

**LEARNERS ' FOREIGN LANGUAGE PREFERENCES IN THE CURRICULUM:
ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN
ZIMBABWE' UNIVERSITIES**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish university students' foreign language preferences. It was motivated by the observation that, in Zimbabwe learners' foreign language preferences are not included in the curriculum. This study was guided by the pragmatist philosophy which sought what works in a given context. The research design was a linear combination of document analysis, survey and focus group discussions. Data was collected from a stratified sample of 279 adult learners at a university of technology in Zimbabwe. The study found that, Zimbabwe school curriculum is limited by the foreign language policy to offer the following foreign languages: English, French, Portuguese and Chinese mandarin. Learners' foreign language preferences include Japanese and Chinese to facilitate trade and commerce. Zimbabwe imports computers and vehicles under the "Look East policy." These technical appliances bring with them repair and maintenance manuals which are in Japanese or Chinese. Consumers who are illiterate in such foreign languages operate and repair them on a trial and error and trial and success basis. The utility value of foreign goods dictates the need for foreign languages in the school curriculum from primary school. Schools limit their foreign languages because there is not compulsory policy. They have no teachers for other foreign languages besides English. The study encourages foreign bilateral relations for the promotion of language teachers' from Zimbabwe to learn foreign languages and how to teach it within the appropriate context. Foreign embassies canthe teaching of foreign languages by supplying videos which can be played and discussed in the context of the foreign culture. The few lecturers and teachers of foreign languages can be sponsored to write or translate stories from Zimbabwe's context into any foreign language that they are competent in to enhance the utility value for foreign languages in Zimbabwe.

Key Words: Zimbabwe Foreign Languages, Policy Implementation.

1. INTRODUCTION

People are social beings who place a great emphasis in communicating their social, economic and physical activities through language. To that end schools in different countries use their local and foreign languages for teaching different courses. According to Bishop (1985) language as a means of communication plays a vital role in any school curriculum. For any curriculum to appeal to all participants for whom it is designed, it must include their preferences. Consequently, national policies need to consider learners' preferences of foreign languages in their school curriculum.

This paper considers any language that is not of Zimbabwean ethnic origin as foreign. Examples can include English, Spanish and French to name a few.

We can trace the origins of foreign languages to the modern Christian concept of speaking in tongues to the miraculous utterances of [Pentecost](#), recounted in the [New Testament](#) book of [Acts](#). Jesus' apostles were reported to be filled with the [Holy Spirit](#) and spoke in languages foreign to themselves, but which could be understood by members of the linguistically diverse audience. Acts 2 verses 2 to 11 suggests that, the gift of tongues is the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign language. We interpreted the gift of speaking in tongues as God's endowment of Zimbabweans' ability to speak any foreign language. The biblical purpose for speaking foreign languages is anticipated to be the need for universal communication. In Zimbabwe foreign technology seem to dictate the motive for using foreign languages.

At independence, Zimbabwe inherited a dual British education system which had a narrow language policy with English only being the foreign language. It was apparent that there should be an alignment between the graduates produced from education and the social and economic needs of the country. As such, in 1998, the then President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, the late Robert Mugabe set up the Nziramasanga Commission of inquiry mandated to identify specific areas in the education system requiring reforms on a short term, medium term and long term basis (*Government of Zimbabwe 1999:261*), *Terms of Reference 2.1.2*). In the sphere of languages, globalisation has increased the demand for foreign languages as a result of increased international trade and communication. In an attempt to improve economic development, the government of Zimbabwe resorted to importing goods and services from other countries like China.

Consequently, the goods and services came with manuals in foreign languages and services requiring translation. Captains of Commerce and industry pointed out that there was a missing link between the school system and the employment sector resulting in a mismatch between employment resources and market needs. Unfortunately, the curriculum in Zimbabwe's schools does not adequately prepare learners with these vital skills in foreign languages. However, one of the Commission's recommendations was the introduction of an outcome based curriculum which is broad based in terms of subject offering. That liberty in curriculum design offered stakeholders an opportunity to include their interest.

Whilst the Nziramasanga Commission Report (1999) recommended an outcome based new Curriculum broad based in subject offering, it did not specifically report on foreign languages. The Curriculum Council (2014), in the new Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education (henceforth CFPSE) therefore proposed the integration of the following foreign languages into the curriculum: French, Portuguese, KiSwahili, Spanish German, Latin and Afrikaans. This integration is intended to widen learners' linguistic choices in the curriculum. Such intended foreign language curriculum is supposed to be activated in the classroom by teachers. The teacher interprets the language policy document, plans its teaching and sources materials to use. Hence, its success depends to a large extent on the learners who concentrate on what they want to learn.

In fact, there are several factors that determine the successful or failed implementation of any subject content in general and specifically, foreign language teaching and learning in educational

institutions. Schools in Zimbabwe use a centralised education curriculum for a centralised examination system. The Ministry of Education provides and expects schools to operate using given curriculum guidelines according to government policies. The practice in the schools where the curriculum is implemented (actual curriculum) should align with the stated policies (intended curriculum) and steer towards the achievement of national aspirations. However, the intended curriculum documents at times are not detailed enough to influence effective achievement of desired foreign language goals in education.

In developing countries like Zimbabwe, the intended curriculum policy is influenced by economic developments which now call for broad based foreign language teaching and learning. The initiative is expected to develop future citizens capable of using their broad based foreign language skills in economic activities linked with other countries. Graduates are not only expected to use foreign languages at individual, but national and international levels. It is therefore imperative to examine learners' foreign language preferences and factors influencing their choices as an empirical base for foreign language prioritisation policy in the schools national curriculum.

The Zimbabwean language education policy is enshrined in the *Education Act ((1987)as Amended in 2006; Secretary's Circular Number 2 of 2001, Secretary's Circular Number 1 and 3 of 2002 and the Director's Circular Number 26 of 2007*. The Education Act is a legislative tool used to drive the country's objectives through education by guiding the curriculum. In the amended Education Act (1987), Section 62 is entitled; language-in-education. Sub-section (3) of Section 62 of the *Education Act (1987) Amended in 2006* is the clause that refers to foreign language teaching. The clause states that 'the Minister may authorise the teaching of foreign languages in schools. The use of the modal auxiliary 'may' indicates possibility but leaves room for the minister not to authorise the teaching of foreign languages in schools.

The ambiguity of the statement underscores the secondary importance accorded to foreign languages in the curriculum. One can attribute the oversight as a factor influencing the development of teachers' and learners' negative attitudes towards foreign languages. The interpretation of the modal auxiliary "may" is problematic in that government's political will is not binding in the clause. The language used is not obligatory and trivialises the initiative of having foreign languages taught in schools.

Studies carried out by Bamgbose (1991) reveal some administrative factors affecting foreign language policy implementation. Factors linked to policy interpretation encompass: policy modifications at school level, teachers' interpretation of exit clauses, qualified statements and technical justifications in the documents. Also, let-outs by successive policies affect positive policy implementation. Last but critical are the opt-outs to a language policy at school level. Examining of such forms of alibi for non-implementation are a passion for this study's lenses. A clear position is the fact that, the enumerated factors are silent on learners' foreign language preferences.

The Education *Secretary's Circular Minute Number 2 of 2001* is also an educational instrument guiding schools' formal curriculum. Its sub-section 4.2, "Core Subjects" point 4.2.1 states that: "All learners are expected to study the following core subjects up to 'O'Level: English Language,

History, Mathematics, Science, Integrated, Physical Science, Biology or Chemistry, Technical/ Vocational/ Commercial or Business subjects.”

On the list of core subjects, English is the only foreign language given core status. Other languages including indigenous languages and foreign languages are not listed. In fact, on the inherited British education curriculum, English is given a pre-requisite status for entry into most professional training courses. Zimbabwe still has such political hangovers from the inherited British education system which had no intention of facilitating Zimbabweans' communication with other nationalities.

In a letter dated October 10, 2018, addressed to all hospital Chief Executive Officers, Provincial Medical Directors and Medical superintendents, Health and Child Care Permanent Secretary Dr Gerald Gwinji dictated enrolment requirements for nurses' recruitment training taking effect from May 2019 intake as:

Applicants for the above course should be between ages of 18 and 30 years. Applicants must have five O-Level passes in one sitting with Grade C or better. The subjects should include English Language, Mathematics and a Science subject. The two other subjects exclude practical subjects such as Woodwork, Building, Metalwork, Fashion and Fabrics (*The Herald*, October 18, 2018).

Policy critical eyes noted that, this recruitment policy limits nurses to one foreign language. We wondered why the legislator overlooked the fact that, nurses interact with different foreign nationals. Some of them like cross-boarder truck drivers through Zimbabwe, do not speak English or any of Zimbabwe's local languages. The omission calls for the need to consider learners' preferences of foreign languages before they are maimed by prescriptive national policies.

Another observation which could not escape the eye is the lack of education policy synchronisation. Exclusion of practical subjects contradicts the fact that they are listed as core subjects in the *Secretary's Circular Number 2 of 2001* educational document. We wondered why learners take practical subjects as core if ultimately they are not going to be considered as relevant when learners apply for places into training institutions? We concluded that, policy makers who are not educationists can make faulty policies because they do not understand both education and the nature of skills required by specific professions. Consider the fact that, the purpose of practical subjects is to develop dexterity, the manipulative skills necessary for nursing beyond distribution of tablets.

Since foreign languages have optional status in Zimbabwe's intended curriculum, learners are obliged to choose from the limited prioritised foreign languages. The choice of foreign languages to be integrated in the curriculum is according to government interests and decisions. Currently (2022), the learner has no input in the choice of foreign languages in Zimbabwe's schools' curriculum.

In the new CFPSE (2015-2022), Goal number 3.5.1 for the curriculum for Forms 1 to 4 is; the requirement for learners to demonstrate linguistic competence in both local and a foreign language. Unfortunately, no foreign languages were specified as a standard for their competence.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, competence is defined as “the ability to do something successfully or efficiently”. The expected outcome can be the development of learners with effective foreign language vocabulary and communication skills. Effective language skills can only stem from proficiency in the foreign language in question.

Section 4 of the CFPSE (2015-2022) for grades 3 to 7, Sub-section 4.4.1, entitled “Languages”, comprises Indigenous, English and Foreign languages. Unfortunately, again, the foreign languages are not specified. That oversight leaves room for schools to offer no foreign language at all. In point 4.4.1.2. the curriculum framework (MoPSE (2015-2022: 34) states that; “the learning of English and its use as a language plays a vital role in the development of literacy in that it enhances learning in other areas of the curriculum. A foreign language creates opportunities for the learner to interact with an otherwise closed world. Both English and any foreign language play complimentary roles. They help learners to develop communication skills and critical understanding which is necessary for meaningful and active participation in society and the world at large”.

We applauded the new CF for acknowledging the key role that learners with foreign languages skills can play in development at national and international level. However, the new curriculum still accords other foreign languages (except English) an optional subject status. Foreign languages are presented amongst subjects that learners may choose when they have identified their pathway, in preparation for ‘A’ -Level. In fact, the curriculum document presents them as “necessary electives”. Reality has it that, not all learners proceed to A-level but everybody uses foreign technology and interacts with foreigners in their different walks of life.

The optional status of foreign languages in Zimbabwean schools does not reflect the world’s current systems. For instance, technology in Chinese does not select the end users. The majority of culinary menus found in hotels and restaurants are in French, with no options for language understanding. In all these curriculum activities, learners are not even afforded the opportunity to learn according to their preferences.

The CF has a foreign languages syllabus for form 1 to 4. In this syllabus,(Foreign Languages syllabus for form 1 to 4: iv) the preamble reads; “The Forms 1 - 4 syllabus for Foreign Languages (Chinese, French, KiSwahili and Portuguese) is designed to introduce and develop communicative and functional skills to learners so that they are alert to the business opportunities and economic dynamics of today’s world.”. The list of foreign languages is not consistent with the previous list in the *Secretary’ Circular Number 2 of 2001*. In other words, the language-in-education policy is not consolidated. This time Chinese is on the list of foreign languages mentioned in the syllabus.

The time allocated on the teaching and learning of foreign languages is not adequate for the objectives provided. Optional subjects are allocated 4 periods per week for the following objectives:

- ✓ point 4.1.1 states that “the learner should be able to reproduce sounds in the target language well enough for a native speaker to understand”. This calls for an ideal source for the foreign language vowel sounds.

- ✓ point 4.1 states “the learner should be able to communicate needs, emotions and feelings in formal and informal conversations”. This language competence dictates a rich vocabulary for those needs to be articulated.
- ✓ point 4.6 states “the learner should be able to read a variety of texts for knowledge and recreation.” This demands resources such as novels in foreign languages to develop the required day-to-day application.
- ✓ point 4.12 states that “the learner should be able to earn a living through foreign languages.” The current Zimbabwe school curriculum is crippled in foreign languages .

All these expected outcomes are high order skills that require proficiency acquired over a long time of learners’ exposure to the target language. With the available human and material resources, the objectives may not be attainable.

Cook-Sather (2006: 359) proposes that learners “should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education. The degree of learners’ involvement depends on the learners’ maturity and on the complexity and scope of the change being considered”. For students to become involved in implementation, they must understand the relevance of the new program and feel that, they truly benefit. As active participants, learners are likely to embrace the implemented foreign language curriculum with interest and enthusiasm or reject it by purposefully deciding to participate as observers and fail it in the national examinations.

The process of foreign language learning is multi-faceted involving individual, socio-cultural, economic and psychological factors such as motivation and attitudes towards the target language and culture. Interest and enthusiasm are elements of motivation which is a key factor for foreign language learning. The core of motivation is passion and successful language learning is linked to the learner’s passion. To harness motivation, learners should be provided with the opportunity to clarify and assess their preferences.

When a learner studies a foreign language out of own volition, the learner already has intrinsic motivation and is more likely to perform well in the language class. Deci and Ryan, 2000: cited in Hamadziripi and Mkhizo (2019: 9) assert that, most researchers in the field of motivation believe that intrinsic motivation tends to have positive results, whereas extrinsic motivation has negative outcomes. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand, is a type of motivation in which an individual is enthused by external desires. When the external drive is removed the learner’s interest subsides.

To a larger extent, motivation is driven by attitude. The attitude forms over time as a result of what the learners observe in society. Edwards (1985) posits that positive attitudes are likely to facilitate second language learning when developed at an early age. Positive attitudes in foreign language learning can be developed by the realisation of the language’s utility value. Conversely, Zungu and Pillay (2010: 111) concur with Edwards and believe that if people have negative attitudes towards a group of people, they are unlikely to acquire their language. This view, calls for activities such as television programs to develop positive attitudes towards foreigners, their lives and language.

Gardner and MacIntyre in Ushiola (2011): cited in Silalahi, 2018 are of the opinion that learning a foreign language is socially constructed and as such is also partly conditioned by the social

environment and its practices. In such a case the learner's choice is more or less decided for them by those around them. The social pressure on which language to learn is influenced by the communities of people and activities around the learners.

O'Rourke 2011, cited in; Wamalwa, Adika and Kevogo (2013: 17) claims that, a language's social, economic and linguistic status is determined by the institutional support it gets in public foras such as the media and education. Such a language gains power and individuals will associate learning that particular language with prestige and upward mobility. For example, access to prestigious jobs in foreign countries is in most cases determined by knowledge of that country's particular languages.

Aragão's (2011) studies show that learners' beliefs are influenced by the opinion of significant others. These encompass their relatives, classmates, friends and teachers. Carroll et al (2017) concurs with Araújo (ibid), especially on the influence of parents' beliefs of learners' preferences in foreign language learning. Learners act on these beliefs and form a negative or positive attitude toward foreign language learning. The nature of support from the learners' sphere of influence is double barreled; it can motivate or demotivate the learner.

According to research published by Russell (199), students are shunning the traditional foreign languages of German and French to study more "exotic" languages in Europe. They would rather learn Spanish, Italian, Greek and Japanese than the languages more usually taught in schools.

Val Davis (1997) observed that an increased trade with Latin America and the use of English as the language of business across Europe contributed to its trend of adoption. Val Davis (2009: 12) aptly said: "For many years German and French were the two languages most places offered and that was your choice if you wanted to learn a language. The three languages now key for business are English, Mandarin and Spanish."

On the other hand, in Africa the rapid increase of Chinese investments and trade has seen China becoming Africa's biggest trade partner. As a result, the learning of Chinese Mandarin as a second third or fourth language has become the trend, not only in Africa, but across the world as China has been expanding into the world as an economic giant.

The French language is also a 'necessary evil' in Africa to such an extent that in an article by the Nigerian News Agency in *The Street Journal* of September 11, 2022, the Director General of the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), Otunba Segun Runsewe expressed concern over how preference for foreign languages was affecting Nigerian languages. A political angle suggests that, there should be no dominance of local languages by foreigners. This is not practical when economic utility value takes the centre stage.

The former head of state of Nigeria, the late General Sanni Abacha in 1996 declared the new status of French as the nation's second official language. Abacha's need for French in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Nigeria's geographical, economic and diplomatic as well as her educational and research needs makes it imperative for her to give adequate attention and priority to the learning of French.

In Zimbabwe, bilateral trade links with China have grown significantly. Zimbabwe leads the rest of the continent in the training of teachers of Chinese/Mandarin. More than a thousand university students have received language training in Chinese Mandarin at the University of Zimbabwe since 2009 and they continue to be trained *en masse*. This human resource development could gradually equip Zimbabwean schools with well trained Chinese Mandarin teachers. So the availability of teachers can motivate the inclusion of Chinese in schools foreign language curriculum choice if the learners preferred it.

In an article by Mukeredzi (2013) in the *Highbrow Magazine* of April 8, 2013, according to Professor Mashiri, the inaugural Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Zimbabwe, “The net effect is to have the teaching and learning of Chinese cascade from university to secondary and primary schools”.

Learners are aware of the current language trends and each language’s influence status in the today’s world. As such learners would like to be accorded a say in the foreign languages offered to them in the curriculum as they know what they need. For effective language learning and teaching, learners should be provided with the opportunity to clarify and assess their preferences, particularly in reference to definition of objectives in general and awareness of strategies in foreign language learning. Learners are not generally regarded capable of expressing what they want or need to learn and how they want to learn it.

Personality traits affect foreign language learning in that different individuals prefer certain tasks as methods of learning. This has implications on the teaching methods. The tasks given in the classroom are an important motivator for foreign language learning. Consideration for the methodology can include drama, poetry and television case discussion.

Other factors that affect foreign language learning preferences include the learner’s age. There has been a lot of conflicting debate regarding the effect of age on second/foreign language learning. Most parents, policymakers and educators have widespread belief in the credo “the younger the better”. Research on effects of age has been grounded in natural settings abroad. According to SLA studies in the 1960s and 1970s, Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979) concluded that research consistently pointed to advantages for older learners, adults over children, who acquired language at a faster rate. Second language (L2) learning during early childhood leads to higher proficiency in that language.

More recent studies by Pfenninger, (2014a) have provided converging evidence that older learners (12 years and older), particularly in the beginning stages, consistently learn at a faster rate than younger learners. The findings encourage the teaching of foreign languages to upper primary and adult students in Zimbabwe. Empirical research in those contexts have shown that those who start second language acquisition early achieve better proficiency than those who start later, but the late starters had a faster rate of acquisition.

Based on these findings, Cummins, (1983) argued that the level of cognitive maturity favours older learners. Their teaching methods can be based on explicit instruction applied in secondary education. This advantage of older learners over younger learners has been attributed to their ability to learn explicitly. Pfenninger and Singleton, (2016) suggest that adult learners make use

of their metalinguistic knowledge, such as applying rules and their more advanced native language (L1) literacy and oracy skills while benefiting from the cognitive advantages of a more mature brain.

Unsworth, Persson, Prins, and de Bot, (2015), concluded that under non-immersive conditions or without increased exposure in school environments, the amount of exposure seems to be more important than time of onset.

Research into early foreign language learning has shown that to achieve equal or higher levels of language proficiency between younger, compared to older learners that start later, require longer and more intense exposure. Lightbown and Spada (2008) suggest that a minimal input of an hour or two per week does not suffice. Krashen (1985) agrees with the exposure aspect and asserts in his affective filter hypothesis that “foreign language acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language.” He further added that natural communication with native speakers would speed up the acquisition process.

According to Krashen (1982)’s affective filter hypothesis, a number of “affective variables” play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence, anxiety and personality traits. Krashen (1982) claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, a low level of anxiety and extroversion are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, anxiety, introversion and inhibition can raise the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition.

Anxiety is a result of uneasiness with the new language to be learnt. Feelings of uncertainty, embarrassment, self-doubt and boredom can arise in a foreign language learner, (especially during oral tasks) hindering learning. A study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) confirmed that speaking in front of peers was frequently mentioned as both highly anxiety-provoking and enjoyable. MacIntyre (2017) and Horwitz et al. (1986) also established that some of the triggers of anxiety in the foreign language class include: the fear of not doing well on tests, of speaking up in public and the possible negative reactions by peers and teachers.

Statement of the Research Problem

Although literature alluded to strongly suggest the need for foreign languages for economic and social global communication purposes, Zimbabwe’s education system only has English as its dominant foreign language in the school curriculum. In universities, foreign languages taught are decided by the university. There is limited inclusion of learners’ preferences for foreign languages in the current education system.

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Deduce learners’ foreign language preferences.
2. Establish factors influencing the inclusion of foreign languages in university curriculum.
3. Suggest strategies for including learners’ preferred foreign languages in the school curriculum.

2.METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was guided by pragmatism research philosophy. Pragmatism aims at evaluating interventions. In this study, the philosophy simplifies the combined application of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Qualitative research methods enabled the capturing of responses presented in words while quantitative methods facilitated the quantification and presentation of numerical variables. Since the principal researcher is a language lecturer, White (2005) encouraged the application of qualitative research to allow the researcher to interact with participants. The research design was a parallel sequence of document analysis, surveys and focus group discussions.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study was composed of 239 undergraduate students studying hospitality and tourism and 146 masters' students from the school of business sciences and commerce. These were ideal for this study on foreign languages since they interact with different nationalities in their fields. Each program was considered a cluster composed of people with different interests and needs for foreign languages. Consequently, cluster sampling was applied. Using Slovin's formula for determining sample size, with $N = 385$, the sample size $n = 279$. Creswell, (2014: 206) encouraged researchers to apply probability sampling to enhance the capturing of variables in their quantitative ratios.

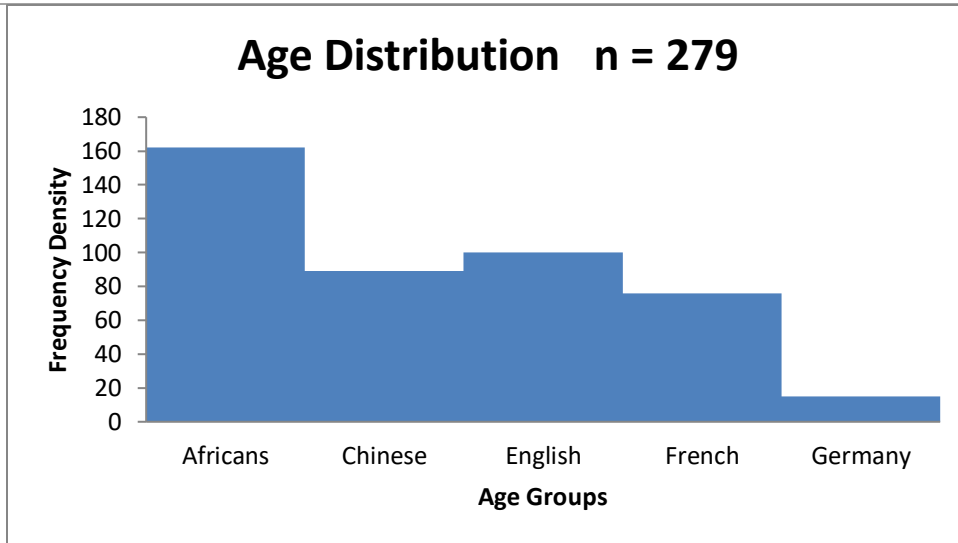
Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was initiated by seeking permission from different schools in the university. This is an ethical observation which harnesses institutional support for data collection. This was followed by document analysis of policies and research methods. The researcher designed the questionnaire for the foreign language survey and administered it. Focus group discussions were organised at the university and managed by researchers. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. For example, age is presented on a frequency density graph because it is a continuous variable. Respondents direct quotations are presented to allow readers to form their own interpretations as per semantics.

3.FINDING AND DISCUSSION

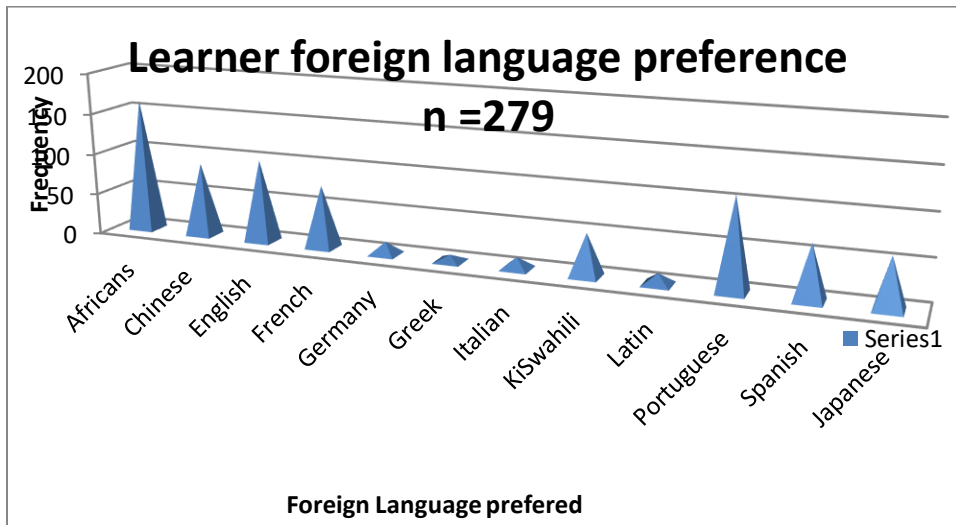
Findings presented are from literature and empirical evidence from a sample of size $n = 279$. This is statistically a large sample whose variables are expected to be normally distributed for findings to be generalised to similar populations.

The youngest participant was 20 years old. All participants are adults (above 18 years), they are able to make choices which can be considered seriously for policy formulation. The age range was (53- 20 = 33 years) which shows a wide spread of foreign language preferences over the ages. The mean age is 39 with a standard deviation 22 years. Most (65%) of the masters' students are employed adults. Their views are influenced by vocational demands for foreign languages.



Analysis of survey responses revealed that, learners (73%) preferred Africans, followed by (61%) who preferred Portuguese and then (53%) who are for English. Interviews and focus group discussions show that, learners preferences are influenced by vocational needs. One respondent said: “We need Africans, Portuguese and English to facilitate employment and cross boarder trade and employment.”

Zimbabwe’s neighbouring countries use English as their official language (Zambia, Botswana and South Africa). In South Africa, Africans is widely used.



Chinese and Japanese were also preferred because Zimbabwe is flooded with Chinese and Japanese goods. These include vehicles, computers, calculators and watches. These have operation manuals in Chinese and Japanese languages. Their repair and depends on Zimbabweans’ understanding of the Chinese and Japanese languages. These show that, learners’ foreign language preference is motivated by trade.

Focus group discussions identified English language, French, a bit of Portuguese and Chinese Mandarin as the few foreign languages taught in some schools in Zimbabwe. Factors affecting the teaching of foreign languages in schools include:

1. Schools have no teachers familiar with more than two foreign languages. There is a human and material resources shortage which needs to be addressed at national level.
2. Teachers have limited applied methods for teaching foreign languages.
3. Policies on foreign languages are not binding hence schools take advantage of such weaknesses to side-line the teaching of foreign languages.
4. Curriculum designers did not make efforts to include learners' preferences and seem to underplay the utility of foreign languages in Zimbabwe.
5. Political dominance in the curriculum designing stage, limits the inclusion of foreign languages in Zimbabwe's curricula.
6. Learners' performance in foreign languages is low due to ineffective teaching methods and environmental factors. A teacher X, explained that; foreign language learners in a Zimbabwean context are exposed to only one speaker of the target foreign language (the teacher) who in most cases is not a native speaker of that target language. Contact with the target language is in only one setting (the classroom) and for only 4 periods per week. Foreign language learning in Zimbabwe is not in a naturalistic setting. It is an instructed setting.

4.RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following to improve the learning of foreign languages in Zimbabwe.

1. A decentralised curriculum be implemented in which learners' foreign language preferences are included.
2. At national level, teacher exchange programs be initiated to so that, trainee teachers from Zimbabwe can be sponsored to learn to teach the foreign language from its mother country. For example, teachers' college students learning to teach Spanish can be sponsored to do part of their language teaching in Spain, so that they are immersed in the Spanish language and culture.
3. Foreign embassies can be requested to provide videos which can be played as case study methods in class, as part of promoting their language in Zimbabwe.
4. Embassies can sponsor Television series programs for positive attitudes towards the foreign language provided in an appropriate (business, social or traditional) context.
5. University lectures can be sponsored to write or translate books and novels of Zimbabwean stories in any foreign language that they are competent in. This critical for providing foreign languages with a Zimbabwean context.

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