

ISSUES IN CURRICULUM AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Edited by:

FOLAJOGUN V. FALAYE

JOSEPH A. ADEGBILE

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Volume 1

**ISSUES IN CURRICULUM AND LANGUAGE
EDUCATION**

Volume II

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**Folajogun V. Falaye
Joseph A. Adegbile**

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INFLUENCE OF STUDENT-RELATED FACTORS ON JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN FRENCH LANGUAGE IN IBADAN NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Maxwell Olakunle Araromi

Introduction

French language occupies a vantage position as the language of diplomacy and international communication especially with the neighbouring francophone countries that share borders with Nigeria. Considering the role Nigeria plays as a member of international organizations such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Africa Union (AU), French language functions as language of social, political, economic and international relations as the members of these organizations who are mainly French speaking countries in Africa. The status of this language in Nigeria cannot be under-estimated. In spite of the significant value of French language in Nigeria, the teaching and learning of the language is bedeviled by certain constraints and problems. Ogunbiyi (2002) identified some problems militating against the teaching and learning of French language in Nigeria. These problems include shortage of qualified language teachers, inadequate teaching aids, lack of relevant textbooks, problem of multilingualism, lack of well-equipped language laboratories, lack of interest on the part of the pupils and lack of motivation on both teachers and students. In spite of the identified problems militating against the teaching and learning of French language in Nigerian system of Education and the major attempt by the researchers in the field of language education to find remedy to the problems, the persistent increase in students achievement and attitude to learning of the language has been a great concern for the stakeholders in the field of education. Researchers have suggested some students related variables that could influence their success in the learning of the language.

The language background of the students could be determining factor in students' success of French language. This could reflect in the four basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Jiang and Kuehn (2001) examined the issue of transfer for low- intermediate ESL students enrolled in an academic English development course at the community college level.

The early years are recognized as the foundation years for children's development. In particular, the first six years are crucial for young children in developing their first language and cultural identity, and it is during these early years that children build up their knowledge of the world around them. For children from language background other than English, the language or languages of the home that have been used since birth are the basis for developing meaningful relationships and learning about meaningful communication and interaction (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke 2000). For infants and toddlers their early interaction with parents and caregivers provides the basis for communication and learning in both the first or home language and in the second language (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke 2000).

August, Calderon and Carlo (2000) conducted an investigation which focused on the understanding the manner in which enabling skills for reading are transferable from Spanish to English. The study examined how performance on indicators of Spanish reading ability at the end of the second grade could predict English reading performance at the end of third grade.

Perception of the usefulness of French language is a variable that should be considered as determinant of students' performance in French language. Students tend to be motivated by the importance they attach to the learning of French language and the significant value of the language to their chosen career. Literature has shown that student motivation is multifaceted and results from many factors, considered in several theoretical approaches (Bzuneck 2009). Among them, the achievement goal theory has been widely used as a reference for scholars concerned with the practices in the classroom. As a social-cognitive approach, it emphasizes both cognitive variables, including the focus on a target, such as environmental factors in the explanation of the motivation to learn. According to its proponents, student motivation is influenced by their orientation to a type of goal achievement, understood as the reason or purpose in performing tasks and in the application of effort, influencing the quality of their involvement (Bzuneck 2009b; Kaplan & Maehr 2002; Liem et al. 2008; Urdan & Midgley 2003; Urdan & Schoenfelder 2006; Zusho & Pintrich 2001). There is urgent need to investigate the perception of usefulness of French among learners of French language because learners appear to have divergent goals for learning French language which could have positive or negative influence on their achievement in the language.

Gender is another variable of interest in this study. The influence of gender on the achievement of learners in French language has been inconclusive among researchers in the field of foreign language education. The influence of gender on students' success in language has been a controversial issue among researchers in education. William (2000) affirms that sex differences in cognition are small and traditional differences in some subjects have narrowed. Zamri (2004) study in Malaysia also reported that male learners used strategies more often than females when they were learning Malay language as a first language. William (2000) affirms that sex differences in cognition are small and traditional differences in some subjects have narrowed. Weiner (2010) affirms that sex differences needs to be treated with caution since the studies may themselves be stereotyped or biased towards one sex or the other. Diab (2006) reveals statistically significant gender-related differences in language learning beliefs in two instances, while Siebert (2003) reveals that male students possessed a greater linguistic self confidence and estimated their ability to learn the language higher than did the female students.

Research Questions

Two research questions were answered in this study:

- (1) What is the level of students' language background in French?
- (2) What is the level of students' perception of the usefulness of French?

Five hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Hypotheses

- H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between students' language background and achievement in French Language.
- H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between students' perception of the usefulness of French language and achievement in French language.
- H_{03} : There is no significant difference between male and female achievement in French language.
- H_{04} : There is no significant difference between male and female students' language background in French Language.
- H_{05} : There is no significant difference between male and female students' perception of the usefulness of French Language.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive research design. The researcher has no direct control over the independent variables and so, no variables were manipulated since they are assumed to have existed prior to the study.

The Sample and Sampling Procedure

The target population of the study comprised all junior secondary school II students in Ibadan Municipality. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the respondents. In the first stage, Ibadan was stratified into educational zones. In the second stage, the researcher employed simple random sampling technique to select a Local Government Area in Ibadan out of eleven Local Government Areas in Ibadan Metropolis. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 306 students from six Junior Secondary Schools selected from Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. The Junior Secondary School II Students were purposely selected for the study because they are not writing any external examination at the time of the study. The researcher used Junior Secondary School because French language is mandatory at this level but optional at the Senior Secondary Level.

Research Instruments

Two research instruments were used for the purpose of data collection for the study. They include:

- (i) Achievement Test in French Language (ATFL).
- (ii) Questionnaire on Students' Perception of the Usefulness of French Language (QSPUFL).

Achievement Test in French Language (ATFL)

The instrument was designed by the researcher based on the curriculum of Junior Secondary School Students II collected from the Ministry of Education. The instrument is divided into two: Sections A and B. Section A contains 30 multiple choice questions which centres around the students' knowledge of the rules of grammar, syntax, vocabulary and culture and civilization. The thirty items were those with difficulty index of 12.50 - 87.50% and discriminating index of 0.25 and above, selected from the initial forty items that were formulated. Section B contains two essay type in which students are expected to express their opinion in writing.

The instrument was given to practicing French language teachers and lecturers in the Department of European Studies, University of Ibadan for face and content validity. The instrument was trial tested among 40 Junior Secondary School Students in Ido Local Government of Oyo State. The scores for these set of students in ATFL were then used to calculate its reliability coefficient which was determined to be 0.69 using Kuder Richardson KR 20.

Questionnaire on Students' Perception of the Usefulness of French Language (QSPUFL)

This is a 15 item Questionnaire on Students Perception of the Usefulness of French Language among selected Junior Secondary School Students. This instrument is self-designed. They indicate the option that best represent their response to each statement on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The positive statement will be rated 4= Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2=Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree; and the reverse for the negative statement.

The instrument was given to some experts in research methodology supervisor for construct and content validity. The instrument was trial tested among 40 Junior Secondary School II Students in Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State, Ibadan. The data generated were used to calculate the reliability coefficient of the QSPUFL which was determined to be 0.58 using Cronbach alpha.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher employed the services of practicing French language teachers in the selected school for administration of the instruments. The French language teachers were briefed on the purpose of the study and instructed about the significant value of the research. The two instruments—Questionnaire on Students' Perception of the Usefulness of French Language (QSPUFL) and Achievement Test on French Language (ATFL) were administered on the participants in each school by the researcher and the research assistants. The study lasted four weeks.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage mean and standard deviation, inferential statistics of t-test were used to analyze data at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	176	57.5
Female	130	42.5
Total	306	100.0

Table 1 indicates the gender distribution of the respondents of the study, 176 (57.5%) of the respondents were male, while female were 130 (42.5%). The result implies that there are more female than male respondents.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the level of students' Language background in French Language?

Table 2: Language Background of Respondents

Language of respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
Edo Language	4	1.4
English Language	53	17.3
French Language	4	1.4
Igbo Language	3	1.0
Yoruba language	61	19.9
English/Igbo	20	6.5
English/Igbo/Calabar	7	2.3
French/Edo	4	1.3
Igbo/Hausa/Delta	4	1.3
Yoruba/ English	97	31.7
Yoruba/Arabic Language	3	1.0
Yoruba/English/Igbo	20	6.5
Yoruba/English/Igbo/Hausa	20	6.5
Yoruba/English/Senegal	6	2.0
Total	306	100.0

Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents speak Yoruba and English language simultaneously (31.7%) while 19.9% and 17.3% speak either English language or Yoruba language as the only language of communication.

Research Question 2: What is the level of students' perception of the usefulness of French Language?

Table 3: Level of Students' Perception of the Usefulness of French Language

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total (%)
1	Studying French will allow me to read French literature in the original language	94(30.7)	148(48.4)	41(13.4)	23(7.5)	306(100.0)
2	Studying French will allow me to read newspaper	117(38.2)	141(46.1)	32(10.5)	16(5.2)	306(100.0)
3	A knowledge of French language will make me a better educated person	92(30.1)	134(43.8)	67(21.9)	13(4.2)	306(100.0)
4	Studying French language will make me improve my knowledge	65(21.2)	101(33.0)	88(28.8)	52(17.0)	306(100.0)
5	Studying French is important to me because I will need it for my future career	87(28.4)	123(40.2)	69(22.5)	27(8.8)	306(100.0)
6	Studying French is important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job	129(42.2)	119(38.9)	35(11.4)	23(7.5)	306(100.0)
7	Studying French will expose me to the History, Culture and Civilization of French people	126(41.2)	135(44.1)	31(10.1)	14(4.6)	306(100.0)
8	I will continue to learn French language even after leaving school	67(21.9)	129(42.2)	76(24.8)	34(11.1)	306(100.0)
9	Studying French is a waste of time because I do not need it in the nearest future	28(9.2)	46(15.0)	120(39.2)	112(36.6)	306(100.0)
10	Studying French language will make me a bilingual person	66(21.6)	128(41.8)	74(24.2)	38(12.4)	306(100.0)
11	I do not need the knowledge of French language since I speak English Language already	35(11.4)	63(20.6)	129(42.2)	79(25.8)	306(100.0)
12	I study French Language so as to gain access to on line information documented in French Language	98(32.0)	121(39.5)	55(18.0)	32(10.5)	306(100.0)

Table 3 contd.

13	I do not need to study French Language because it does not interest me visiting the French Speaking Countries	31(10.1)	51(16.7)	123(40.2)	101(33.0)	306(100.0)
14	I do not need to study French language to become a diplomat or Foreign officer	38(12.4)	66(21.6)	126(41.2)	76(24.8)	306(100.0)
15	Studying French language has no value on my career choice or development	45(14.7)	70(22.9)	111(36.3)	80(26.1)	306(100.0)
	Average Total	75(24.8)	105(34.3)	78(25.5)	48(15.7)	306(100.0)

Table 3 shows the level of students' perception of the usefulness of French Language. Out of 306 respondents, 75(24.8%) said strongly agree, while 105(34.3%) said agree, 78(25.5%) said disagree while 48(15.7%) said strongly disagree. It implies that majority of respondents agree with the level of students' perception of the usefulness of French Language.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between student's language background and achievement in French Language.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Language Background and Achievement in French Language

Variables	N	R	P	Remark
Academic in French Language	306	-.056	0.332	Not Significant
Language background				

From table 4, there is no significant relationship between students' language background and achievement in French Language. Achievement in French Language has no correlation with Language background ($r = -0.056$, $P > 0.05$), since P is greater than 0.05 level of significance. That is, there is no significant relationship between students' language background and achievement in French Language.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between students' perception of the usefulness of French Language and achievement in French Language.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Perception of the Usefulness of French Language and Achievement in French Language

Variables	N	R	P	Remark
Achievement in French Language	306	.151**	0.008	Significant
Usefulness of French Language				

Correlation Significant at *P<0.05 level.

Table 5 shows significant relationship between students' perception of the usefulness of French language and achievement in French language. Achievement in French language has correlation with usefulness of French language ($r=0.151$, $P<0.05$), since P is less than 0.05 level of significance, there is significant relationship between student's perception of the usefulness of French language and achievement in French language.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between male and female achievement in French Language.

Table 6: T-test of Difference in Achievement in French Language of Male and Female Students

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df.	t-Cal	t-Crit	P
Achievement in French Language	Male	176	10.39	4.838	304	0.154	1.960	0.878($p>0.05$) Not Significant
	Female	130	10.47	4.404				
	Total	306						

Table 6 shows that there was no significant difference between male and female achievement in French Language. It was observed that the t-Calculated value was lesser than t-Critical values ($t\text{-Cal}=0.154 > t\text{-Crit}=1.960$), ($P>0.05$). There was no significant difference. Therefore, it was concluded that, there is no significant difference between male and female achievement in French Language.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between male and female students' Language background in French Language.

Table 7: T-test of Difference in Language Background in French Language of Male and Female Students

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df.	t-Cal	t-Crit	P
Language background	Male	176	3.34	3.173	304	0.834	1.960	0.405(p>0.05) Not Significant
	Female	130	3.65	3.152				
	Total	306						

Table 7 shows that there was no significant difference between male and female Language background in French Language. It was observed that the t-Calculated value was lesser than t-Critical values ($t\text{-Cal}=0.834 > t\text{-Crit}=1.960$), ($P>0.05$). There was no significant difference. Therefore it was concluded that, there is no significant difference between male and female Language background in French Language.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference between male and female students' perception of the usefulness of French Language.

Table 8: T-test of Difference in Perception of Usefulness of French Language of Male and Female Students

Variable	Sex	N	Mean	SD	df.	t-Cal	t-Crit	P
Usefulness of French Language.	Male	176	40.18	4.768	304	0.339	1.960	0.735(p>0.05) Not Significant
	Female	130	39.99	4.909				
	Total	306						

Table 8 shows that there was no significant difference between male and female students' perception of the usefulness of French Language. It was observed that the t-Calculated value was lesser than t-Critical values ($t\text{-Cal}=0.339 > t\text{-Crit}=1.960$), ($P>0.05$). There was no significant difference. Therefore, it was concluded that, there is no significant difference between male and female perception of the usefulness of French Language.

Discussion

There is no significant relationship between students' language background and achievement in French language. The findings contradict the findings of Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2000) who states that in children from language backgrounds other than English, the language or languages of the home that have been used since birth are the basis for developing meaningful relationships and learning about meaningful communication and interaction.

Houmafar, Hayes and Herbst (2005) concludes that the history of the first language is a major component and participatory factor in the acquisition of the second language and its maintenance. This prior

knowledge of how language works and the features of the specific L1 will undoubtedly be transformed and used as part of the foundations for learning other languages even if not all L1 tools are of relevance in L2 production (Candlin & Mercer 2001). Macro (2001) remarks that for L2 users, the language in which they choose to think may significantly impact their overall competence.

There is significant relationship between students' perception of the usefulness of French language and achievement in French language. This finding contradicts the findings of (Bzuneck 2009; Kaplan & Maehr 2002; Liem et al. 2008; Urdan & Midgley 2003; Urdan & Schoenfelder 2006; Zusho & Pintrich 2001) who affirmed that student motivation is influenced by their orientation to a type of goal achievement, understood as the reason or purpose in performing tasks and in the application of effort, influencing the quality of their involvement.

Second language acquisition research has shown that foreign language study in the elementary years improves cognitive abilities, positively influences achievement in other disciplines and results in higher achievement test scores in reading and mathematics (Stewart 2005). The knowledge of second language significantly, improved young children's understanding of mental and non-mental representations (Berguno & Bowler 2004).

The findings of this study revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female achievement in French Language. This finding contradicts the earlier submission of Diab (2006) that affirms that male students possessed a greater linguistic self-confidence and estimated their ability to learn the language higher than the female students. Zamri (2004) also corroborates this assertion by affirming that male learners used strategies more often than female learners when they were learning Malay language as a first language, Weiner (2010) affirms that sex differences should be treated with caution since the studies may themselves be stereotyped or biased towards one sex or the other.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to determine the influence of student-related factors on the achievement of junior secondary school students in French language in Ibadan North Local Government Area. On the basis of the findings of this study, it was concluded that there is significant relationship between students' perception of the usefulness of French language and achievement in French language. Lastly, it was concluded that language background of the students does not have any significant relationship with the achievement of the students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the findings of this study:

- (1) French language teachers should make frantic efforts to encourage students to acquire skills in French language since the language background of the students do not have any significant relationship with their achievement in French language.
- (2) Efforts should be made by stakeholders in the field of French language to inculcate positive perception of the usefulness of French language to the future career development of the students. This could effectively be done through career talk, seminars and conferences and workshops. If the perception of the students about the usefulness of French language is positive, their achievement in the language would improve drastically.
- (3) Stakeholders in the field of French language should encourage gender balance in the enrolment of students into foreign language study.
- (4) Government should organize sensitization workshops to create more awareness about the usefulness of French language to Nigerian students. As the findings of this study revealed that students perceived the usefulness of French. All students should be encouraged to learn French language.

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