

# The Contribution of the American Cultural Center in the Learning of English by the Congolese

MVWALA MONA-TEMBO Jeremih  
Department of English Letters and Civilization  
Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences  
University of Kinshasa

**Abstract:-** Nowadays in the worldwide, reading has become a daily activity for people in fact they understand its impact on the human brain, and they recognize its importance in the development of the mind, and understanding a written word occurs as the mind grows in its ability.

The English language has become the dominant language at the international level and it is included in almost all fields of human life, among them we have education. This article is about the contribution of the American Cultural Center in the learning of English by the Congolese. The Qualitative method was used, including open-ended questions and a survey questionnaire which allowed us to explore ideas and opinions of the sample constituted of 30 persons about our topic. And the data collected demonstrate that the American Cultural Center contributes to the learning of English by the Congolese as it provides them with all necessary tools that can help them to learn well and deepen their English skills, moreover they are attracted because they have free access to the library where there are books to read, the internet and computers to use.

**Keywords:-** Contribution, American Cultural Center, Learning, English.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Documentation is any communicable material that is used to describe, to explain or instruct regarding some attributes of an object, system or procedure such as parts, assembly, installation, maintenance and use. Documentation can be provided on paper, online or on digital or similar media such as audio tape or CDs. It consists of documents which provide a record of something (en.m.wikipedia.org).

Nowadays in the world, reading becomes a daily activity for people who understand the impact of reading for the human brain, they recognize its importance since it develops the mind, shapes the understanding of a written word is that the mind can grow in its ability.

The library is fundamentally an organized set of resources, which include human services as well as the entire spectrum (e.g. video, hypermedia). Libraries have physical components such as space, equipment, and storage media, intellectual components such as collection policies. Libraries are today considered as knowledge's houses, they are considered as the curated collections of sources of information selected by experts and made accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing, or in a quiet environment conducive to study (en.wikipedia.com). Libraries provide physical or digital material, and maybe a physical location or a virtual space. They can include books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, Blu-ray discs, e-books.

The English language has become nowadays the dominant language at the international level in all fields of human life, such as: communication, sciences, business, aviation, diplomacy and tourism. For learning and improving English language skills, people use different ways to achieve it such as attending English centers, libraries to read English books, making researches and following online English courses with videos. And this paper investigates and shows us how Congolese people acquire English skills just by attending the American Cultural Center.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### ➤ English

The term English is derived from angelic, the speech of angles which was one of the Germanic tribes that invaded England during the fifth century. It is a Germanic language of the Indo-European family, originated in England and it is the dominant language of the United States of America, and the United Kingdom.

English is a necessity for most people in today's world and it is an official language of India, the Philippines, Singapore and many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including South-Africa (Art: English Language by Simon Potter: University of Liverpool, 1945-65). It is the first choice of foreign language in almost the other countries of the world,

and this status gave it the position of a lingua franca, a language used as means of communication between populations speaking vernaculars that are not mutually intelligible.

As time has passed, the global importance of English has increased considerably to the point that it is now considered as the main language of commerce, diplomacy, sciences and technology, and it is now so widely spoken and has such a level of influence that it is sometimes referred to the lingua franca of the modern era.

#### ➤ *English Language in and Around DRC*

DRC is a multilingual country where an estimated 242 languages are spoken, and among them, 215 are living languages and the official language inherited from the colonial period is French. Four indigenous languages have the status of national languages: kituba, called kikongo, lingala, Swahili and ciluba (Luanga 2012).

DRC is an expanding circle space where English as a foreign language mainly as a school subject has been used for special purposes and is considered as an arising language in the country where it is used for academic purposes and job needs too (Buhendwa 2010). The majority of people who live in DRC especially students prefer to continue their studies in an English speaking environment, and research conducted by Professor Buhendwa in 2010 shows that 70 percent of Congolese who live in DRC precisely in Kinshasa city speak English and it is now considered as an important tool for being accepted in the community.

English is sometimes used in Congolese everyday life, and when you want to interact or communicate with strangers, you need to get some English language skills because the majority of foreigners speak English and all their job opportunities include English in their criteria of selection (Buhendwa 2011). Around DRC, English is spoken in many countries in the East, precisely in Rwanda, Uganda, South and North Soudan, Tanzania and in the Southern Africa, precisely in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi and South Africa where English was first brought at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

And another reason which explains the presence of English in DRC is a member of the African Union and the language required in this community is English.

#### ➤ *Learning*

Learning is a process which occupies an important role in molding the structure of our personality and behavior. It develops socially accepted behaviors and also there is equal chance of building negative side of human behavior. It requires to meet some personal need as it is purposeful and goal oriented. Recognizing such needs enable us to evaluate whether that learning has been worthwhile of human behavior (William Dharmaraj, 2015-2016).

Learning involves new ways of doing things (with no limit) to adopt the new ways and means to attain the goal. It is a continuous comprehensive process which involves different methods and covers native, cognitive and affective domains of human behavior. It is the process by which behavior in a broader sense is originated or changes through practice or training (Kingsley and R. Garry 1957).

#### ➤ *The Learning of English*

Learning English as a second or foreign language can be challenging because it is full of complexities. A lot of people learn English at school, where English is a common subject, but there is also a category of people who prefer to spend time to learn English skills by themselves.

And in order to improve their English skills, some of them attend English corners, centers, libraries or read books that can help them learn the language. And for them, books are great because they teach them grammar, vocabulary, even if only reading books is not enough for learning English, but they combine reading with listening, because when it comes to carry out a conversation, the fact of listening more to those speaking will enable them learn useful vocabulary and grammar without even realizing or memorizing them ([www.englishexpress.com.s.g](http://www.englishexpress.com.s.g)).

#### ➤ *Cultural Center*

Culture is the sphere revealing the human evolution, because a human being cannot exist in an uncultured environment. Culture as an affective social power which is always in the spotlight. In specific areas of research, the cultural status is mostly related to creative activities; however, it may also be researched in the sphere of education, promotion and expression of sociability.

The oxford lexicon dictionary defines a cultural center as the center of cultural activity including a language in an area or a region, a public building or site for the exhibition or promotion of arts and culture, especially of a particular region or people; cultural means relating to a particular society and its ideas, customs and arts.

A cultural center is an organization, a building or complex that promotes culture and arts of a country. Cultural centers can be neighborhood community arts organizations, private facilities, government-sponsored and activists ([e.m.wikipedia.org](http://e.m.wikipedia.org)). And one of the important roles of these centers is to develop social intellectuality of individuals. Cultural centers are designated to form and satisfy information, educational, cultural needs of the library's users and workers. Their work is focused on the conducting of events and socio-cultural significance; galleries, exhibitions, museum, educational events, conferences ([www.nbl.by](http://www.nbl.by)).

### ➤ *American Cultural Center*

Formally called information resource center, the American Cultural Center was officially opened on Tuesday, June, 2019 and was baptized as Phillis Wheatley American Center, and it is located on 498 Lieutenant Colonel Lukusa Avenue, facing the engen station in the Gombe Township.

Its objective is to help Congolese people have a better understanding of the United States of America, its policy, culture and values. It also provides modern well-equipped services using information and communication technologies devices.

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- The American Cultural Center is made up of printed materials including over 4000 books as well as various electronic resources (online catalog, full search, database, e-journals, periodicals, newspapers locator, virtual library, virtual periodical, reading room, E-book virtual library), covering the following themes:
- Bilateral USA-DRC relations, -Democracy and the rule of law, -Administration and management, -American's politics and Economics, American society and culture.
- The American Cultural Center provides information and communication technology and other services to Congolese seeking information and knowledge about the United States of America, its culture and language.
- The American Cultural Center provides to its users the 21<sup>th</sup> century methods of research and offers access to ICTs devices, including CDs, DVDs and the internet. It also provides internet training to help them leverage the new world wide web alike.

We have to note that, Congolese people have free access to everything we quoted previously, the USA embassy in DRC gives Congolese people the opportunity to learn English language by themselves and improve their English performances using all devices and materials within the American Cultural Center.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. *Participants*

This study used a convenience sample of 30 people from the American Cultural Center (25 male users and 5 female users).

### B. *Instrumentation*

A survey questionnaire was used and given to the users of the American Cultural Center, including open-ended questions (qualitative design).

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What is the American Cultural center?
- What are the objectives of the American Cultural center?
- What do you expect from the American Cultural center?
- What do you exactly do in the American Cultural center?
- Reading English books
- Reading books in general
- Using computers for researches in the internet
- Using computers for watching English videos online
- What is the importance of the American Cultural center for you?
- Do you think that the American Cultural center contributes to your English learning?

### C. *Data Analysis*

Data were prepared, organized, reviewed, explored and presented in a cohesive manner and theory was formulated. A narrative analysis was used to reformulate stories of respondents taking into account the context of each case and different experiences of each respondent.

## IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Let's remember that 6 questions were asked to my informants which allowed me to collect possible data from the American Cultural center. Through my survey questionnaire on the basis of 30 sample that I surveyed, 83% of my respondents were male and only 17% of them were female. I have noticed that in the identity variables, men are more numerous than women, that means the American Cultural center is more visited by men. And concerning age variable, 67% of my informants are in 20-30 years old and 33% of them are in 30-45 years old. And as you can clearly read numbers, the American Cultural center is more intended for young people, and the majority of them are students from different Universities of Kinshasa.

To the first question, students didn't answer with the same words, but all of them insisted on the point that the American Cultural center is an American space which talks about the American Culture, customs, values and policy. And their answers reveal that the American Cultural center is not a kind of English center which teaches English, but a space which gives more information about the United States of American.

To the second question, the respondents said that the American Cultural center aims to help Congolese to have a better understanding of the United States of America through their values, culture, customs and policy (the center aims to convey the American culture). About this question, I have noticed that the respondents were well informed about the corner they take part, they know exactly the goals pursue by the center, and they said that they can't participate in

something without knowing what kind of activities are done inside.

To the third question, the respondents told me that they go to the American Cultural center because there is free access within the building where they can find books, computers and the internet. They are interested by the technology settle in the American Cultural center which help them to do researches physically and virtually.

To the fourth question, 57% of my respondents said that once inside the American Cultural center, they read English books because those books allow them to improve their English skills. With reading, they learn new words and enrich their vocabulary. I noticed that 80% of my informants who go to the American Cultural center come for reading books in general, and the majority of them read English books (with 57%). I have understood that even if the name of the space is American Cultural center, it does not mean that only English activities take place inside; the space also contains books written in other languages than English, and most of them are written in French. So, the American Cultural Center doesn't receive only English learners and speakers, but everyone depending on the field of research of each one.

To the fifth question, my respondents argue that the American Cultural Center is important for them as it gives them the opportunity to enjoy the new technology settled in the building where they found interesting things such as computers, soft and physical books, internet. They are most interested by the materials that the American Cultural center has, and the building is well equipped and everything inside is free.

To the sixth question, 57% of my respondents agreed that the American Cultural center contributes to their English learning as it provides them with all necessary tools that can help them to learn well and deepen their English skills. And all those arguments let me understand that inside the American Cultural center, we have 3 kind of people who attend the corner, there is one group of people who come for the English language, another one come for other fields of study than English, and the last come for using computers where the internet is free.

## V. CONCLUSION

After a very long process of investigation on the contribution of the American Cultural center in the learning of English by the Congolese, data collected demonstrate that 57% of my respondents said that the American Cultural center contributes to the learning of English by the Congolese as it provides them with all necessary tools which can help them to learn and deepen their English skills. The data demonstrate that Congolese people are interested by the American Cultural

center because of its free access inside the building where there are books to read, internet and computers to use.

The data collected show that the American Cultural center is not a kind of English center which teaches English classes, but it is an American space which talks about the United States of America, their culture, customs, values and policy. The corner receives three kind of people, there is the first one who come especially for English, another one comes for other fields of study in general (law, medicine, French, Spanish), and the last group comes especially for internet purposes (computers).

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