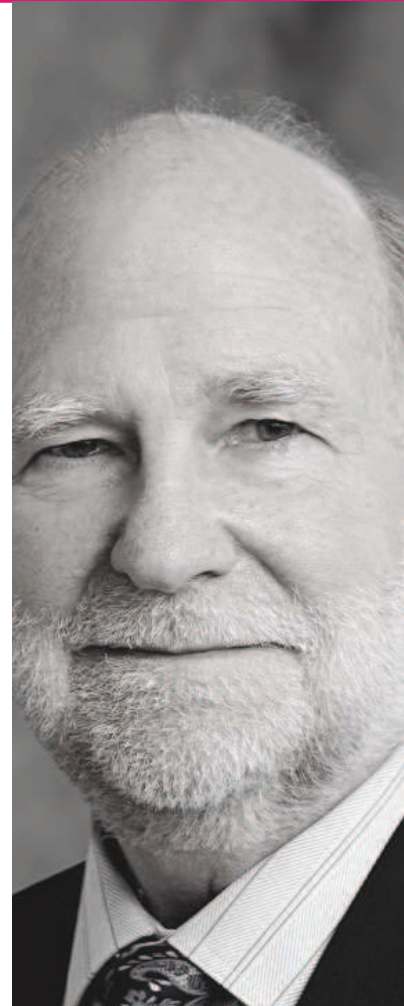


FRENCH-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

HOUSTON

FALL - WINTER 2020



FACES OF INNOVATION

HOW HOUSTON CONTINUES TO RISE
PROMISING STARTUPS & GROWING ECOSYSTEM
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*Do you speak
Business French?*

FRENCH BUSINESS LANGUAGE

AN ASSET FOR YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR CAREER

BY ROMAIN DEVAUX



The evolution of the global economy and international setting requires high levels of foreign language skills, but also cultural competencies. Communicating in a foreign language goes far beyond knowing syntax, grammar and vocabulary; it is also developing cultural sensitivity, international awareness and a global mindset.

Professional research has shown that businesses settings can greatly suffer from linguistic and cultural misunderstanding. The British Chamber of Commerce published a language survey in 2004 (The Impact of Foreign Languages on British Business) showing how British exporters were penalized by language deficiencies. The research surveyed 1000 British small and medium businesses (SMEs); three quarters of the reported losses in export sales due to their inability to meet linguistic and cultural requirements in international trade.

The survey showed there was a direct correlation between the value an export manager was placing in language skills and his/her annual turnover. The ELAN (Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise, 2006) and PIMLICO (Promoting, Implementing, Mapping Language and Intercultural Communication Strategies in Organization and Companies, 2010) studies, led by the European Commission, confirmed that a significant amount of companies could be losing business opportunities as a result of missing skills in languages and intercultural competence.



Language management strategies can be a valuable asset in company considering that the economic impact of foreign language skills among employees on a company's export performance is indisputable.



Romain Devaux, International Project Manager

French proficiency: an international advantage

On an international level, French proficiency can also be regarded as strongly profitable to international companies. The francophone world is the 6th largest geopolitical space for its population, and could become the 4th by 2050. The Organisation internationale de la francophonie estimated the approximate number of French speakers in the world to be increasing from 230 million people in 2014 to 300 million in 2018.

From an economic point of view, francophone countries are strong importers of goods and services. Francophone countries in Africa have known an approximately 12% annual growth of their importation over the last decade, and this growth has reached 15% for countries in the Maghreb region.

The 2020 Global Economic Prospects report of the World Bank shows that by 2030, 100 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa should become middle class consumers and that household spending should increase by 5% per year until 2030, compared to an average of 3,8% in other developing countries.

“Physical distance makes effective communication necessary and cultural distance makes effective global communication essential” N. Spinks & B. Wells

Lack of common language is a barrier to trade. Overcoming this barrier is costly but the payoff from effective implementation of second language proficiency could be invaluable for a company. In an increasingly competitive global market, businesses seek capable workers that are adapted to a globalized world. Foreign language competency at work is a great asset to have in a team, and according to recent surveys, French seems to be one of the top choice languages to learn for US professionals.

For this reason, the Paris Ile-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Le français des affaires supports institutions willing to develop a Business French course offer for companies and professionals through joint actions with Franco American Chamber of Commerce.

FRENCH PROFICIENCY IN THE U.S. JOB MARKET



A general trend shown by a 2017 report by the think tank New American Economy, Not Lost in Translation, The Growing Importance of Foreign Language Skills in the U.S. Job Market, found that language skills are now essential in many professional sectors and mastery of French is a key advantage.

Nearly 22,300 job offers published online in 2015 in the United States were looking for candidates proficient in French compared to 9,500 in 2010.

French is the third most requested language on the American labor market, particularly in sectors such as insurance, healthcare, finance, and humanitarian aid.

A second study led by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, "Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers," has shown that in 2019 French was in the top 3 languages with the greatest demand among US employers, but also ranked as having the biggest shortages. 85% of U.S. employers say they're reliant on Spanish, making it by the far the most sought-after language. This is followed by Chinese (34 percent) and French (22 percent). Meanwhile, 17% of employers say they're experiencing a shortage in French skills.