

THE EDUCATION RESEARCH AND STUDIES GROUP, WHAT IS IT?

The Education Research and Studies Group was inaugurated in 1984 when Prof. Pai Obanya assembled a group of his colleagues and convinced them of the need to pool resources together and fund/sponsor studies and publications in Education. The result of that first meeting was a collection of papers in memory of one of their departed colleagues, Prof. P. O. Okunrotifa. Since 1988, the leadership has passed on to Prof. S. O. Ayodele under whom the group has published some other titles, listed below.



OTHER ERS G PUBLICATIONS

1. Obanya, PAI (1984) Education in Theory and Practice, Papers in memory of Prof. P. O. Okunrotifa.
2. Ayodele, S. O. et al (1995) Methods of Classroom Teaching.
3. Ayodele, S. O. (1996) Education in the Service of Humanity, Papers in Honour of Prof. Pai Obanya.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

1. Papers submitted to the *Biannual Review of Educational Studies* should be well balanced summaries of original studies conducted in the field of education and should not have been published, and not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
2. As a policy, the preference is for studies leading to masters or doctoral degree awards in recognised universities; or major other similar studies.
3. Papers should be submitted in duplicate, typed in double spacing on one side of the paper only, and contain wide margins. These will not be returned unless accompanied by a large stamped, addressed envelope.
4. No abstract is needed since the whole paper itself is a detailed summary of the original work. The original manuscript and figures will be discarded as soon as the publication is out unless the publisher is requested to return the original to the author, in which case the paper should be sent with the self addressed, stamped envelope as described above.
5. Tables and all necessary illustrations, especially graphs and charts, should accompany the typescript and should appear in the appropriate place in the write-up where they should come up. However, authors are implored to limit the number of such illustrations.
6. References should use the American Psychological Association (APA) pattern, as shown in the following examples:
7. Ogunsanya, M. O. (1983) "The Student Factor in the Achievement of School Organisation," *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol. 3, No. 3., pp. 253-261
8. Fed. Ministry of Education, (1981) *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: Government Press.
9. As much as possible, footnotes should be avoided, as all notes should come at the end of the document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	iii
Ayodele, S. O.	<i>The Impact of Language Acquisition on Performances in Psychological Testing.</i> 1
Araromi, M. A.	<i>French Teaching in Nigeria, the Outcome of Studies by Three Scholars</i> 1
Odumuh, T. O. (Mrs)	<i>A Study of Motivation on Reading Comprehension: A Study of Senior Secondary School Students in Gwagwalada Area Council of Fed. Capital Territory, Abuja</i> 27
Adedeji, S. O. & Adeagbo, J.	<i>Socio-Economic Determinants of Female Participation in Vocational Education in Oyo State Secondary Schools: A Theoretical Review.</i> 39
Adelabu, S. B. (Mrs)	<i>Reading Problems and Reading Achievements: A Review of Two Nigerian Studies.</i> 46
Adeyanju, G. A.	<i>The Relationship Between Conceptual Tempo of Reflectivity and Impulsivity Cognitive Styles with Scholastic Achievement</i> 57
Adeyoju, C. A.	<i>Study Habits Modification, Study Skill Training and Their Bearing on Students' Achievements.</i> 65
Adegbile, J. A.	<i>Competence in Written English: A Review of Studies by Two Scholars</i> 72
Ogundele, B. O.	<i>Awareness of Drug Hazards by Selected Secondary School Students</i> 85
Isiugo-Abanihe I. (Mrs.)	<i>Review of Reading Research in Nigeria</i> 92
Ajayi, M. A.	<i>Practice Distribution and Pre-task Ability in the Acquisition of Gross Motor Skills Among Junior Secondary School Students.</i> 104
Ogunbiyi, O. (Mrs)	<i>Factors of Success in the Learning of French in Nigeria</i> 113
Adepaaju, A. A.	<i>Some Effects of Mastery Learning Strategies on Students' Achievements in Selected Subjects</i> 122
Falayojo, Wole	<i>Special Guest Contribution: Correlates of Learning Achievements: Some Aspects of a National Survey.</i> 133

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FACTORS OF SUCCESS IN THE LEARNING OF FRENCH IN NIGERIA

by

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Introduction

Nigeria, an Anglophone nation, is surrounded on all inland areas by French speaking countries. To the west is the *La Republique Populaire du Benin*, to the north is *La Republique du Niger*, and *La Republique du Tchad* and to the east is *La Republique du Camerouns*. From this arrangement, it would be clear that in order to communicate effectively with their neighbours, Nigerians need to acquire some degree of efficiency in the French language. Quite apart from this is the reality that French is one of the most important foreign languages which is learnt in most of the English speaking world either as a second or a foreign language. As the language of one of the greatest civilisations with a long and esteemed literary traditions and a large influence in matters of politics, international diplomacy and scientific discoveries, French cannot be ignored in educational circles today. Above all, as one of the five languages of the United Nations Organisation and one of the three official languages of the Organisations of African Unity, it

should be one of the key subjects on the curriculum of our schools.

In 1973, the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) organised a workshop on the National Secondary Education Curriculum. The French panel pointed out that: "The main contribution of the French language to the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria is to serve as a window into the international world and to encourage contacts on a social intellectual and economic basis with the neighbouring Francophone countries."

Taking the foregoing into consideration, quite a number of studies have been conducted into the teaching and learning of French in Nigerian secondary schools. In this review, our focus is on two such studies, viz. those of Ojo (1990) who conducted a study into the factor of motivation in the teaching and learning of French in Oyo state secondary schools, and of Ajibade (1993) who worked on the factors of intelligence, proficiency in English, aptitude and affective factors as predictors of success in the learning of French. We take these one after the other.

Ojo, A. P. (1990) *Motivation in the Teaching - Learning of French in Oyo State Secondary Schools*, M. Ed. thesis, University of Ibadan.

The primary objective of this scholar was to establish the impact of motivation on the teaching and learning of French among teachers and students in Oyo state of Nigeria. The ultimate aim was to find feasible and lasting solutions to the problems which have been confronting the teaching and learning of French since its introduction into the Nigerian school system.

Among the authorities cited by the investigators are Omolewa (1971) whose paper, "The Teaching of French and German in Nigerian Schools, 1859 - 1959", discussed the historical development of French teaching in Nigeria during the hundred years preceding the independence of the country. Similarly, Evans (1972) in a paper entitled "Does everybody need French?" highlighted the major landmarks in the teaching and learning of French in the country. This paper discussed the features, problems, and solutions in the teaching - learning climate of French since independence. Similarly, the literature review focused on Dada's (1979) work which treated the development of French since its inception in Nigeria at the end of the last century. Dada examined the

context and situation, factors and problems militating against French teaching. Further to this, the investigator examined Dada's (1982) work in which the various aspects of French teaching, their problems, and possible solutions are discussed. Dada in that work proposed a "Discriminating French Learning Curriculum" based on available resources, situational analysis, objective selection of content, teaching strategies and evaluation of learning outcomes.

Also reviewed are the works of Obanya (1974) which examined the problems of attitude, motivation and other learner's characteristics at the secondary school level; of Brann (1970) which examined the issue of staffing as it affects the teaching and learning of French; of Araromi (1984) which dealt with the effects of visual imagery instruction on achievement in teaching of French; and of Aluko (1986) which treated the problems and problems of French teaching.

Methodology Used

A survey research design was employed for this study. A questionnaire was designed to determine the level of motivation in the teaching and learning of French in Oyo state secondary schools among the teachers and learners. The instrument was in two parts. The first part, of 19 items, was for

learners, while the second part, with 14 items, was for teachers.

The subjects were 149 students (60 males and 89 females), aged between 10 and 19 years. The students merely provided answers to the questionnaire items and the analysis of these constituted the basis of the major findings shown below.

Major Findings

Table 1: *Personal Interest of Learners of French: "Do you wish to study French in the University?"*

	Yes	No	Unc.
Males	43.3%	48.3%	8.3%
Female	51.2%	45.4%	3.4%
TOTAL	48.3%	46.3%	5.4%

Table 2: *Students' Perception of French Lessons.*

	Diffc.	Easy	Unc.
Males	25%	68.5%	6.7%
Female	23.6%	68.5%	7.7%
TOTAL	24.1%	68.5%	7.3%

On the issue of the extent to which students like the French class, 88.3% of the males signified that they did, while some 85.3% of the females signified that they did; on the other hand, 11.7% of the boys said they did not, leaving none of the boys undecided, while 13.5% of the girls signified that they did not like the lessons, leaving 1.2% of them

undecided. Thus, it would appear that the degree of liking for the subject was higher among the boys than among the girls. The result is very similar to the findings about the students' liking for the French teachers, shown below.

Table 3: *"Do you like Your French Teacher?"*

	Yes	No	Unc.
Male	96.6%	3.3%	0%
Female	88.8%	4.5%	6.7%
TOTAL	91.2%	4.0%	4.0%

As to whether the teacher gives gifts and/or praises, some 58.5% of the boys as against 66.3% of the girls answered in the affirmative while 36.5% of the boys and 28.2% of the girls answered in the negative. Others were undecided.

Turning to the influence of the home and peers, the investigator sought to know whether the subjects spoke French at home, with the result shown below.

Table 4: *"Do you speak French at home?"*

	Yes	No	Unc.
Males	38.3%	56.7%	5%
Female	35.6%	57.3%	6.7%
TOTAL	36.8%	57.0%	6.3%

The result thus shows that most of the subjects do not use French at home, apparently because there are

few people to interact with in French. Following this is the item asking the students "Are your friends happy hearing you speak French?" To this, 63.4% of the males and 50.5% of the females respond in the affirmative, while 28.3% of males and 28.2% of females respond in the negative, with the remaining being undecided.

10. the items asking the subjects how long they had been studying French, 96% of males, and 83.1% of females indicated they had been studying it for between 2 and 5 years, with 1.7% of males and 13.5% of females indicating they had been learning it for between 6 and 16 years. Then comes the items on whether the subjects have texts for French, with their responses shown in the next table.

Table 5: "Do you have textbooks for French lessons?"

	Yes	No	Undec.
Male	76.7%	18.5%	5%
Female	77.6%	20.2%	2.2%
TOTL	77.2%	19.4%	3.4%

The result thus shows that quite a good proportion of the students lack texts in the subject. As to the item asking if they had been to a French speaking country, 21.7% of males and 16.9% of the females respond in the affirmative while 76.7% of males and 75.3% of females say they

had never been so privileged. Others did not respond.

The focus then turned to the teachers. A total of 15 teachers of French were involved in the study, and again, the same pattern of "Yes/No" items were involved. The first item asked the simple question, "Do you enjoy teaching French?" Naturally enough, a total of 14 of the teachers responded in the affirmative while only one responded "No". The teachers were then requested to indicate which aspect of French they most enjoyed teaching; to which ten of the teachers indicated Grammar, while 3 indicated Vocabulary, and 2 indicated Literature.

To the item, "Why/How did you become a French teacher?", 9 of the teachers indicated it was purely out of interest, while 3 said it was out of their personal choice, and the other 3 said it was purely out of chance or accident. Asked, "Do your students like French lessons?", most (14) of the teachers responded in the affirmative while one said this was not so.

On the all important question of whether or not the conditions of service were attractive, 7 out of the 15 said the conditions were good, while the remaining 8 said the conditions were poor. An aspect of the conditions could be the issue of scholarships, and so to the question of whether or not scholarships were available for the study of French,

only three answered in the affirmative while the remaining 12 answered, "No".

However, on the issue of whether or not the people in the immediate environment liked French, all the teachers responded in the affirmative. Thus, this is one item that would paint a good picture of the study of French. Yet, the very next item, on whether or not there were activities such as Quiz, Debates, Excursions, to promote the study of French, 10 of the teachers responded in the affirmative, while the remaining 5 responded in the negative.

Finally, how did the teachers feel about French? There were some four sub-items on this, with the following responses.

Difficult.	3
Easy	12
Boring	2
Interesting	13
Not Encouraging	5
Encouraging	10
Dying out	6
Very much alive	9

It would be clear from this table that the responses to most of the items are positive although some are rather disturbing.

How then would one sum up the learning climate for French, both from the perspectives of the students and teachers? It would be clear from this study that the situation is

sufficiently stimulating for the learning of the French language although the situation could be much better. We now turn to the second study, that of Ajibade.

Ajibade, Y. A. (1993)
Intelligence, Proficiency in English, Aptitude and Effective Factors as Predictors of Success in the Learning of French, Ph. D. thesis, University of Ibadan.

The aim of the investigator was to discover whether performances in the English language could be used as a predictor of success in the learning of French, much as Obanya (1973) did. The study also attempted to establish if other factors such as intelligence, attitude, motivation, aptitude and socio-cultural background are equally highly relevant to the study of the French language. Specifically, the study attempted to provide answers to the following research questions:

- Is there a relationship between performance in the English language and performance in the French language when learnt in similar contexts?
- Is there a relationship between intelligence and French language learning?
- Is there a relationship between motivation for French and French language learning?

- d) Is there a relationship between attitude to language learning and French language learning?
- e) Is there a relationship between socio-cultural background of a child and French language learning?
- f) Is there a relationship between aptitude test and proficiency test in English as a predictor of success in French?

Methodology

A one group pre-test post-test pre-experimental design was used for the study. Seven research instruments were used for the study out of which five were constructed by the researcher herself. The instruments were:

- ♦ the non-verbal intelligence test (Test M);
- ♦ Dada and Astill Foreign Language Aptitude Test (DAFLAT);
- ♦ Proficiency Test in the English Language (PTL);
- ♦ Achievement Test in the English Language (ATL);
- ♦ Questionnaire on Motivation for French Language Learning (QMFLL);
- ♦ Questionnaire on Language Attitude (QLA); and
- ♦ Questionnaire on Socio-Cultural Background (QSCB).

Four secondary schools in Ile-Ife and its environs were involved. One of them was situated in the rural area. In all, 304 subjects from JSS 1 were used for the study which lasted for a period of ten weeks. The first week was used to administer both the proficiency test in English and the pre-test of the achievement test in French to all participating students.

During the second to the ninth weeks, French was taught in all the schools involved in the study. French was taught twice in each of the weeks during which the study lasted. By the 10th week, the intelligence test, the aptitude test, the post-tests in French as well as the questionnaires on motivation, attitude and socio-cultural background were administered in all the schools. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation test was applied to test all the hypotheses posited. Factor analysis was also applied to group together underlying variables.

Major Findings

The result did not show any adequate relationship between attitude and achievement in French language learning on the one hand and between motivation and achievement in French Language learning on the other hand. The study however showed that there is significant correlation between performances in English and French; between intelligence and success in French learning, and between aptitude and

success in English as a predictor of success in French.

Besides, the study identified five underlying factors as being important in French language learning, namely: (i) written linguistic skills, (ii) aptitude (with motivation as component); (iii) aptitude (with attitude as component); (iv) cognition; and (v) attitude.

Furthermore, the study outlined the following findings:

1. Performance in English can successfully predict performance in French when learnt in similar contexts;
2. The second language and the French language have some degree of relationship;
3. Intelligence is an important factor in French language learning. When this is accompanied by effective factors such as motivation and attitude, it could predict success in French language learning;
4. Motivation for learning French does not necessarily imply success in learning the French language. Before motivation can lead to successful performance in the language, it has to be accompanied by necessary cognitive factors;
5. Language attitude equally does not predict success or failure in French language learning. Attitude

has to be accompanied by necessary cognitive factors for it to be used effectively in predicting language learning;

6. Socio-cultural background is a very important factor in the French language learning situation. The higher the socio-cultural background, the better is the quality of learning in French. It can be effectively used for predicting success in French language learning;
7. Aptitude has been underlined in the study as a very important factor in foreign language learning. It can be used in predicting success in the French language as pointed out by its correlation with English and with French in the study;
8. The most important variables in French language learning are aptitude, socio-cultural background, performance in written English which account for the highest amount of variance in the result shown;
9. Aptitude is a complex factor which has other components such as motivation, (Pimsleur, 1963), attitude (McKay, 1968);
10. Motivation is seen as more than just having an urge to identify with a group or wanting to learn a language for economic purposes, as Gardner (1979) puts it, the

desire has to be followed up by an effort.

Conclusion

Both researchers have tried to look into the problem of French teaching and learning in the formal school system. From these studies, we can see that if French teachers are made aware of the use of performance in a subject like English to predict success in French, their teaching will be more goal - oriented and more fruitful. From the two studies, it is clear that there is something lacking in French teaching and learning process. It may then be assumed that one of the ways to improve the situation will be to motivate both the teachers and the learners. Motivational techniques such as the use of praise and other incentives will go a long way in sustaining the students' personal interest for the French language. Schools, rather than forcing all their wards to choose between French and Arabic as is currently being done, can actually select students into the French programme on the basis of their scores in English.

Equally, situational influence, environment and material can motivate learners to learn. Thus, in order to raise the level of language development of the Nigerian child, the standard of living of the average Nigerian needs to be raised. In the study, all the factors examined which are significant for French language

learning are influenced by the environment of the child. Brembec (1966), Hanghurst and Neugarten (1977) state that even mother-tongue learning has been found to be correlated with the environment. A very attractive environment, the availability of teaching and learning aids and opportunity to travel to a French speaking country will encourage the students to learn French.

Finally, teachers could be motivated to teach effectively by availing them of the opportunities of in-service training, scholarships as well as travelling to France in order to update their knowledge and skills in the subject.

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