

# **THE ROLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN SUPPORTING THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA'S HIGH-PERFORMANCE ORGANISATION OBJECTIVES**

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## **Abstract**

This research investigates the strategic significance of foreign language education (FLE) in promoting the University of Botswana's (UB) transformation into a high-performance organisation (HPO). FLE is not only aligned with UB's institutional goals: enhancing graduate employability, expanding international engagement, and advancing research excellence, but also plays a pivotal role in advancing Botswana's economic diversification and diplomatic aspirations, as outlined in Vision 2036. This research identified best practices for incorporating FLE into professional degree programmes through qualitative document analysis and comparative case studies of international institutions such as the National University of Singapore, Georgetown University, and Sorbonne Abu Dhabi. Research outcomes have shown that FLE contributes to intercultural competence and competitiveness on the labour market but also encounters challenges like institutional resistance and limited resources that need to be addressed. This research suggests a tailored approach for UB, advocating for policy changes, interdepartmental language courses, and collaborative alliances to maximise the institutional influence of FLE. This research bridges the gap between theory and practice, providing practical insights for semi-peripheral higher education institutions to capitalise on multilingualism as a means of enhancing academic excellence and increasing global competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Foreign Language Education, High-Performance Organisation, Human Capital, World Systems, Global Competitiveness, University of Botswana

## **Introduction**

### **Foreign language education's role in the university of Botswana's internationalisation objectives**

The University of Botswana has a proven record of delivering top-notch education, enabling its graduates to excel in a progressively more interconnected global community. The institution's commitment is explicitly outlined in foundational documents, including the Graduate Employability Strategy of 2008 and the Strategy Plan 2020–2029, which emphasize academic excellence, innovative research, and international collaboration. UB has recently built upon its strategic foundations by adopting the principles of a High-Performance Organisation (HPO). The university's aspirations as an HPO are heavily reliant on its ability to produce graduates who are globally competitive. This transformation could be facilitated by Foreign Language Education (FLE). FLE focuses on three critical strategic objectives. It initially boosts

graduate employment prospects by offering students language skills that could be highly regarded in Botswana's key sectors, including mining, tourism, business and international relations. Language proficiency in languages such as French, Chinese, or Portuguese, for instance, can lead to career opportunities in multinational corporations, regional organizations like SADC and the African Union, and diplomatic services. Secondly, FLE enables global cooperation by overcoming language obstacles that could otherwise impede research collaborations and academic exchanges. Acquiring fluency in French could enhance UB's relationships with Francophone Africa, whereas proficiency in Mandarin could fortify its connections with Chinese academic and research establishments. Thirdly, FLE encourages inclusivity and diversity by developing intercultural understanding among students, in line with UB's mission to produce graduates who are socially responsible and capable of succeeding in multicultural settings.

At the national level, FLE is fully in line with Botswana's development plan outlined in Vision 2036. The country's plan to diversify its economy relies on increased trade, tourism, and foreign investment, all of which are supported by a workforce that speaks multiple languages. For instance, acquiring Chinese language skills could help facilitate partnerships in mining and infrastructure development, whereas proficiency in French could enable Botswana's involvement with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Furthermore, FLE serves a crucial function in international diplomacy by equipping graduates with the skills necessary for careers that involve negotiation, cultural diplomacy, and multilateral cooperation. Portuguese and Kiswahili languages could further facilitate regional integration, providing more opportunities for cooperation with Angola, Mozambique, and countries in East Africa. By giving FLE top priority, UB can establish itself as a driving force behind Botswana's economic and diplomatic objectives, thereby ensuring its graduates are not only skilled enough to succeed in the job market but also engaged members of the nation.

### **Definition and Contextualisation of Foreign Language Education**

To effectively explore how FLE can facilitate UB's transformation into an HPO, it is essential to initially clarify and situate the concept of FLE within both global and local contexts. Understanding this concept is crucial in a culturally and linguistically varied region like Botswana, where the categorization and role of languages frequently contradict straightforward categorizations. Ensuring definitional clarity within the context of UB is crucial, as it directly impacts the alignment of the university's institutional language policy with its objectives of fostering graduate competitiveness, facilitating global engagement, and promoting inclusivity.

### **FLE within Botswana's Linguistic Environment**

The classification of a language as foreign is a relative concept that varies with the speaker and is influenced by the language environment in which they reside (Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008). Although English is the official language used for teaching at UB, its actual status differs significantly among various student groups. Building upon the illustration proposed by Larsen-Freeman and Freeman (2008) regarding Spanish identity in the United States, an analogous examination of the linguistic landscape in Botswana reveals that English occupies a complex and multifaceted position within the nation's sociolinguistic ecology. It can

be categorised as a foreign language for those with limited or no contact with it (Mokibelo, 2015), a second language for individuals who use it alongside their native language (Chimbganda & Seru, 2009), or a native language for those who acquire it as their first or inherited language.

In this research, foreign language refers to a language that is not native to an individual, and is typically acquired through formal education or leisure activities, with the aim of either achieving educational goals or enhancing communication skills in a globalized world ('Second Language Learning', 2010) and is learnt outside the environment where it commonly spoken (Moeller and Catalano, 2015). FLE learning seeks to cultivate proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language, while also cultivating cultural awareness (Sun, 2013).

### **Problem statement, aim, and significance**

The University of Botswana's adoption of the HPO framework underscores its commitment to academic excellence, research innovation, and international collaboration. Within the context of these strategic priorities, FLE emerges as a critical competency that enables both students and staff to engage more effectively in global academic and professional arenas. Despite its significance, FLE has not been explicitly acknowledged as a component of the HPO framework. This study, therefore, seeks to advance a rationale for positioning FLE as an essential element in the realization of the HPO objectives. The justification for this claim will be examined through the following guiding questions:

1. *What is the importance of FLE for students and staff in higher education institutions?*
2. *How can FLE be strategically aligned with the university of Botswana's objectives of an HPO?*
3. *What are the potential challenges in implementing FLE at the university of Botswana?*

This study aims to:

1. *examine the significance of FLE for students and staff in higher education institutions, with a focus on its role in enhancing employability, intercultural competence and institutional competitiveness.*
2. *explore strategies for aligning FLE with the UB's HPO objectives, including global engagement, research collaboration, and graduate employability, by identifying best practices from comparable institutions.*
3. *identify potential challenges in implementing FLE at UB, including institutional, pedagogical, and socioeconomic barriers, and to propose evidence-based recommendations for effective integration.*

This research carries significant implications for educational policy, informing both the UB's approach to FLE and its broader strategies for internationalization. The findings are also relevant for other universities in comparable contexts that seek to enhance FLE as a means of

strengthening their global competitiveness. The study contributes to academic and policy debate in three principal ways. First, it provides empirical evidence of the role of FLE in improving graduates' employability within an increasingly globalized labour market, particularly among holders of higher education qualifications. Second, it develops a context-sensitive framework that aligns FLE with institutional key performance indicators, drawing on the HPO model, and offers actionable recommendations for curriculum design and policy development. Third, it advances theoretical understandings of multilingualism as a performance metric in semi-peripheral higher education institutions.

### **Literature review: Strategic value of FLE in higher education**

At higher education level, FLE enhances academic achievement primarily through three channels that operate at individual, institutional, and global levels. First, language proficiency is critical for enabling international research partnerships. In an era where groundbreaking scientific work increasingly emerges from cross-border collaboration, the ability to communicate across languages facilitates joint publications, grants, and innovation. According to Beadle et al. (2015) and Wächter & Maiworm (2014), universities with strong FLE programs equip their researchers and students with the tools to participate in multinational consortia and projects, thus broadening the scope and impact of their research.

Second, FLE supports active participation in global knowledge systems. English, in particular, functions as the dominant academic lingua franca, but multilingual competence allows scholars to access a wider range of research outputs and contribute diverse perspectives (The British Academy et al., 2021). Ammon (2001) asserts that proficiency in foreign languages ensures that students and academics can both consume and produce knowledge in international journals, conferences, and digital platforms, thereby embedding themselves more fully in global academic discourses. Without these skills, both individuals and institutions risk marginalization from critical arenas of intellectual exchange.

Third, language education plays a decisive role in enhancing the competitiveness of academic institutions. Universities that integrate robust FLE policies attract more international students, staff, and research funding, reinforcing their global reputation (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In a competitive higher education market, multilingual environments serve as markers of excellence, signalling openness, inclusivity, and adaptability to global change. Moreover, institutions with strong language policies not only achieve higher rankings but also better prepare graduates for the global labour market, further strengthening their academic and societal relevance (Beadle et al., 2015; Macaro, 2018).

These three channels illustrate how FLE is not merely a support mechanism for individual learners, but a structural driver of research excellence, knowledge production, and institutional prestige in the contemporary higher education landscape.

### **Implementation Variations**

The historical evolution and contemporary implementation of FLE exhibit significant regional variations, reflecting divergent educational traditions, policy priorities, and

sociolinguistic contexts. In Europe, robust multilingualism is sustained through coordinated initiatives such as the Bologna Process and Erasmus+, which integrate language learning into higher education curricula as a core component. Conversely, the United States demonstrates declining enrolment trends in FLE despite widespread recognition of its strategic importance, a disconnect signalling the need for policy and perceptual adjustments to align educational objectives with global competency demands. Meanwhile, African institutions navigate a complex linguistic landscape shaped by colonial legacies, where resource constraints, administrative resistance to curricular reforms, and the coexistence of colonial languages with indigenous varieties present unique challenges (Laitin et al., 2019). These regional disparities in FLE adoption highlight the tension between its demonstrated benefits and the practical, political, and pedagogical obstacles to its implementation. Despite these challenges in educational settings, the broader professional and organizational value of FLE, particularly in high-performance environments, continues to be a point of discussion.

### **Leveraging FLE for HPO**

FLE is widely acknowledged for its role in fostering cross-cultural communication (Oberste-Berghaus, 2024) and bolstering global competitiveness (Miština & Fedorová, 2025), however, its direct impact on the efficacy of HPOs remains a subject of debate. Critics contend that while multilingualism confers secondary advantages, it is not a primary driver of organizational productivity, innovation, or strategic success. Instead, scholars such as Collins (2009) identify technological advancement, leadership quality, strategic agility, and data-driven decision-making as more critical factors in HPO performance. A key criticism is that language proficiency does not inherently translate into heightened productivity or operational efficiency. Nevertheless, this perspective overlooks the cognitive and relational benefits of multilingualism. Alisoy (2024) demonstrates that multilingual individuals exhibit enhanced cognitive flexibility, a critical trait for navigating dynamic and complex environments. Additionally, Vocerol (2024) highlights that multilingual employees mitigate cross-cultural misunderstandings, thereby improving team cohesion and communication efficiency. Even in multinational corporations such as Rakuten, Pixar Animation Studios or Siemens AG, language training remains integral to facilitating collaboration and customer engagement (Vocerol, 2024; Neeley, 2019).

Another argument against prioritizing FLE in HPOs stems from advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and real-time translation technologies. Advocates of these technologies argue that tools like Google Translate diminish the necessity for human language proficiency by enabling functional communication without extensive training (Frey and Llanos-Paredes, 2025). Such innovations, coupled with broader digital transformation efforts, are often perceived as offering higher returns on investment than language programmes. However, this view fails to account for the limitations of AI in handling nuanced communication. Machine translation frequently struggles with domain-specific terminology and cultural subtleties (International Achievers Group, 2024; Singh, 2024), which are essential for effective international business interactions. European Business Review (2005) and Grant et al. (2023) further emphasize that trust and rapport are significantly strengthened when communication occurs in individuals native language, a dimension AI cannot replicate. Therefore, rather than

rendering multilingualism obsolete, technology reinforces its enduring value by managing routine translations while multilingual professionals address complex, high-stakes negotiations.

Cost-effectiveness also remains a point of contention, with critics underscoring the substantial time and resources required for language acquisition (Benigno et al., 2017). Given the protracted learning curve and variable proficiency outcomes, FLE is frequently perceived as misaligned with the immediate objectives of HPOs. However, this critique underestimates the long-term strategic benefits of multilingualism. Research by Ayres-Bennett et al. (2022) indicates that foreign language skills could return more than the investment cost. This research, conducted jointly between RAND Europe and the University of Cambridge, found that investing in language education for Arabic, Mandarin, French, or Spanish in UK secondary schools offers a benefit-to-cost ratio of at least 2:1. This means that every £1 invested could return approximately £2 to the UK economy. Similarly, Vorecol (2024) provides evidence that firms investing in language education experience increased customer loyalty, improved market penetration, and stronger global networks. Consequently, recognizing and valuing language diversity not only contributes to improved team dynamics but also empowers organizations to thrive in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world (Vorecol, 2024.) The Harvard Business Review, as cited by Vorecol (2024) reported that organizations that prioritize effective cross-language communication are 50% more likely to succeed in international markets. Thus, while FLE demands initial investment, its returns are both enduring and strategically significant.

A final critique posits that cultural intelligence (CQ) offers a more pragmatic alternative to FLE. CQ is defined as one's ability to adapt when confronted with problems arising in interactions with people or artifacts of cultures other than one's own (Sternberg et al., 2021). Research demonstrates that CQ significantly enhances communication effectiveness in multicultural settings, even when a shared language is used. Baratipour et al., (2022) found a positive correlation between higher CQ levels and improved communication skills among emergency department staff of three hospitals in Iran, indicating that CQ helps individuals better interpret and respond to culturally influenced communication styles. Similarly, Yue and Wei, (2023) emphasize that CQ enables adaptive communication strategies aligned with diverse cultural norms, facilitating smoother interactions in linguistically common but culturally varied environments.

Notwithstanding the above, CQ should not be viewed as a substitute for language skills, as research indicates that multilingual individuals frequently exhibit higher CQ than their monolingual counterparts. Wang and Yu's (2025) mixed-methods study of 291 Chinese EFL learners found that English majors demonstrated significantly higher CQ than non-English majors. The analysis identified five key enhancing factors: (1) cultural knowledge, (2) awareness of cultural differences, (3) an open and tolerant intercultural mindset, (4) cognitive recognition of diversity, and (5) motivation for intercultural engagement. This aligns with Guo et al., (2024) large-scale multinational study (N > 300,000; 27 countries) which established foreign language proficiency as a positive predictor of global competence (GC), a construct subsuming CQ. Both studies converge in demonstrating that language skills facilitate intercultural engagement, with Guo et al. (2024) further revealing that higher linguistic ability



correlates with elevated GC levels. Together, these findings underscore language learning as a catalyst for both CQ development and broader cross-cultural capabilities. Consequently, CQ and FLE should be regarded as complementary competencies that collectively enhance an organization's ability to operate effectively in international and multicultural contexts.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Foreign Language Education in Universities**

The demonstrated interdependence between language proficiency and CQ provides a compelling rationale for institutional investment in FLE. This relationship finds its theoretical grounding in two complementary frameworks: Human Capital Theory and Globalisation and World-Systems Theory.

#### **Human Capital Theory**

According to Human Capital Theory (HCT) (Becker, 1980), investments in education, training, and skill development increase an individual's productivity and economic potential. Within this framework, proficiency in a foreign language is a crucial component. In addition to improving personal employability (Martinaj, 2020), FLE facilitates international communication and involvement in the global market. From this viewpoint, FLE enhances labour market efficiency by providing graduates with language and intercultural skills (Carvalho et al., 2021) that are becoming more highly valued in industries including international business, diplomacy, education, and global health. Consequently, universities can strengthen their ability to support workforce development and meet global economic needs by providing comprehensive language programmes. Educational institutions that incorporate FLE into their curricula improve students' ability to function effectively in multilingual, multicultural settings, thereby matching academic achievements with the demands of a highly interconnected global workforce.

Beyond benefiting individuals, FLE also boosts the international reputation of universities. Institutions that provide multilingual curricula, dual degree programmes and opportunities for studying abroad attract international students and researchers, thus enhancing global academic networks. International partnerships, like collaborations between European and African universities, rely on multilingual capabilities to facilitate research cooperation and knowledge exchange, as noted by Deardorff (2009). Government-sponsored initiatives, such as those in the U.S., also support this endeavour. Language education has a significant strategic role in national economic and geopolitical priorities, as highlighted by the National Security Language Initiative and France's Eiffel Scholarship.

#### **Globalization and World-Systems Theory**

Wallerstein's (2011) Globalization and World-Systems Theory (GWST) provides a complementary viewpoint on the role of FLE, especially within the context of global economic and academic systems of inequality. The global economy is structured into core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral areas, characterised by varying levels of industrialisation, capital accumulation, and geopolitical power. Central countries exert control over global markets and the creation of new knowledge, whereas peripheral and semi-peripheral areas primarily supply

workers and raw materials and frequently attempt to advance their positions within this worldwide system.

Within this framework, FLE functions as a strategic instrument for both core and non-core institutions. In core countries, institutions frequently promote language education to preserve their dominance in global academic discussions, facilitate international collaborations, and maintain their attractiveness to international students and scholars (Graddol, 2006). These universities usually provide extensive language courses that facilitate international mobility, academic exchanges, and collaborative global research. In contrast, universities located in semi-peripheral and peripheral regions often focus on multilingual education to increase their global standing and improve student mobility. These institutions aim to establish their global standing by giving students the linguistic abilities necessary to engage in international academic and professional settings. International partnerships, including satellite campuses, collaborative research projects, and cross-border degree courses, frequently rely on proficiency in multiple languages and exemplify the expanding global connections within academia.

Language education is often employed as a tool for advancing cultural diplomacy and exerting soft power. Language initiatives such as Erasmus+ in Europe and the Confucius Institutes worldwide demonstrate how countries utilise programmes to project their influence and fortify international connections (Starr, 2009). Scholarships encouraging FLE, such as Taiwan's Huayu Enrichment Scholarship and France's Eiffel Scholarship, have both geopolitical and educational value. FLE is not merely a tool for learning skills, but rather a platform for influencing global knowledge exchange and enhancing institutional and national influence within the global knowledge marketplace (Yang, 2018).

HCT and GWST jointly highlight the diverse benefits of FLE in university settings. HCT emphasizes its importance in both improving individual economic opportunities and the development of the workforce at an institutional level, whereas GWST underscores its key role in global positioning and academic relations. When examined through the perspectives outlined, FLE is revealed to be more than just a scholarly concept, but rather a crucial element of a country's global competitive edge and educational approach in a rapidly globalising world.

## **Research methods**

### **Research design**

The research employed a qualitative methodology that integrated systematic document analysis and comparative case study methods to explore how FLE could facilitate the transformation of the UB as it transitions into an HPO. A qualitative approach was chosen to offer a more detailed comprehension of policy implementation processes and the surrounding factors that could be missed by quantitative methods.

### **Data collection methodology**

This study utilized a multi-faceted data collection method, combining systematic document analysis with extensive digital searches to guarantee the thoroughness and scope of the pertinent data. The researcher carried out targeted searches across institutional archives and



academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Google Scholar using specific keyword combinations, which had been carefully chosen, such as "university + foreign + language + education", "high-performance + organization + universities", and "dual + programmes + foreign languages + non-humanities disciplines". These search parameters were created to encompass diverse global viewpoints while keeping the study's central theoretical framework at the forefront.

The document analysis aspect was mainly centred on institutional policy documents from the University of Botswana, which were chosen for their direct applicability to the study's internationalization and human capital development objectives. The key documents consisted of the Graduate Employability Strategy (2020), the institutional Strategy Plan spanning 2020-2029, and HPO implementation frameworks. This methodological approach ensured that the criteria for selecting the case studies were consistent with the institution's documented goals for graduate competencies and global engagement.

### **Selection process and inclusion criteria for case studies**

The case studies were chosen through a systematic process aimed at guaranteeing academic credibility, reliable data, and useful real-world applications. The study utilised purposive sampling to select institutions that matched three key requirements: (1) easily accessible information on foreign language courses from the official university websites between 2022 and 2024, thus ensuring the data's currency and the institutions' endorsement of programme details; (2) explicit promotion of foreign languages as integral components of non-language degree programmes, as evident from the curricular structures, learning outcomes, and programme objectives stated in official documentation; and (3) representation of geographic diversity in order to capture variations in regional approaches to teaching languages. The tripartite selection framework facilitated a systematic comparison of different institutional models, ensuring consistency in methodology across all cases.

### **Document inclusion rationale and analytical framework**

The study only utilised primary source materials which explicitly showed an institution's commitment to integrating foreign languages within professional degree courses. The materials included programme specifications, curricular maps, and learning outcome statements that articulated clear relationships between foreign language proficiency and disciplinary capabilities. Documents were excluded if foreign language study was presented as supplementary or optional, rather than being an integral part of the degree's overall structure. The analysis concentrated primarily on institutions that function within the HPO framework, as indicated by their strategic plans, quality control systems, and international ranking outcomes. The HPO alignment was implemented through three key factors: (1) the direct connection between foreign language skills and graduate job prospects, (2) proof of ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of foreign language teaching, and (3) tangible investments in foreign language-related facilities and staff training.

### **Geographic and institutional diversity considerations**

The global distribution of case studies was carefully designed to reflect major models of higher education: European (Sorbonne Abu Dhabi, University of Bonn), North American (Georgetown, Ottawa), and Asian (National University of Singapore) settings. This geographic division allowed for the examination of how local educational customs, employment market requirements, and internationalisation plans influence foreign language integration methods. In each area, priority was given to institutions that showed: (1) better-than-average job placement rates for graduates, (2) a high level of excellence in foreign language teaching, and (3) curriculum designs that moved beyond the traditional separation of foreign languages and specialised disciplines. The resulting case study portfolio serves as a solid basis for pinpointing universal principles and context-dependent modifications in the design of language-integrated programmes.

### **Limitations of case study selection: accessibility and conceptual alignment**

The selection process was influenced by two major limitations which ultimately determined the final structure of the case studies. Many African universities offer foreign language courses within their academic programmes, but detailed records of these courses are often hard to obtain through official university sources. Most university websites either failed to provide detailed descriptions of their programmes or featured foreign language courses as secondary components rather than essential parts of their curriculum, as seen at the University of Ghana and the University of Cape Town. The absence of this vital information led to the exclusion of qualified African institutions, which otherwise could have contributed valuable insights to the research.

Several globally renowned universities known for their strong foreign language programmes (such as Harvard University, University of Tokyo, University of Cape Town, University of Melbourne) were left out due to conceptual rather than quality-based factors. The institutions in question did not satisfy the key requirement of the study by clearly outlining how foreign language education relates to either graduate job prospects or the university's internationalisation plans in their official records. Although these universities offer complex foreign language courses, their public information generally presents foreign language study as either a general education requirement or a way to broaden one's cultural horizons, rather than as a key aspect of professional training. The exclusion of these otherwise standout institutions highlights the significance of maintaining methodological consistency in case study research, in which conceptual alignment with research requirements must take precedence over institutional prestige or reputation in the selection process.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical concerns were considered at every stage, involving a strict observance of copyright regulations and adherence to the research ethics guidelines established by the institution.

## **Case Studies**

This case study investigates the successful implementation of degree programmes at five institutions, which combine foreign language studies with professional fields of study. These programmes demonstrate the increasing emphasis in higher education on integrating linguistic proficiency with disciplinary expertise to equip graduates for success in international careers. The final case studies encompassed the National University of Singapore, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi in Qatar, the University of Ottawa in Canada, Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service in the United States, and the University of Bonn in Germany, collectively offering worldwide viewpoints on successful FLE models.

### **National University of Singapore (NUS)**

The National University of Singapore's Centre for Language Studies was founded in 2001 and functions as a central location for teaching foreign languages within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The Centre focuses on language acquisition as a vital asset. NUS enhances its main programmes with structured Minor choices, enabling students to pair language study with their primary subjects, thus developing interdisciplinary skills highly sought after in global job markets.

### **Sorbonne University, Abu Dhabi**

The Bachelor of Applied Foreign Languages programme at Sorbonne Abu Dhabi serves as a prime illustration of foreign language-professional integration. This three-year degree integrates in-depth study of two chosen foreign languages (from Arabic, English, German, Italian, Spanish, and French) along with fundamental business subjects, encompassing international marketing, financial management, and business law. A defining characteristic of the programme is its provision of around fifty annual foreign language internship opportunities in Europe for students. This dual-qualification approach caters to the requirements of multinational corporations by combining civilizational studies with language proficiency to promote cross-cultural understanding.

### **University of Ottawa**

The International Studies and Modern Languages programme uses a comprehensive approach to global issues, necessitating advanced fluency in three languages, which include both of Canada's official languages, French and English, and an extra modern language. The curriculum combines insights from economics, geography, history, and political science with a comprehensive FLE programme. The programme's global focus is strengthened by study abroad experiences and international internships, resulting in graduates skilled at examining cross-border issues from various cultural perspectives.

### **Georgetown University (Walsh School of Foreign Service)**

Georgetown's core curriculum, which encompasses multiple disciplines, views proficiency in a language as a crucial element of its mission to foster globally aware individuals. The School of Foreign Service mandates that all students attain professional proficiency in a contemporary language, thereby equipping them for careers in international affairs across diverse industries. The structure of this requirement is designed to be fulfilled before students

participate in study abroad experiences, thereby enabling them to fully immerse themselves in host cultures. The programme integrates philosophical, theological, and social science principles with customised language instruction designed for diplomatic and international business settings.

### **University of Bonn**

The Faculty of Arts' undergraduate courses comprise an innovative Interdisciplinary Praxis Area (ÜPB), which adds a practical and interdisciplinary dimension to traditional humanities training by linking academic study with essential real-world skills. Through its diverse modules, the ÜPB fosters competencies in areas such as language proficiency, digital media, cultural management, civic engagement, professional readiness, and creative processes, thereby preparing students for both academic and non-academic career paths. A central component of this framework is the provision of foreign language modules, coordinated by the University's Language Learning Center, which offers structured and certified opportunities to study up to sixteen different languages, encompassing both modern and ancient traditions. This emphasis on linguistic and cultural training aligns closely with the University's broader internationalization strategy, which prioritizes the expansion of English-language courses and the promotion of intercultural competence as integral aspects of contemporary higher education.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Three key characteristics are common to these programmes: (1) integration of language study with professional disciplines; (2) a focus on developing intercultural competence through immersion experiences; and (3) structured pathways that link language proficiency to career outcomes. The models differ in their approaches, ranging from Sorbonne Abu Dhabi's business-oriented LEA to Georgetown's curriculum focused on diplomacy, yet all acknowledge multilingualism as vital human capital in global knowledge-based economies. Institutional strategies encompass a spectrum of approaches, from mandatory language requirements (Georgetown) to flexible minor course options (NUS), showcasing diverse routes to comparable graduate results.

The case studies demonstrate how top-ranked universities are adapting to globalisation by developing interdisciplinary programmes that bridge the gap between language instruction and vocational training. Incorporating strategic language programmes can significantly enhance the global competitiveness of institutions, as evidenced by the success of these models.

Research results emphasize the necessity for the UB to adopt a well-planned, multi-stage strategy for incorporating FLE into its various academic programmes. At the institutional policy level, UB should consider setting language proficiency standards for high-demand programmes, such as Business, and International Relations, where global workforce needs are most evident while still offering adaptable alternatives for students in other fields. The university's quality control systems should include language skills as a crucial metric for measuring performance, which directly corresponds to the objectives of the Graduate Employability Strategy in terms of global competence requirements utilising a model that

integrates linguistic instruction into professional curriculum rather than treating it as standalone coursework.

### **Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Strategies**

Comprehensive FLE integration poses several substantial operational challenges. Academic departments may oppose foreign language requirements, perceiving them as a distraction from the core curriculum content and diverting valuable credits. This issue can be addressed by developing specialized language courses tailored to high-demand disciplines and integrating them as elective options within relevant degree programmes. This initiative would involve creating discipline-specific modules such as French/Chinese for International Business, Chinese for Mining Engineering, French for Diplomacy, and French/Portuguese for Tourism & Hospitality, ensuring direct relevance to Botswana's economic priorities and graduate employability. Course content would be designed in collaboration with industry partners to incorporate sector-specific terminology, intercultural communication skills, and real-world case studies. Programme selection would be guided by current enrolment trends in language electives, prioritizing disciplines where student interest and employer demand for multilingual competencies are highest.

Building on this data-driven approach to programme selection, UB should actively involve key stakeholders in the curriculum development process. To foster meaningful engagement, the university could establish a working group comprising staff from both language and professional departments, along with industry representatives, to co-design course outcomes and assessment methods. This collaborative structure would ensure the selected programmes maintain their relevance to both academic standards and workplace needs. Furthermore, by cultivating partnerships with corporate stakeholders, UB could enhance these language offerings through targeted internship opportunities, potential funding for specialized language resources and guest lectures from industry professionals, approaches that have proven effective in enhancing language programme quality (Asperis, 2024).

Another challenge in the implementation of FLE programmes is the limited institutional resources, particularly the shortage of qualified lecturers and teaching materials for languages (Swanson & Mason, 2018). These constraints mirror challenges faced by universities across Africa in implementing effective multilingual education policies (Kamwangamalu, 2016). Strategic partnerships with cultural institutes offer a viable solution. For example, collaborations with established institutions like the Confucius Institute for Chinese language instruction could provide multiple benefits.

Student motivation presents another critical challenge. Enrolment rates in non-English language courses tend to be low when learners perceive limited career benefits, as the dominance of global English reduces motivation to study other languages (Ushioda, 2017). This aligns with research showing that perceived career utility significantly influences language learning choices among students (Dörnyei, 2019; Likoko & Wu, 2025; Kamwangamalu, 2016). To combat this issue, UB could adopt a comprehensive approach focused on career alignment, drawing on successful models from institutions like the University of Bonn. First, the

development of an interactive “Industry Language Needs” dashboard would provide students with real-time labour market data, highlighting sector-specific language requirements in fields. This platform could also feature alumni testimonials and case studies demonstrating successful career trajectories where foreign language proficiency played a vital role, an approach shown to enhance student motivation (British Council, 2021). Second, implementing an incentivization system for students achieving B2 proficiency (as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) could include priority access to corporate internships, exclusive invitations to industry networking events, and consideration for international exchange programmes.

Furthermore, to ensure the effectiveness of these FLE initiatives, a robust monitoring and evaluation framework should be implemented through carefully designed pilot projects. Key metrics would include tracking graduate employment rates and career progression timelines for language-competent graduates, measures that have been effectively used to evaluate language programmes in similar contexts (Grin, 2003). Drawing on assessment frameworks such as the one developed by the PISA (OECD, 2021) programme-specific indicators would monitor enrolment trends in language electives, retention rates across proficiency levels, and employer satisfaction with graduates’ language skills. Data collection methods would encompass alumni surveys conducted at different periods, employer feedback mechanisms, and longitudinal studies of student cohorts. Regular analysis of this data would facilitate evidence-based refinement of both the FLE curriculum and partnership strategies, ensuring that UB’s language education initiatives remain responsive to student needs and labour market demands while operating within existing resource constraints, ultimately strengthening the university’s position as a leader in practical, career-focused language education.

### **Limitations and Future Directions of this Research**

Several promising avenues for future research emerge from the limitations identified in this study. First, the generalizability of findings is constrained by the resource-intensive contexts of the examined case studies, which predominantly featured well-resourced institutions. Subsequent investigations should prioritize cost-effectiveness analyses of FLE models in mid-tier African universities, while also examining the pedagogical implications of integrating local languages with FLE (Kamwangamalu, 2016).

Methodologically, current research suffers from inadequate control of language-related variables, highlighting the need for more rigorous experimental designs. Future studies would benefit from employing matched-pair experimental designs comparing control and treatment groups across comparable programmes, coupled with the development of standardized assessment tools for intercultural competence, a critical but often poorly operationalized outcome of language education (Deardorff, 2009).

Furthermore, while existing literature frequently cites the employment advantages of FLE, empirical evidence remains limited. There is a pressing need for comparative longitudinal studies tracking career outcomes between language-proficient graduates and their monolingual counterparts, particularly in African labour markets (Grin, 2003). Additionally, research should



examine the institutional factors contributing to successful FLE programmes in contexts where language study maintains strong enrolment despite not being integrated into interdisciplinary curricula. Such investigations could yield valuable insights into student motivation and programme sustainability in diverse higher education settings (Ushioda, 2017; Dörnyei, 2019). These research directions would significantly advance our understanding of FLE's role in African higher education while addressing critical gaps in the current evidence-based study.

In conclusion, FLE is crucially important, going beyond being an academic option to being a vital strategic initiative that aligns UB's institutional objectives with Botswana's national objectives. Targeted language programmes at UB can equip graduates to excel in a global economy, facilitate international collaborations, and cultivate cross-cultural awareness. This alignment highlights the transformative capabilities of FLE in moulding both the university's future as an HPO and Botswana's path as a dynamic player on the global stage.

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