



Teaching French Language in Colleges of Education In Nigeria: Challenges And Ways Forward

*Abdullahi Isyaku Lawal**

Department of French, Niger State College of Education Minna, Nigeria

The purpose of this study was to describe the teaching of French as a second language in Nigeria. This study used descriptive qualitative method. The results of this study indicate the poor French teaching conditions as a second language in Nigeria. The conclusion of this research shows that learning French as a second language in Nigeria requires attention from the government.

Keywords: French Language, Teaching, College of Education

OPEN ACCESS

ISSN 2548 2254 (online)

ISSN 2089 3833 (print)

Edited by:

Rifki Afandi

Reviewed by:

Suciati Purwo

***Correspondence:**

Abdullahi Isyaku Lawal

ialawal3@yahoo.com

Received: 19 November 2019

Accepted: 10 January 2020

Published: 29 February 2020

Citation:

Lawal AI (2020) Teaching French Language in Colleges of Education In Nigeria: Challenges And Ways Forward.

PEDAGOGIA: Jurnal Pendidikan. 9:1.

doi: 10.21070/pedagogia.v%vi%i.122

INTRODUCTION

Man can achieve virtually nothing without the use of language as a tool for communication. It is a means by which a people in business, scientific research, political interaction, etcetera, exchange information and ideas, develop plans, proposals and policies for sustainable development. Language enables man to understand his neighbor interacts with other people at all times. Language is used in decision making process. It is a medium through which knowledge is impacted and relationships sustained. [Asake \(2006\)](#)

Therefore, for smooth and productive communication and working relationship with neighbouring countries, Nigerian citizens mandatorily require a good knowledge of French language [Language \(2007\)](#). In that vein, it is observed that French language has received little attention in Nigeria. Moreso, most students consider it as a difficult subject to learn and capital intensive.

French language however, was introduced into the country's educational system after the extinction of Latin language. Expatriates were brought into the country to teach the language in the Nigerian secondary schools when it held its esteemable position. Lately, Nigerian government exhibits little or no concern in the effective teaching and learning of French language. As it is, French teachers are very few. They are no longer employed while the existing ones are subjected to teach other subjects like English language, literature in English etc.

This policy direction of the government towards effective teaching and learning of French has made both the parents and the students to have some mixed feelings or loss of interest for the language. Many parents now consider the study of French language with levity and a share waste of time and resources. Most of them prefer to dedicate their time in other subjects. This attitude has rendered many graduates unemployed. This is so because their services are mostly required in private institutions.

This challenge has negative impact on the department of French in Niger State College of Education Minna and other colleges of education in Nigeria. Hardly can one find a student who voluntarily applies to study French as a course. The department rather depends on the pre-NCE programme in order to source for students transiting into the first level of the programme. Many of the students in the department offer the course as a last option as they do not consider it as a course that can guarantee them a bright future.

This research work focuses on the attitude of government, students, parents and the French language. It explores availability of infrastructure for teaching and learning. Another aspect researched into is admission enrolment, among others. While identifying the significance of French language in Nigeria, [Bliss \(2007\)](#), described Nigeria as an Anglophone country in a sea of Francophone. It implies that the geographical location of Nigeria as a country has made French a mandatory language in the country.

[I et al. \(2004\)](#) observed that for Nigeria to enter rela-

tions of mutual benefits with these neighboring nations, it is imperative, to some extent, for her to communicate with these countries in their own official language-French. [Onyemelukwe \(1995\)](#) opined that Nigeria needs the knowledge of French so as to have healthy relations with the francophone neighbors.

[Ogunkeye \(2007\)](#) further, gave four reasons why Nigerians should take advantages of French language in Nigeria. 1). In a world that is fast becoming a global village, French can only be an added advantage. There will be access to foreign materials and other opportunities available in times of communication, technology, international politics etc; 2). Nigeria is surrounded by francophone countries; therefore, French as an official language will facilitate communication and interaction with neighboring countries; 3). The seat of ECOWAS is in Abuja, Nigeria; there are nine francophone and five Anglophone countries in ECOWAS. French therefore is the natural choice being the language of the majority; 4). There will be also job opportunities for individuals in organization such as African union, United Nations and other multinational companies who require their employees to speak French especially at various embassies. [Ogumbiyi \(2012\)](#) however, buttressed others' opinion that "since Nigeria is surrounded by French speaking countries, the importance of the language in Nigeria for social, political, economic and international relations cannot be overemphasized". Yet, French language teaching and learning suffered a serious setback.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Government's Effort Towards French Language in Nigeria

On several occasions, Nigeria government has expressed concerns to have French language as country's second official language. However, the implementation policies appeared to be politically motivated. Sometimes in the seventies and eighties, French was taught as a subject in secondary schools. Unfortunately, even after adopting it as a second official language, it is still not being offered in most of the public secondary schools as a core subject.

Since, French language used to be an optional foreign language in the Nigeria's educational system, "late in (1997), the then head of state General Sani Abacha gave French a new status, declaring it Nigeria's second official language. Thus, Nigeria became officially an English/French bilingual and this was documented in the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1998, [Ogunkeye \(2007\)](#) . Subsequently, administration in 2002 took a fundamental decision to making French language as second official language as well as giving it a status as core subject in both junior and secondary school curriculum.

Between January, 2007 and March, 2008, the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) convened a meeting of experts and also organized several work-

shops to produce the senior secondary school curriculum which would ensure continuity and flow of themes from junior secondary school to senior secondary school but all efforts proved abortive. Departments and institutes of French language were established towards the end of 20th century by the Federal Republic of Nigeria but could not yield any palpable result. In that vein, Niger State College of Education, Minna was examined to find out major factors hindering effective teaching and learning of French language in colleges of education in Nigeria.

Factors Militating Against Effective Teaching of French Language in Colleges of Education

Despite of the benefits of French language to Nigeria's citizens, these and many more might be the major obstacles hindering its acquisition. [Andreou et al. \(2005\)](#) asserts that "...learners of French were expected to have not less than 16 hours of contacts with their teachers in a week. In practice however, it is often realized that a lot of interferences get in the way; learners are soon very tired, the teachers are unmotivated..." [Ogumbiyi \(2012\)](#) affirmed that "in the early sixties, scholarships were given to both French teachers and students. The essence was to encourage them to study the language". However, this is no longer obtainable in our system because of diverse problems ranging from dearth of relevant materials, and shortage of manpower to handle it, among others.

Poor Enrolment Policy

French language department basically rely on pre-NCE programme to have students in to year one. This may not be unconnected with the fact that most of the public secondary school do not offer French. Therefore, it would be very difficult for the students to gain direct entry admission into department of French without having an "O" level French which is a pre-requisite for admission. Those students with deficit in their admission requirement are the ones that opt for pre-NCE French programme. Most of the admitted students into the department are either the less intelligent or consider French as the last option. This trend has gone a long way in affecting the standard of the calibre of students produced yearly by the departments.

Lack of Infrastructure

The requisite atmosphere needed for teaching and learning of French such as resource room, library, language laboratory and internet facilities are not adequately provided. The French centres that are supposed to be an alternative to both teachers and students are not well equipped. The Centre for French Teaching and Documentation C.F.T.D is the only available umbrella that has been very supportive in addressing some of these challenges.

Low Motivation

Formally, teachers and students of French language enjoyed one form of support or the other from government. Recently, there is virtually nothing government is doing to bring back the lost glory.

Students encounter diverse difficulties in the course of their programme in French language. Benue State and Kano State governments should be applauded for providing financial grants to French students going for French immersion programme as a form of motivation.

Lack of Interest of the Students' Part

Interest is an essential tool in whatever one focuses on. Therefore, any student who lacks interest cannot learn effectively. A number of students in the department see themselves as victims of circumstance. They do not see the course to holding any prospect for them. As such, their morale is dampened.

Environmental Factors

The environment where learning of French language takes place is purely Anglophone. The expatriates who are supposed to be the role models are no longer available. This has made it very difficult for the students to be able to learn French language in the French way. In an attempt to address this, Nigerian government established Nigeria French language village, Badagry for French students of tertiary institutions in place of a year abroad scheme. Yet, the aim has been defeated as students mostly communicate their various languages or English. [Offorma \(2012\)](#)

Cost of Acculturation Fee

Language immersion programme, is a mandatory course for all bonafide year two of French language students of all colleges of education in Nigeria. The course is essentially designed for the period of three months so that they can have the French atmosphere and other linguistic requisites.

It is disheartening to note that NCE students now pay as much as forty thousand naira (N40,000) tuition fee for this programme. This has been causing a lot of distress to French language students and scaring a lot from coming into the department of French. [Bangbose \(1983\)](#)

Lack of Government Commitment towards Teaching of French Language

Despite efforts made by various administrations to institutionalized French language as second official language in Nigeria, the government is still not doing enough to improve the teaching of the language. Those that acquired the language in the seventies and eighties were accorded with all forms of privileges to excel in the language.

[Olayiwola and Ogundele \(2015\)](#) asserted that: "...the Fed-

eral Government decree says that French is compulsory in schools, but does nothing to enforce it...”. A number of French graduates are now wandering on our streets for most of our public schools do not offer French only few ones can be accommodated in private schools. They already engaged French graduate are subjected to handle disciplines other than French language.

REFERENCES

- Andreou, G., Vlachos, F., and Andreou, E. (2005). Affecting Factors in Second Language Learning. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 34, 429–438. doi: 10.1007/s10936-005-6202-0.
- Asake, O. J. (2006). Introduction to French Language Iife (Ohio: Lawrence Press).
- Bamgbose, A. (1983). Language and Nation Building. *Public Enlightenment Lecture Series. Ekpoma.*
- Bliss (2007). Textbook for Class 9 Second Language Practice Makes Perfect Basic English, Second Edition (Textbook Binding).
- I, O. L. et al. (2004). Deceptive Cognates in A French Class in Nigeria. *Education ET Societies Flurislinguistics* 17.
- Language, F. (2007). Senior Secondary School Curriculum.
- Offorma, G. (2012). French Language Education in Nigeria. .
- Ogumbiyi, O. (2012). Implementation of the Senior Secondary School French Curriculum in Lagos State: Problems and Prospects. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 5.
- Ogunkeye, O. (2007). Bilingualism and the Teaching of English and French in Nigeria. *Journal of Social and Cultural Studies* 10.
- Olayiwola, J. K. and Ogundele, M. O. (2015). Teaching of French Language in Oyo State Colleges of Education in Nigeria: Problems And Ways Forward. *Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 3, 26–30.

CONCLUSION

If the government of this country is actually committed to the issue of teaching and learning French in Nigeria, there must be a concerted effort with all the relevant stakeholders at all levels. It is glaring to note that French is spoken in a number of African countries and other countries in the world. A good number of these African countries share common borders with Nigeria. Therefore, the over – riding aim of studying French language in Nigeria is to facilitate communication with our French-speaking neighbors and to enhance multilateral relations with all the French speaking countries of the world.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright © 2020 Lawal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.