthered to complex items, essential for interactions in International Trade.

Anyway, the courses cannot be thoroughly theoretical and thus require practical support namely some pedagogical means and techniques if possible.

#### **4. DIDACTIC IMPLICATIONS**

They will encompass materials and methodology needed for the teaching purpose.

## **\* MATERIALS**

Up to now, no standard appropriate materials have been submitted to teachers. It is then up to them to select adequate materials capable to fit their classroom activities.

Hence, a teacher can use in addition to available Textbooks and dictionaries:

- Audio-cassettes and tape recorder for listening activities and phonetic practice.
- Photocopier to multiply documents.
- Video cassettes to associate images to theory. Learners may follow directly on the screen sequences of specific language items. They may also learn much about Business terms and concepts.
- The teacher may as well allow the use of handbook of business terms and concepts designed to provide support to learners during the courses.

## **\* METHODOLOGY**

In the paragraphs above, we have defined in broad terms the objectives of the Business course without any particular attention to the learner's specific target situation; now the people who will attend the learning cannot obviously need English for the same purposes. The same way, the proposed programme issued by the Benin Centre of Foreign Trade contains no specific details about the specific needs of the course participants. Therefore, the result of the training will be affected. Consequently, we think that the first step to undertake in the teaching/learning process is to study in depth the learners'needs before designing the syllabus to be followed. To reach this goal, a set of questions formulated by the teacher can help them express their immediate and future needs.

Yet, as pointed out earlier, the first main need of the people interested in the learning is to succeed in communicating effectively and correctly in English. Very often however, they master grammatical structures and rules but are unable to express themselves adequately. Thence, it is necessary to find out a methodology which can provide learners with the opportunity to practise the language as suggested by LITTLEWOOD:

“It is not enough to teach learners how to manipulate the structures of the foreign language. They must also develop strategies

for relating these structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time. We therefore provide learners with the opportunities to use the language themselves for communicative purposes" <sup>10</sup>

In this respect, the effective acquisition of the foreign idiom will be facilitated by such techniques as conversations, dialogue between pair groups, interviews, and discussions and why not exposes. Many other means can possibly be found out and used, provided that they contribute to obtain enjoyable results. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to achieve the desired goal while learning because of the amount of difficulties encountered at different levels of the training; that is why, before putting forward our suggestions for a better learning of commercial English, we think it important to study some of the problems relevant to this specific field of study in our country.

## **5. PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR BETTER LEARNING**

### **5.1 PROBLEMS**

The problems relevant to the learning of commercial English are of various kinds. In the context of this work, attention will be given to those referring to materials, learners and teachers.

#### **5.1.1 Materials**

At this very moment, there is a crucial shortage of relevant commercial English materials in our country. The few coursebooks available are rather thoroughly outdated. Consequently, teachers do not find full information on the items to be taught.

- It is difficult, even rare, to come across materials (textbooks) especially designed for specific groups of learners. There is no one specified coursebook teachers can follow for specific subject matters; so they try to get the best from the very limited materials at their disposal.

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<sup>10</sup>Littlewood, W. (1981) Communicative Language Teaching. An introduction. University Press Cambridge

- Available materials are not always authentic, that is they do not really correspond to the teaching/learning situation.
- There is no public or private library to provide essential materials on commercial English. Similarly, there is no specific place for delivering the lectures for the training.
- Equipments (tape-recorders, Video-cassettes, photocopier...) are expensive and thus hardly purchased.

### **5.1.2. Learners**

- The great majority of the Businessmen attending commercial English in our country do not always succeed in mastering quickly the training chiefly because of its technical nature. Consequently, they prefer to work with translators, interpreters or bilingual secretaries.
- Learners feel often "frustrated" because their expectations remain unsatisfied. The courses they are taught do not always relate to their needs in real - life situations.
- Frequently, the knowledge they acquire during the training is unfortunately not formally used in the target situation; sometimes not at all.
- Benin being a French-Speaking country, it is often difficult for learners to acquire an efficient performance in the use of the English language. They are generally good in writing.
- Most of the learners (Businessmen in particular) find it compulsive to give up their activities to attend one, two or more hours of courses per week. For the latter, time is money and even a single minute should not be wasted.

### **5.1.3. Teachers**

- Commercial English being a specific field of study, teachers are rarely formally trained to deliver such lectures. In reality, almost all of them are EGP (English for General Purposes) teachers transferred to ESP. Consequently, they just manage to cope up with subject matters they are in charge of teaching.
- The needs analysis of specific groups of learners is a difficult task. Moreover, their characteristics (age, social class, aptitude to learning, motivation) differ from those of general English course students.

- There is no formal elaborated syllabus. At worse, the great majority of the teachers do not know how to devise a syllabus.

All these problems constitute some of the many obstacles which tend sometimes to hinder the learning process.

Obviously, it is not an easy task to solve these problems. As a matter of fact, we cannot pretend to find definite solutions to them but we are rather going to make a few suggestions which we think will help for a better learning.

## **5.2. SUGGESTIONS FOR BETTER LEARNING**

In this section, we do not intend to solve the difficulties listed above but our objective is to make out a few realistic suggestions for a possible improvement of the commercial English learning.

Given the fact that teachers of commercial English lack an adequate knowledge of specific subjects, we suggest that:

- They have regular contacts with subject specialists and are retrained by them if a proper training overseas is not possible.

Because of the lack of appropriate course books and textbooks, teachers can:

- Try to have correspondents who will probably provide them with new materials and more recent works published on the field in developed countries; and get them learn about modern Business English methodology.
- Contrary to what is done at the "Centre Beninois du Commerce Exterieur," we urge teachers to take into account learners needs and wants so that the latters are taught things relevant to their specific fields.
- In order to help learners interact effectively in English, teachers can try to reinforce communicative teaching in class instead of spending more time on the explanation of grammar and business concepts. They should encourage learners to express themselves and allow them enough room to do so.

- Learners must:

- Strive to interact with their fellows as often as opportunity is offered.

- Try to plan at least once a year long or short stays in English-speaking countries.
- Because of the actual development of technology, computing must be part of the teaching of commercial English. Thus, learners should be taught to associate computer to the management of their Business.

Finally, our country needs reliable sponsors to take up this specific area of study.

## CONCLUSION

The Republic of Benin remains a multilingual country owing to the diversity of languages spoken. This heterogeneous linguistic situation is further complicated by the existence of foreign idioms alongside the multitude of local languages.

Inherited from colonial power, French is the operational language of the whole country. As for English, integrated earlier in the nearby areas by British colonists, its use is steadily spreading in the commercial field. Whether in the formal or the informal range of activities, it is being widely the language of Business.

Indeed, far from remaining the property of native speakers, the language is enjoying now a worldwide currency and becoming the medium for commerce thanks chiefly to the rapidly developing technology of the powerful English-speaking countries.

Because of the increasing importance of English nowadays, a good many people are more and more aware of the necessity to acquire it; so English is no longer the concern of pupils and students only, but rather the preoccupation of large proportion of individuals from different layers of the society. As a matter of fact, there exist a growing number of participants at the English training centres. Such is the case in the "Centre Béninois du Commerce Extérieur" (CBCE) and the American Cultural Center where most of the people attend courses on English for Business.

It makes no doubt that the recent reconsideration granted to the learning of English is a success of our decade; consequently, it would be interesting to encourage the study of English for the satisfaction of specific needs.

Obviously, the concept of English for specific purposes is still new. Thus important efforts and means are required to achieve efficient results since the learning or the teaching of English has always been concerned with General English.

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