

# The Essence of Foreign Language Learning in Today's Globalizing World: Benefits and Hindrances

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## Abstract

This paper highlights the essence of foreign language learning in today's globalizing world as well as underscores its benefits and hindrances. It emphasizes that foreign language does collectively bind us together as human beings predicated upon our irresistible interdependence in various ways. Rationally speaking, being knowledgeable of a second or foreign language is extremely pertinent because it provides numerous life time opportunities. Yielding the dividends of studying abroad, employment, personal development, security, political and economic benefits among others make foreign language learning absolutely beneficial. Consequently, this paper sees foreign language conversance as a key that could unlock the door of your life and it must not be ignored. However, despite its overarching benefits, foreign language learning is continually constrained with the challenges of complexity, ignorance of its importance, learner-native speaker gaps, weak policies and inadequate support. Some of these challenges are related to the constructs of motivational beliefs and strategies which are vital to foreign language learning because learners must believe in themselves, value tasks and use appropriate strategies if they are to succeed. Finally, it recommends a collective concerted effort against monolingualism, but supports the formulation of salient policies and programs including the inclusion of foreign languages in the curricula, increased financial and moral supports, and early teaching of foreign languages to kids.

**Key words:** foreign language, language benefits and barriers, motivational beliefs, language learning strategies, globalizing world.

## 1. Introduction

It has become an irrefutable fact that the world is a global village. This solidifies the point that despite diversified peoples, ideologies, political affiliations, economic and social activities, and cultural beliefs across the world, there exists a glaring necessity for exchanges and interactions. In other words, every human being, poor or rich, developed nation or developing nation, each needs one another either directly or indirectly to move ahead or survive. In the words of Sandoval (2005), nations are dependent on each other. It is practically impossible for any country to graciously subsist in isolation of others. This is indicative of interdependence amongst countries, regions and even continents to succeed. The point being noted here is that amidst our differences in beliefs, values, customs, interests, languages, policies, principles, laws, ties, etc., we must endeavor to foster friendly collaboration, consolidation, cooperation and interdependence aimed at making the world a better place to live.

In the quest to achieve the aforementioned, one of the rudimentary things for consideration is foreign language knowledge, which happens to be at the core in the actualization of these feats. In 2005, Sandoval quotes American educator June K. Philips saying that foreign language learning is a vital connection in the interdependent relationships of the next century. And, why language knowledge you may wonder? Well, there are a variety of phenomena to consider about the advantages of being knowledgeable of a second or foreign language. Of course, its essence in today's globalizing world is the strategic focus of this paper and its detailed significance will be elucidated later. But in the meantime, take a moment to critically ponder on this scenario. Imagine a monolingual American diplomat on a bilateral cooperative mission, a French citizen on a business expedition, a British professional desirous of a teaching job and a Liberian student intending to study abroad if all journeyed to China, for instance, to seek their respective interests. How effective, proficient and successful each of them would be if they all arrived in China taking into account the language barrier? Just pause for split seconds and soberly reminiscent.

Definitely, it is obvious that you've got numerous points seriating through your mind. It is surmised that you will agree that all of them will inevitably encounter some challenges because of their non-Chinese language communication competence. For a typical example, the monolingual American diplomat will find it difficult in harmoniously discussing bilateral cooperative issues between his country and China if he and his Chinese

counterpart cannot understand well each other's mode of communication, English versus Chinese. You might argue that there are interpreters and that this is their job, but don't be insensitive to the fact that not every facet of information you would appreciate putting across through an interpreter to your discussant. There could be some cagey or confidential issues and emitting them through an interpreter could be detrimental. This point is intended to give you a gist of how profitable it will be for you to master a second or foreign language in today's changeably dependent world.

Foreign language has to do with a method of communication that is infrequently used in one's native country. According to Mitchell and Myles (1998), it is a language that has no immediate local uses. It is estimated that between 6,000 and 7,000 number of languages exist in the world. Prominent among these languages include: English, French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Portuguese, Hindi, Russian, Bengali and German. Being conversant with two or more of such international languages is extremely beneficial. For instance, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1999) reports that global research shows that bilingual people tend to do better at IQ tests when compared with monolingual people of the same socioeconomic class. Other underlining goals have, in addition, been established with regards to foreign language learning. For example, Lantolf and Sunderman (2001) found four main goals for the study of languages including reading literature in other languages which increases one's understanding of other cultures, practical and utilitarian goals; that is, students believe that language learning will help them find a job and that it is useful in business, as well as personal endeavors. They also recognized that the study of languages enhances one's intellectual and linguistic development because studying other languages improves the person's native language ability, as well as, his or her general reasoning and leads to improvement in personal enjoyment of and pleasure from the benefits of traveling to and learning about other cultures that have prestige. Accordingly, passing on part of one's heritage to children, bridging generations and improving communication within the family and with the extended family, building international links, experiencing different cultures, being able to compare values and worldviews, and becoming biliterate are part of other benefits that are usually accrued by language learners (Marcos, 1998).

However, despite the manifold advantages foreign language carries, much pertinence has not been attached to its learning or acquisition. This is a glaring truth. For instance, a 1979 report by a presidential commission of the United States of America acknowledges that monolingual society that neglects teaching of foreign tongues is at a great disadvantage in dealing with foreign powers. Gathering intelligence is enfeebled for lack of understanding of the philosophical cultural content of a country if its language is not properly understood. It notes that lack of Americans' foreign language competence diminishes their capabilities in diplomacy, in foreign trade, and in citizen comprehension of the world in which they live and compete (Sandoval, 2005). Considering when this challenge was detected which is over thirty years now and up to present, one can possibly signpost that a monolingual society, not only in the US, but in other countries that had initially conceived similar believability, still persists in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Coleman (2009) observes that language issues appear invisible to policy-makers at the highest level. The point here is not geared towards demurring against efforts that have been fostered to annihilate any monolingual society. However, it is an illustration that we have not dexterously tackled this problem which seems to be a pandemic menace to interrelationships between and among states and their peoples. Apparently, our words are not equated to our deeds.

But, why should this be of concern to the current and future generations? It should be because language does collectively bind us together as human beings predicated upon our irresistible interdependence. Language, therefore, impinges on all aspects of public and private life and pervades all aspects of society (Lo Bianco, 1987). Lo Bianco believes individual, ethnic, racial, and national identification and allegiances are often inextricably bound up with language. In the words of Charles (2007), language issues concern everyone and that knowledge is created and shared through language use. Coccia (1979) also emphasizes that the neglect of foreign languages in schools should concern everyone, but especially principals and teachers of foreign languages. He notes that the study of foreign languages is more practically valuable than ever as young people today seek to relate to the global community, consequently, more people travel to foreign lands today than ever before. Indeed, even in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the traveling of people from one country to the other remains and will continue to persist unabatedly. For instance, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 1980 reported that the population of internationally mobile students was about 1.1 million; the number increased slightly to 1.3 million in 1990 but by 2009 it had tripled to 3.4 million. This is an indication that one cannot state succinctly the need for and the value of studying a foreign language (Coccia, 1979).

It must be pointed out that since the 1970s, considerable research in second or foreign language learning has been devoted to studying individual differences in language learners (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002). Researchers have endeavored to establish how well learners proceed in learning a second or foreign language and what it entails to develop its communication competence. However, much emphasis has not been dedicated to ideally discussing the significance of foreign language learning, which could enlighten the minds of foreign language learners and augment their resolve to unwaveringly forge ahead in their quests to achieve foreign language competencies. Cognizant of this fact, therefore, the purpose of this paper is to highlight and re-emphasize the essence of second or foreign language learning in today's globalizing world. Additionally, this paper will pinpoint and discuss some benefits and hindrances of foreign language learning in order to advance recommendations. This journey begins with a dichotomy on second or foreign language on one hand, and learning and acquisition on the other hand.

## **2. Foreign/Second Language Learning/Acquisition**

This segment tends to provide a contrast between key words mentioned in the above sub-heading as it relates to language. Reading between the lines, foreign language and second language, on one hand, and language learning and language acquisition, on the other hand, have some close relatedness. Foreign, in short, usually means distant, away, external or overseas, etc. So, adding the word foreign to a language makes it a language that is barely spoken in one's native land or if it is not so, it might have been borrowed from another country or countries, thus, not still widely used and not presumably accepted by the majority population of that nation. Similarly, second language has to do with additional language(s) learned after one's first language. It is imperative to highlight that first language is acquired unconsciously during one's childhood; the person often feels comfortable to communicate in it, while second language is normally learned during adolescence or adulthood. Based on the point stated, it is obvious that someone's second language can also be his/her foreign language. As a matter of fact, second language is not limited to itself but other languages learned thereafter inclusive of foreign language. Gardner (1985), Mitchell and Myles (1998) note that second language can be a third, fourth, or fifth language. And, consequently, individuals can learn a particular language both as second language and foreign language, predicated upon one's language background. Therefore, the concepts of foreign language and second language are being considered identical and will be used interchangeably in this paper. This proposition was also upheld by Mitchell and Myles in 1998.

Similarly, the words, acquisition and learning are usually added to second language such as second language acquisition (SLA) and second language learning (SLL) as well as foreign language acquisition and foreign language learning. In 1998, Mitchell and Myles consider learning as conscious and acquisition as unconscious. Also, in providing distinction between the two identical concepts, acquisition and learning as it relates to language, VanPatten and Jessica (2007) note that acquisition takes place naturally and outside of awareness; it emerges spontaneously when learners engage in normal interaction in the second language (L2), where the focus is on meaning, while learning involves explicit knowledge about language such as its rules and patterns. Though VanPatten and Jessica's argument has some basis, the proposition of acquisition of language taking place naturally and outside of awareness seems debatable. Some learners can seek acquisition of language by creating avenues to practice their fluency of the language with native speakers through interactions. By doing this, the issue of acquiring language naturally and outside of awareness is uncertain. During language acquisition, especially a second/foreign language, one's awareness is inclusive. As it relates to their view about learning of a language, it is much clearer. Learning of a language imbeds appropriate knowledge of its rules and patterns. However, even during the acquisition of language, adherence to the rules and patterns is vital. In the absence of doing so, it will be quite difficult to master such language. Preferably, the inclusion of both learning and acquisition mechanisms is pivotal in enhancing one's new language knowledgeability.

## **3. Benefits of foreign language learning in today's globalizing world**

Firstly, it is an imperative to extrapolate that there exists innumerable number of benefits of foreign language knowledge. Depending on your own situation, knowledge of a second or foreign language could be very helpful to you. However, this paper highlights and discusses the following benefits relating to communication, mobility, economic, social and political dimensions, employment, security, and personal and social development.

### **3.1 Communication benefits**

One of the most singularly important roles of a foreign language is for the purpose of communication. Basically, communication entails the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). According

to Pearson and Nelson, it requires perceiving, interpreting, and comprehending meaning as well as interactions between people and that such activity must be continuous and the message has to be understood among the communicators. Without understanding the language of a particular locality, it sometimes becomes mind-numbing to live in such environment. Finding means of meeting daily needs and wants, addressing problems, and interacting with others can become quite inexorable. To avoid such situations, learning a foreign language of a targeted country is the best alternative.

### 3.2 Studying abroad benefits

In the quest for formal education, one of the critical essentials that must be taken into account is language. This is mostly vital when such learning must take place outside of one's native land with different language setting. By this, it becomes a precondition for learners to learn a 'foreign language'. Junor and Usher (2008) claim that general language proficiency and cultural integration (culture shock) often hold individuals back from choosing to study abroad. This emphasizes the point that conversance of a foreign language is indispensable in studying abroad. Accordingly, certain colleges and universities require at least two years of high school foreign language study for admission. Moreover, some tertiary institutions in the UK, USA and Australia, just to name a few, often insist that would-be students attain certain test scores in the language to be taught in prior to admission, while China, for instance, demands a one year intensive Chinese preparation study in order to undergo a Chinese taught program. This speaks volume of foreign language knowledgeability essence in increasing one's chances of securing an admission to a college or university elsewhere in the world.

### 3.3 Employment benefits

As the world's population continues to increase at an alarming proportion, one of the main concerns of learners nowadays is employment. In many countries today, the supply of graduates habitually surpasses the demand for graduates. Predicated upon this and other factors, getting absorbed into the job market remains a competitive task. As a result, employers always seek to employ people with optimal potentials and talents aimed at ensuring effectiveness and proficiency based on their goals. Many fields such as the travel industry, communications, advertising, education and engineering have sectors dealing with foreign language study. Having better employment opportunities and greater chances of excelling in business suggest the importance of foreign language study (Osborne, 2003). For instance, Grosse, Tuman, and Critz (1998) found employment opportunities as the most important factor for the preferment of a language by Thunderbird students. Consistent with language skill oriented demands, graduates with more than one language competence stand the chance of enhanced employment opportunities. Today, learning languages other than one's own may become a matter of keeping one's job and maintaining one's survival (Tochon, 2009). It is indisputable that some jobs currently, especially in the UN circle and at other diplomatic levels now require some level of knowledge of a second or foreign language. Being able to speak an international language apart from one's own, no doubt, could save one from the frustration and nightmare of forfeiting a job in one's country or else in the world that obliges foreign language knowledge.

### 3.4 Economic benefits

In today's world, there exists a greater economic interdependence. Bilateral and multi-lateral companies and industries need soothe collaboration and cooperation. In the process of business deals as well as transactions, understandable communication must be carried out. Second or foreign language again steps in to go through this process. When the ground is settled and the deal finalized, there is usually a need for a team of linguistic technocrats both at local, national and international levels to promote and sell produced products or commodities to potential consumers to maximize profits. With foreign language know-how, the prospects of being enthralled by employers in this area are imminent. In a survey of eight language classes, Grosse, et al. (1998) found economic importance of the language as the second key factor in the selection of foreign language for study.

### 3.5 Political benefits

Politics is a powerful tool. The political trend of any nation determines its route. It is what determines the stability or instability of every fabric of a given society. Therefore, its vitality cannot be overstated. Of course, second or foreign languages have a major role to play in the governance processes as well as bilateral and multilateral cooperation. One consequence of the neglect for other languages is that countries isolate themselves and lose international contracts and power by their incapacity to communicate in other languages and with other cultures, not to speak of other issues of political importance (Trochon, 2009). At the beginning of this paper, you followed an intuitive scenario on a diplomat and other individuals. Henceforth, it is fervently hoped that you got

a gist of the political relevance of a foreign language from that scenario. Retrospectively, a 1979 report by a presidential commission of the US reminds us of a great disadvantage of any monolingual society in dealing with foreign powers and an enfeebled nature in gathering intelligence (Sandoval, 2005). To reiterate, it could be quite devastating for a nation with serious second or foreign language gaps. Diplomacy, bilateral and multilateral relations, cooperation, and advocacy would be hampered. This can be triggered by the inability of requisite designated Government's individuals and functionaries to adequately put their nations' cases through as a result of communication barriers. Also, the gathering of some security intelligence can be knotty to accomplish if those involved don't comprehend the language and culture of the targeted nation.

### 3.6 Security benefits

You may wonder how being seasoned to a second or foreign language can profit you security-wide? Absolutely, it does. Take another scenario. Imagine, you found yourself in a locality where there exists ethnic or tribal wrangling between two groups and you are a member of one of the groups. Each group member is a threat to the other. Envisage what will happen to you if you were captured by the opposite group. Indeed, being capable of speaking the tribal dialect of the opposite group could save your life from harm. This is just a dialect, what about the bigger one, second or foreign language. It is a key that could unlock the door of your life and keep you moving. Moreover, in order for security and even non-security personnel to gather certain intelligences, they must be familiar with the language in which they want to galvanize the intelligences in. In the absence of this, said expedition will be an illusion.

### 3.7 Personal development benefits

Learning a foreign language also helps in our individual development as well. Research has shown that the study of a foreign language can make an individual to understand his own language better (Osborne, 2003). According to Osborne, it also deepens the understanding of one's own culture and provides a positive effect on one's intellectual growth as well as enriches and enhances mental development; it contributes significantly to the development of individual intelligence. Osborne notes that by learning languages, students develop a range of skills for making meaning from situations, texts and technologies. Besides, learning a language can give students the motivation and confidence to engage with other users of the language, and to gain a wider sense of belongingness.

## 4. Hindrances to foreign language learning

First of all, it is prudent to highlight that whatever possesses benefits does have hindrances. Hindrances, in this context, refer to stumbling blocks, obstacles, hitches, hurdles, difficulties and challenges that are encountered during the pursuit of second or foreign language learning or acquisition. This is because good things don't always come on the silver platter. Therefore, an individual needs to value, put in effort, and show interest in the task, which is not always rosy.

In this paper, a number of possible hindrances identified therein are proportional to some key concepts that have always characterized foreign language studies. They include: culture which is defined as shared way of life of a group of people (Berry, Poortings, Segall & Dasen, 2002), and motivation viewed by Gardner in 1985 as the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning language plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language and as "what gets you going, keeps you going, and determines where you're trying to go" (Slavin, 2006, p-317). And, language learning strategies defined by White (1995) as the operations or processes which learners deploy to learn the target language (TL). This theoretical paper, therefore, argues that based on their correlational relationship with these hindrances which bind them into intermarriage, ignoring them could trigger far-reaching impediment to foreign language conversance. They are as follows:

### 4.1 Language complexity and cultural variance

One of the hindrances of multi-linguistic competencies is the varying complexities of languages intertwined with culture. In 1998, Mitchell and Myles point out that language learning is a complex phenomenon. And, these languages have their own morphological, syntactical, and phonological changes and differences, which could make learning them more challenging. For instance, native-speakers of English who want to master Chinese language have to contend with at least 3,500 commonly-used characters plus four different tones to demonstrate literacy in Chinese language (Huang & Ao, 2009 quoted by Yun, Liang & Hooi 2011), which is far above the 26 alphabetical letters of English. Compared to learning English, familiarizing oneself with Chinese characters



backed by pinyin which usually begins with Nǐ hǎo: 你好 (hello), Xièxiè: 谢谢 (thank you) and Duìbuqǐ: 对不起 (sorry), etc. requires full-time study.

Besides, the intrusion of the learners' first language into the new language being learned is an issue of concern. Despite this apparent muddle, one needs to master the listening, speaking, writing and reading skills of a particular language. In addition, learners of a foreign language must get accustomed to the culture of which the language originates. According to Dornyei in 2001, Williams contends that learning of a foreign language involves far more than simply learning skills, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviors and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner.

All human societies have language, and language forms the basis for the creation and maintenance of human cultures (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008). Matsumoto and Juang believe that language plays a critical role in the transmission, maintenance, and expression of our culture. According to Dornyei (2001), Brown argues that foreign language learning entails learning a second culture to some degree, even if you never actually set foot in the foreign country where the language is spoken. It is proposed that language serves as a vehicle that conveys the embodiment of a particular society and its learners stand the opportunity of being fully putative and absorbable in such society where the language is being spoken; they are easily able to participate in the socio-economic, political, educational and cultural activities of that country in one way or the other because of their adaption to another group's language in which culture is imbedded. The embedment of culture into language emasculates its learning process for some individuals due to variant cultures across borders. In this regard, coping and adapting to another group's culture can sometimes be challenging and complex.

#### 4.2 Negative belief of language difficulty

Though each foreign language is drenched with its own complex nature, our beliefs towards it is also a problem. These beliefs are usually impregnated with self-doubts and low level of motivation which generally affect language learners' success. Accordingly, literatures reviewed by this paper point to the fact that in order to successfully study and master the communicative competence of a foreign language, the possession of motivational beliefs is pertinent. In 2001, Dornyei puts it that 99 per cent of language learners who really want to learn a foreign language (i.e. who are really motivated) will be able to master a reasonable working knowledge of it as a minimum, regardless of their language aptitude. Henceforth, one can unarguably say that without motivation it will be difficult, if not impossible, to attain success in any pursuit like the desire to develop foreign language competence or even in the quest for a productive life. It has been established that most failures begin with the loss of motivation. Alderman (2004) indicates those students who have optimum motivation have an edge because they have adaptive attitudes and strategies, such as maintaining intrinsic interest, goal setting, and self-monitoring. In the absence of motivation there is high infeasibility to exert effort in an activity which could eventually lead to failure. For this reason, the concept of motivation, either extrinsic or intrinsic, has continued to be given keen attention; research findings show that the beliefs appertaining motivation determine the extent to which the person considers, values, puts in effort, and shows interest in the task (see Bandura, 1981, 1993; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2007; Mousoulides & Philippou, 2005). In so doing, the learner's enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are key determinants of success or failure. "Without commitment, more students are likely to drop out in this climate" (Alderman, 2004, p.10).

The possession of negative beliefs by language learners in many occasions leads to poor judgment of their capabilities, which has diminishing returns in foreign language acquisition. As propounded by Bandura (1986), efficacy visualizes success scenarios that provide positive guides and supports for performance while those who doubt their efficacy visualize failure scenarios and dwell on many things that can go wrong. If learners are filled with this ill-fated belief, their desire to endure any preceding challenges they may encounter will deteriorate drastically and failure becomes impending because such learners are more likely to have high anxiety in the learning of a foreign language. Said anxiety will thwart their ability to retrieve what they may have learned in a particular language. However, with positive experiences and perceptions, second language motivation can be increased (Marcos, 1998). Also, as compared with less anxious students, the more anxious learners judge language learning to be relatively difficult, the more they perceive themselves to possess relatively low levels of foreign language aptitude (Horwitz, 1996). Therefore, learners of a foreign language need to show high degree of commitment and persistence void of self-doubts or negative beliefs, but rather maintain a relaxed and focused mind in order to succeed.

#### 4.3 Ignorance of foreign language significance resulting to low value

The good old book says: 'My people perish from a lack of knowledge' according to the Holy Bible, Hosea 4:6 KJV. It is often said that ignorance is a disease. This brief line might be overlooked; nevertheless, it requires some binding acceptance. Being ignorant of something has the proclivity to destroy one's chances in life and even leads to one's demise. Certainly, ignorance to the importance of foreign language knowledge still continues to deluge world-wide today. It has been established that students begin to realize the essence of foreign language knowledge during the latter part of their education. For instance, Grosse, et al. (1998) survey revealed that almost two-thirds of Thunderbird students made decision concerning foreign language at the beginning of their graduate programs. Grosse and his colleagues, then, predicted that it is possible that the remaining one-third might take a less commonly taught language if given a stronger rationale concerning the language's employment opportunities, economic importance, cultural aspects and travel opportunities.

Due to the lack of initial adequate awareness on the significance of foreign languages, it has led millions of people universally to ascribe little or no value to foreign languages; they hold illusory belief that they are unimportant. More unfortunately, the student populace, the prospective drivers of this world formed a part of this falsehood that foreign languages are not significant; they remain stagnant in language learning thus giving cold shoulder or low value to the attainment of foreign language acknowledge. It is perceived that some learners are uninterested in learning a foreign language on grounds that it might not profit them in flagrant disregard that the society is becoming more dynamic day-after- day, and cognizance of a foreign language could become an asset for them. Consequently, many students have learned a second or foreign language for a number of years, but their communication proficiency is below average. By dwelling in the myth of non-foreign language essence, students could only seek immediate extrinsic benefits of the language like studying to score good grades but not the long term life time benefits. Therefore, it behooves us all to assist in eradicating this misconception by promoting the essence and value of foreign languages across the world.

#### 4.4 Learner-native speaker gaps affecting strategy use

One of the observable hindrances of foreign language learning is learner-native speaker gaps. In some areas where foreign languages are being taught or learned, there exists wide gaps between learners and native speakers. These gaps relate to the difficulty language learners encounter in intermingling and practicing what they have learned in the second or foreign language due to non-availability or partial availability of native speakers. Because of this, learners often find it extremely cumbersome to interact with speakers of the new language being learned. For example, some Liberian and Chinese students have been learning French and English, respectively for five or more years in schools, but some can barely express themselves in these languages. On the contrary, some students from these two mentioned nationalities have been learning the same languages where there are no learner-native speaker gaps and they were able to master them at a substantial level in a year. This is not, however, strange; it emphasizes the importance of an environment for interactions between learners and speakers of a particular foreign language. The existence of these gaps is not the fault of the learners.

Social cognitive learning theory by Bandura (1997) reminds us that much of human learning occurs in a social environment and by observing others; people acquire knowledge of rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and attitudes. Strategies help determine how and how well students learn a second or foreign language (Oxford, 2003). She indicates that appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence and can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Additionally, Oxford (1990) notes that strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence. By using learning strategies, learners stand the chance of optimizing their learning capabilities, thus stimulating their language competence. Language learning strategies are linked to learner native-speaker gaps based on the social text. In 1990, Oxford identified six language learning strategies, one of them being, social strategies which can assist students to learn through interactions with others. In the domain of language learning, this is usually done between learners and native speakers of the language being learned.

Additionally, a language learner may have great motivation, but without the opportunity to practice a second language in meaningful situations, he or she never becomes truly proficient (Marcos, 1998). As learners of a foreign language interact with native speakers, it helps them to practice the language use, thus, making them to observe their own production, which is crucial. In the process, learners attempt to speak out what they have

learned and then observe where they have gaps relative to what they wish to say and what they can say. This understanding leaves determined learners of a language to search for words, sentences, or phrases that will make them to make connections during conversations and close those gaps. But the lack of such environment for interaction between learners and native speakers makes it quite difficult for them to develop their second or foreign language competence in those environs.

#### 4.5 Weak foreign language policies and programs

Due to the changing trends of the world, it has prompted some Governments and other policy makers to formulate policies and programs to promote second or foreign language acquisition. Some of these policies have been enacted into laws to make them binding. In Australia, for instance, one of the most successful aspects of foreign language education relates to the National Policy on Languages (NPL) (Lo Bianco, 1987), which provides a framework for language education. Notwithstanding, policies and programs are pivotal when fully implemented to meet the desired results. But, in some instances, the implementation component can have a far-reaching impediment. This is sometimes due to lack of proper mechanisms to achieve the anticipated goals. For example, country X formulates a policy to teach French as a subject to students beginning at the elementary school level. But, there was no previous assessment to ascertain whether there exists qualified and professional teachers in this area neither a prepared standardized curricula to be used as an instrument to impart language knowledge into learners. Such policy is prone to failure. The point here is weak policies do hinder our plans in the process of second or foreign language education, hence, rigorous mechanisms including the availability of qualified and professional teachers and prepared standardized curricula must first be put into place before the introduction of a foreign language as an area of study.

#### 4.6 Inadequate investment in language learning

A foremost issue of debate today when it comes to investment is that resources are scarce. Our needs are 'unsatiable'; they cannot be satisfied. Arguers of this phrase, however, do have some bases for their argument. Absolutely, many Governments and other requisite authorities in charge tend to be on the side of this coin because they are usually parsimonious. This usually elicits inadequate support to second or foreign language studies. What is worth noting is that, eventhough, resources are considered scarce they are to be invested in whatever area is recognized as very important. So, if we do unanimously recognize that foreign language learning is awe-inspiring, then adequate funds must be invested in this direction.

### 5. Recommendations and Conclusion

By now, it is deduced that you do agree that being conversant with second or foreign language is very essential and its importance can't be over-emphasized. We can benefit a lot by acquiring one or two additional languages apart from our first language. The followings are a few recommendations for the promotion of second or foreign language learning world-wide.

Firstly, each individual, young or old, must understand that being monolingual is disadvantageous. Each one must say 'no enough' to one language. Additionally, we must curtail the act of ignorance that learning a foreign language is not important. And, there should be individual as well as collective efforts to learn or acquire a foreign language by all. Fears of language complexity should be put aside; commitment and persistence need to be fostered. In addition, Governments and other policy makers must endeavor to formulate salient policies and programs to promote second or foreign language learning. The inclusion of some relevant second or foreign languages into the curricula as subjects or disciplines is awesome endeavor. Notwithstanding, proper mechanisms must be carved and fully implemented to meet the yield results; there should be qualified and professional teachers in this area, especially native speakers to facilitate the process of learning of the target language.

Furthermore, there must be continued commitment of sizable amount of resources by Governments and other requisite authorities to support second or foreign language studies. In the same vein, there should be students' language exchange programs that would afford them the opportunity to develop their foreign language competencies where said the language is widely spoken. This will assist in minimizing the learner-native speaker gaps that can adversely affect the use of social strategies in learning a language, thus, hampering communication competencies of learners. Finally, it is prudent to promote earlier second or foreign learning. Kids of early ages 4-12 years old should have the chance to start learning a new language besides their first language. It is believed that children usually have better language learning aptitude compared with adults. For this reason, in 1998,



Marcos proposes that language proficiency must be developed during youth. By doing this, it will build a strong generation of bilingual and multilingual people across the world for enhanced global communication.

In conclusion, this paper has scrupulously highlighted and discussed the essence of foreign language learning in today's globalizing world as well as highlighted its benefits and hindrances. Sagaciously, being conversant with a second or foreign language is extremely pertinent and those with such capabilities stand better opportunities in life. They are likely to yield the dividends of studying abroad, employment, personal development, security, political and economic benefits, etc.

Meanwhile, despite its all-encompassing significance, foreign language learning is still constrained with the hindrances of complexity, perceived task difficulty, learner-native speaker gaps, weak policies and inadequate support. Such hindrances must be taken head-on. On the other hand, it is emphasized that in the process of second or foreign language learning, motivational beliefs and strategies are vital which have correlational relationship with some of the hindrances mentioned this paper. Learners must believe in themselves and value tasks as well as use appropriate language learning strategies if they are to succeed. Conclusively, foreign language remains an important phenomenon for inquiries in today's globalizing world as its essence will continue to unabatedly perpetuate.

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