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The communication difficulties for foreigners in Rwanda

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Abstract: The study entitled "The Communication difficulties for Foreigners in Rwanda.", was conducted in the Republic of Rwanda. The problem of this study emanates from numerous difficulties that the foreigners who live in Rwanda meet in their daily communications. It set out to meet three objectives: (1) To access the Linguistic backgrounds of Foreigners who live in Rwanda. (2) To find out the difficulties in communications faced by the foreigners in Rwanda. (3) To highlight the solutions that overcome the difficulties in Communications for foreigners in Rwanda. To achieve these objectives, the study used a questionnaire, interviews, and documentation. The collected data were presented into figures and tables, and statistically analysed. The findings revealed that many foreigners who live in Rwanda have a different linguistic background from Rwandans. Secondly, the results mentioned some difficulties that the foreigners meet in Rwanda and some opportunities that they missed due to those difficulties. Lastly, the findings showed some solutions that can be taken to handle difficulties in communications for foreigners who live in Rwanda. To conclude, the study recommends that foreigners who travel to Rwanda have to be aware of Rwandan culture, as well as the Rwandan national language (Kinyarwanda), and recognise the use of the Language Service Providers (LSP) in their services.

Keywords: Communication, Communication difficulties, Foreigner, Language

Biographical notes: Mr Abasenga Albert is a Master's Holder of Arts in Transborder Languages and Intercultural Communications. He teaches language-related courses including Interpreting-Translation, and Communications at the University level in Rwanda. His areas of interest are Interpreting-Translation, Sociolinguistics, and Communication.

1. Introduction

African Union member states and governments have signed a treaty for travelling in Africa without visa. The treaty was signed in 2018 in Ethiopia. It has the main objective of facilitating the implementation of the treaty which establishes the African Economic Community by providing for the progressive implementation of free movement of people, right of residence, and right of establishment in Africa (AU, 2018: 6).

Free Movement of People in Africa dictates Africans be familiar with several languages that are used in Africa. Amongst the languages which are common on the continent are English for the countries that were colonised by Britain and other countries that adopted the Anglophone system after colonisation; French for the countries that were colonised by France and Belgium. Arabic for the Maghreb countries and other Islamic-based regions. Portuguese to the countries which were colonised by Portugal; Spanish to the country colonised by Spain; Kiswahili to the East African Coast region and Kinyarwanda to the Great Lake Region (Sands & Gunnink, 2019).

Rwanda is one of the countries that has signed that treaty and started its implementation. It helped foreigners to enter in Rwanda and get a working permit easily. In its Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NIS), the Republic of Rwanda (2020:1) informs that the citizens of African Union member states, the Commonwealth, and la Francophonie are allowed to get a free visa at their arrival and stay for thirty days. In addition, the citizens of the member stated of the East African Community are allowed a pass visa for a period of six months and extended.

Like other countries, to travel in Rwanda requires the travellers to have communication skills in international languages that are official in Rwanda. Rwanda allows four official languages: English and French-foreigner languages

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from western. It also uses Kiswahili as an East African region language, and Kinyarwanda, which enjoys both official and national language (Abasenga, 2021:30). All people who travel in Rwanda are allowed to communicate by using one of the official languages accepted in the country. There is no linguistic discrimination in the country. For that, everyone is free to choose a language to communicate in.

2. Problem

Even though Rwanda is an open border to all people from different angles of the world, foreigners who live in Rwanda are not communicating with the Rwandans freely. Those difficulties in their daily communications impede on one way or another their needs in Rwanda.

2.1. Objective

The study has the main aim of evaluating difficulties the foreigners are meeting with in their daily communications in Rwanda.

2.1.1. Specific objectives

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- a. To access the Linguistic backgrounds of Foreigners who live in Rwanda.
- b. To find out the difficulties in communications faced by the foreigners in Rwanda.
- c. To highlight the solutions that overcome the difficulties in Communications for foreigners in Rwanda.

3. Research questions

The study gives the answers for the following questions:

- a. What are the the relationship between the linguistic backgrounds of Rwandans and foreigners who live in Rwanda?
- **b.** What are the communication challenges faced by the foreigners in Rwanda?\
- c. What are the best solutions to handle these challenges?

3.1. Hypotheses

The research is underpin to the following hypotheses:

- a. Foreigners who live in Rwanda raised in different linguistic family compared to Rwandans.
- b. The foreigners meet with cultural background challenges.
- c. To learn always cultural cues of your counterparts.

4. Literature review

This section is analysing several concepts that are important in the study. It also presents review of empirical related and ends with finding a gap.

4.1. Communication

The term communication has root from the Latin word "communicare" that means to participate or to share. Ahmad (2020) mentions that communication expresses the process of sending and receiving messages or transmission of information from one person to other. He adds that it refers to the exchange of ideas, emotions, information and attitudes through verbal or non-verbal means between two or more than two people. That Transfer of message from the sender to the receiver is the act of transmitting, initiating, receiving, and analysing message, in fact it is the way of transferring message as well as feedback.

In addition, The word communication is defined as the process of giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information and opinions so that the information is completely understood by both sides. It is the process of sending message and common understanding from one person to another (Lunenburg, 2010). Abasenga (2021) adds that it is a process of exchanging information, from the person giving it through verbal and non-verbal ways, to the person receiving it.

In order to make a communication effective, they are key elements to be involved in it. Shared elements in every communication exchange are the sender and the receiver (Lunenburg, 2010). Lunenburg explains that the sender initiates the communication while the receiver is a person to whom the message is sent. The sender encodes the message by screening words, symbols, or gestures with which to compose information. The message is the result of the encoding, which takes the form of verbal, non-verbal, or written language. This message is transmitted through channel

or medium, which is the pot of the communication. The channel can be a face-to-face discussion, electronic (telephone call, e-mail), or written report. The receiver decodes the received information into meaningful message. Then, there is a noise which is distorting the message in a communication. Lastly, it is a feedback which happens a time the receiver responds to the sender. That feedback helps the sender to know if the message sent have well understood.

Lastly, people who need to move from one place to another have to be aware with target place communication. No matter who is the person, it is mandatory. In Rwanda, people who live there need to be aware with several aspects of communications in order to communicate with Rwandans. Among those aspects they include Rwandan national language (Kinyarwanda), dressing code, non-verbal cues, and other cultures.

4.2. Communication difficulties

In human beings' daily communications, they meet with several difficulties that impede their communications with their counterparts. Jahbel (2019) mentions that some of the difficulties people meet including problems of intonation related to stress, while others are related to pronunciation. He adds that there are other significant issues that the writer realized. These issues are related to the problems encountered by University students is the excessive use of the first language in the classroom and out of the classroom. However, it is familiar for the students to use their first language in the class because it looks natural. Then, most of the students are not disciplined in using the target language in the university environment.

Nacro reveals that young speech, language and communication needs of young people have poor social perception, poor conversational skills, and poor non-verbal skills, all of which can impede their ability to make a friendships with their peers and can direct them to become marginalised. Further more, they can erode confidence and affect educational achievement, general behaviour, and social integration. Either old or young people meet with communication difficulties when they are reaching in another place place for the first time. These difficulties sometimes affect them negatively, because they can miss some opportunities that they deserve.

4.3. Language

Language is a tool that helps human being to communicate, integrate and cooperate. Amberg mentions that it is a database of rules that usually makes people think of other kinds of situations where rules are implemented by a particular authority. Those rules of language are conventional. This means that they come into practice due to common practice by users of a language rather than depending of the imposition of an authority figure. It is an inseparable part of human society (Martinez, 2015). It is a means of communication, and a gathering of all efforts human beings uses to communicate, whether in spoken way, written, or insinuated by movement and gestures.

Moreover, Language is a symbol of every society and arbitrary to them. In this sense, it means that there is no inherent connection between the words of a language and their meanings or the message transmitted by them. It is a conventional communicative signals used by people for communicating in their community. It means that, language is a possession of a social group, comprising an indispensable set of rules which allows its members to connect to each other, to cooperate with each other, and interact with each other. It exists in a society to nourish and develop culture, and establish human relations on it. All natural languages are used in spoken way, but not all which have their written form. Language is more important in human being daily communications. In any place where human beings reach should use one language to express their ideas and thought. In Rwanda, the people from there, are able to address their ideas and thought by using any language of their choice, among several languages that are used in the country. However, the Kinyarwanda language as the national language is most usage one. It is better that before travelling in Rwanda, foreigners should have some ideas on the Kinyarwanda language and usage.

4.4. Foreigner

The word foreigner, is a social word that implies immigration and difference from home country (Asbrock, 2014). They are no homogeneous group. Every host state has its own immigration history with specific Immigrant teams. In some countries, which have development background long ago, national group membership driven by the idea of heritage immigrants are mostly believe that they are foreigners even after their naturalization (Mazza, 1998).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adds that the foreign-born people stand for all persons who have ever migrated from their state of birth to the current country of residence. It continues that the foreign people consists of people who still have the nationality of their home area, even thought, the people born in the host country. Lastly, the foreigners who live in Rwanda, they enjoy the same services as Rwandans. They are allowed to get the Rwandan citizenship when they fill all the requirements needed by the institution in charge of immigration and emigration.

5. Methodology

The research uses a mixed of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysing collected data from several respondents. It was conducted in Rwanda, the country which mainly uses Kinyarwanda in its daily communications. Number of 80 people participated in the research. The research adopts sampling approach from many foreigners who live in Rwanda. The study population comprised 60 foreigners students in Rwanda and 20 people who live in Rwanda for their own

businesses. These populations were targeted because they are experienced in communicating with local citizens in all sectors

The data are collected by using questionnaires administered to the populations mentioned above. The researcher also conducted interview with foreigners who live in Rwanda in order to be sure that they are aware of the communications that they are using in their daily situation.

6. Findings

This part presents results of the data collected from the respondents. The the data collected from the foreigners students who are studying in Rwanda and other foreigners who are doing their own business. In its starting up, the section presents the data related to the linguistic backgrounds of foreigners who live in Rwanda. Furthermore, the section determines the difficulties in communications faced by the foreigners who live in Rwanda in their daily communications. Lastly, the section proposes the solutions of overcoming the difficulties determined.

6.1. The linguistic background of foreigners who live in Rwanda

This section aims at accessing the linguistic backgrounds of foreigners who live in Rwanda. It determines the foreigners' level and field of education, the political system that dominates in the country of origin of foreigners who live in Rwanda, and the main international language they use.

6.1.1. Level and field of education

This section presents the statistical data about the highest level and field of education of the respondents. The results indicate that 55% of the respondents are still studying their Bachelor's level, 35% have completed their Bachelor's level, while 5% have the Baccalaureat (Advanced Diploma), and other 5% have Master's Degree (see Figure 1). In their field of education, 45% of the respondents studied Business, 20% for technicals, 15% of the respondents did Social Sciences, 15% for Sciences too, and 5% who studied languages (Figure 2).

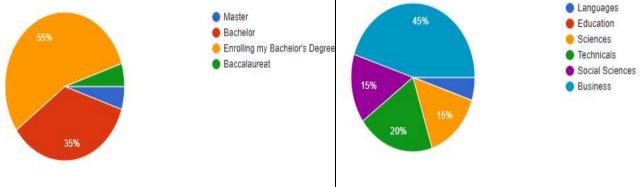


Figure 1: Education level of the respondents **Source:** Computed from Primary data (2022)

Figure 2: Field of education of the respondents

6.1.2. Political system in home counties of respondents

Respondents asked to mention the political system that guides their home linguistic status. The findings in figure 3 state that 45% of the respondents are coming from in Anglophone countries, while 30% in Francophone countries, and 25% from the Arabic.

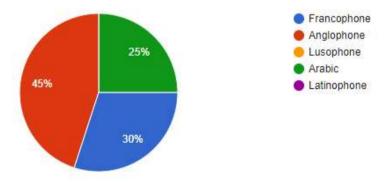


Figure 3: Political system used in perspective home countries of the respondents **Source:** Computed from Primary data (2022)

6.1.3. Main international language used in perspective countries

Culture issues is another perspective that helps people to integrate and communicate. One and the main element of culture is language. For that, the respondents requested to mention the International languages that are used in their

home country. Figure 4 below shows that many respondents (65%) are using the English language. Following is French with 20%, and lastly, Arabic with 15%.

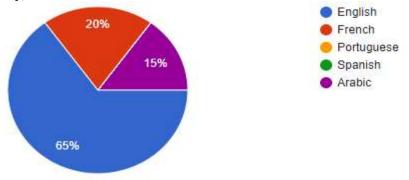


Figure 4: Main International Language that are used in perspective home countries of the respondents Source: Computed from Primary data (2022)

6.1.4. Period of living in Rwanda

Some foreigners have lived in Rwanda for short period others for long period. This period can be a source of miscommunication with local population due to unfamiliar of Rwandan culture and other ways of communicating. According to the figure 5, 45% of the respondents have lived in Rwanda for more than five years. 40% have one to three years of living in Rwanda, other 10% have lived in Rwanda less than a year, while the remaining 5% lived in Rwanda between three to five years.

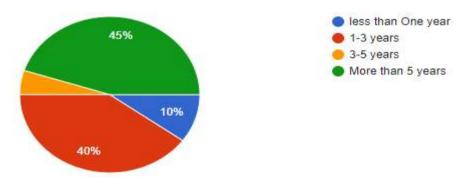


Figure 5: Period that foreigners have lived in Rwanda **Source:** Computed from Primary data (2022)

6.1.5. Language used mostly in Rwanda

People who live in Rwanda, they have their own language that they are familiar with in their daily communications. As well as the Rwandans, they have their own language they like to use too. The statistic data presented in the figure 6 mention that 60% of the respondents use English in their daily communications, 30% use Kinyarwanda, 5% use French and other 5% Arabic. On the other side, the popular language used by Rwandans is Kinyarwanda , 85% of the respondents confirmed, other 10% mentioned English as the popular language in Rwanda, and 5% mentioned Kiswahili (Figure 7).

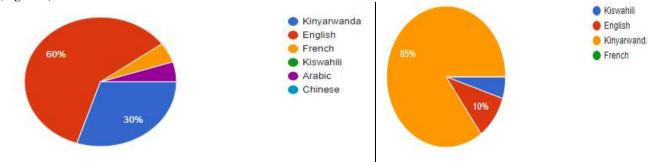


Figure 6: Most language used by the foreigners in Rwanda

Source: Computed from Primary data

(2022)

6.1.6. The difficulties in communications faced by the foreigners in Rwanda

The foreigners who live in Rwanda were asked to mention several difficulties that block their communications with Rwandans. Data presented below indicate the different obstacles that impede daily communications between foreigners

and Local people in Rwanda. Table 1 below shows that majority of the respondents (60%) missed several opportunities because they are not aware of the popular language that is used in Rwanda. Those who missed opportunities; 41.7%, 27.1%, 16.7%, 8.3% and 6.2% missed several opportunities like High price at the markets, travelling problems, group discussions (studies) and bank services (in consecutive order).

Table 1: Opportunities missed by the foreigners due to lack of Rwandan popular language knowledge **Source**: Primary data (2022)

Opportunities that foreigners missed due to lack of Rwandan Popular		Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative
language knowledge				Percent	Percent
Valid	Yes	48	60.0	60.0	60.0
	No	32	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	
Valid	High price at the markets	20	25.0	41.7	41.7
	Travelling problems	13	16.25	27.1	68.8
	Group discussions (studies)	8	10.0	16.7	85.5
	Bank services	4	5.0	8.3	93.8
	Job opportunities	3	3.75	6.2	100.0
	Total	48	60.0	100.0	
Missing system		32	40.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 2 presents the data about the communication challenges faced by the foreigners in Rwanda. Many respondent (60%) agreed that they are facing with several challenges. Amongst the challenges, foreigners faced, they is language barriers (Kinyarwanda) mentioned by 93.75% of the respondents and dressing code occupied 6.25% of the challenges faced by the foreigners in Rwanda.

Table 2: Communication challenges faced by the foreigners in Rwanda **Source**: Primary data (2022)

Communication challenges faced by the foreigners in		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Rwanda				
	Easy	32	40.0	40.0	40.0
Valid	Not easy	48	60.0	60.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	
	Language barriers (Kinyarwanda)	45	56.25	93.75	93.75
Valid	Dressing	3	3.75	6.25	100.0
	Total	48	60.0	100.0	
Missing system		32	40.0		
Total		80	100.0		

6.1.7. Solutions that overcome the difficulties in communication for foreigners in Rwanda

Statistical data mentioned in the table 3 mention the proposed solutions to the communication difficulties faced by the foreigners in Rwanda. 29.2% decided to work with Language Services Providers (LSP), Interpreters and Translators. The use of google translations application, and learning of Kinyarwanda language were adopted by 20.8 per each. The last couple of 14.6% choose to be familiar with Rwandans, and Typing/writing some numbers and proper names.

Table 3: Solutions to the difficulties of communications for foreigners who live in Rwanda **Source**: Primary data (2022)

Solutions to the communication difficulties for foreigners		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
in Rwanda					
Valid	Use interpreters and Translators	14	17.5	29.2	29.2
	Use of google translators	10	12.5	20.8	50.0
	Learning some words of Kinyarwanda	10	12.5	20.8	70.8
	Being familiar with Rwandans	7	8.75	14.6	85.4
	Typing/writing some numbers and proper names.	7	8.75	14.6	100.0
	Total	48	60.0	100.0	
Missing system		32	40.0		
Total		80	100.0		

7. Analysis

The study had the main objective of evaluating the difficulties that foreigners are meeting in their daily communications in Rwanda. It accessed the Linguistic backgrounds of Foreigners who live in Rwanda. According to

the data collected from the respondents, many foreigners who live in Rwanda have different linguistic backgrounds from Rwandans. Statistics mentioned that many foreigners are academicians, however, only 5% of them have majored in the field of languages, which is not easy for them to communicate with Rwandans very fast. Secondly, their political system allowed them to be familiar with some international languages which are not popular in Rwanda. The Arabic and Francophone system covered 55% and the Anglophone for 45% of the foreigners who live in Rwanda. Then, international languages that foreigners are using in their homes are English, French, and Arabic (65-20-15) in consecutive other.

Furthermore, the period that foreigners spent in Rwanda is not helping them to be familiar with Rwandan communications. Data collected, mentioned that only 45% lived in Rwanda for more than five years, while others have lived in Rwanda for less than 5years. In addition, the languages that both foreigners and Rwandans used are not the same. 70% of the foreigners (60-5-5%) who live in Rwanda mostly communicate in English, French, and Arabic, while the popular communicating language mentioned by the respondents in Rwanda is Kinyarwanda, English, and Kiswahili (85-10-5% in consecutive order).

The findings also found out the difficulties in communications faced by foreigners in Rwanda. Firstly, the foreigners who live in Rwanda missed several opportunities due to lack of communication skills of popular languages used by Rwandans. 41.7% bought their materials and products at high prices at the markets. Other 27.1% missed some services in travelling and transport activities. The next 16.7% missed class discussions. Then 8.3% met with difficulties in Bank services and transactions, while 6.2% lost some job opportunities because they are not familiar with popular languages used in Rwanda.

Moreover, many foreigners (60%) who live in Rwanda declared that it was not easy to communicate with Rwandans. They mentioned several challenges that impeded their daily communications with Rwandans. Most of the respondents (93.75) pointed out on the issue of language (Kinyarwanda) barriers. This is because almost all Rwandans are able to communicate via that language which is their mother tongue. The remaining 6.25% addressed their difficulty on the dressing code which is totally different from theirs.

The results highlighted solutions that can overcome the difficulties in Communications for foreigners in Rwanda. Many respondents (29.2%) decided to work with the Language Service Providers (LSPs-Interpreters and Translators). Another couple of 20.8% of the respondents proposed using translating applications and software (Google translators) and Learning some words of Kinyarwanda very fast. The next 14.6% chose to be familiar with Rwandans and the last 14.6% too decided to type/write some numbers and proper nouns to their counterparts.

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9. Conclusion and recommendations

This paper aimed to evaluate difficulties that the foreigners are meeting in their daily communications in Rwanda. The study also accessed the Linguistic backgrounds of Foreigners who live in Rwanda. It found out the difficulties in communications faced by the foreigners in Rwanda. And it highlighted the solutions that can overcome the difficulties in Communications for foreigners in Rwanda.

Furthermore, the results mentioned that foreigners who live in Rwanda do not have the same linguistic backgrounds with Rwandans. This status also prevents them from feeling free in Rwandan communications. Consequently, they are not able to get the full opportunities that they deserve.

The study proposed some solutions to the communication difficulties that foreigners who live in Rwanda meet with in Rwanda. Among the solutions include the use of Language Service Providers (Translators and Interpreters, both online and in person). Socialisation with Rwandans is proposed as the next solution. Lastly, learning some Kinyarwanda words is suggested as another solution.

Lastly, the study recommends that it is better to be aware of your counterparts' language and culture before starting intercommunications. It suggests that being familiar with your counterparts is important in order to make your communications effective. In the end, the study advises that the foreigners who come to Rwanda should be patient and integrate slowly with the Rwandans.

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