



ATTITUDE AND PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS TO THE STUDY OF FRENCH LANGUAGE AS A GENERAL STUDY COURSE

Olaseinde, Felicia Olufemi (Ph. D)

Department of Arts and Language Education, Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the attitude and performance of undergraduate students to the study of French Language as a general course of study in some Tertiary institutions in Nigeria using Federal University Oye as a case study. The research adopted descriptive research design of survey type. The sample for the study consisted of 300 undergraduate French students of Federal University Oye. The students find themselves offering the course as one of the compulsory course in General Studies department of the University. The instruments used by the researcher were made up of three research questions and one hypothesis. The questionnaire was based on Attitude and Performance of Undergraduate Students to the Study of French Language (APUSSFL). It contained twenty questions and was given to the students in order to seek information from them. The results show that no insolent students study the language; the performance and attitude of the students were encouraged through the methods used in teaching the students. The results showed that there is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students attitude and performance towards French Language. It was cleared through the result that there is difference in the students' knowledge of French Language and their performance. It is revealed that the students interest in French Language were increased through the method of teaching and they showed positive attitude towards the course. It is recommended that students should have recommended text books for French Language. Government should try and make French Language compulsory in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria to make the nation an English-French bilingual nation because of her role among the French speaking countries of West Africa.

KEYWORDS: *Attitude, Performance, Undergraduate, French Language, General studies.*

INTRODUCTION

Attitude is a psychological construct, a mental and emotional entity is inherent in, or characterises a person. There is an individual predisposed state of the mind regarding value and it is precipitated through responsive expression towards a person, place, things or event which in turn influences the individual's thought and action. Attitude is a feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving, that is; a particular feelings or opinion. (Cambridge University Press 2018). It is an evaluation of an attitude object, ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive. Most contemporary perspectives on attitudes also permit that people also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object by simultaneously holding both positive and negative attitudes toward the same object.

Eveyik (1999) defines attitude as the state of readiness to respond to a situation and an inclination to behave in a consistent manner towards an object. So attitude refers to our feelings and shapes our behaviours towards learning. Students' attitude is an integral part of learning and it should become an essential component of second language learning. Seweje

(2004) explains that attitude is a way of behaving or relating to certain situation which may involve persons, objects or institutions. He added that attitude could be positive or negative towards the subject or a particular concept which could develop through personal experiences.

Adebayo (2008) in his own submission, submitted that attitude is a positive or negative feeling of mental readiness, learned and organised through experience that exerts specific influence on a person's response to people, objects and situation. Some students show nonchalant attitude to their academic work, some are absent from classes especially when it is time for French lessons. They come late to the school when they are having French Language as the first period on the lesson time-table. Most of the students have unserious attitudes and these affect their learning of French. They manifest the unpreparedness in learning language especially French. Some are afraid, they think that they can never be good in it and this makes them to perform poorly in examination.

Araromi (2013) observes that, the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes metacognitive knowledge that students bring with

them to the classroom is significant contributory factors in the learning process and a determinant of the ultimate success in the classroom context. Furthermore, he suggests that if teachers attend to the affective and cognitive components of students' attitudes as well as develop dependable pedagogical techniques, they may be able to increase both the length of time students commit to language study and their chances of success in it. James (2004) states that; reading is a process of communication. It is very important, because it is through it that most formal learning takes place. It also assists the students in every area of learning. So the importance of reading cannot be overemphasised because in academics, students achieve success in learning through it. Chamber (1999) asserts that learning occurs more easily when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language and learning.

Students like to learn things that will be of benefit to them in the nearest future. It seems as if they do not know the importance of learning French. Most of them think that French is used for a limited purpose. Seweje (2004) stresses that in curriculum implementation; the contents of the curriculum are expected to be transformed into learning experiences by the teachers in order to bring a desirable change in the learners' behaviour. A student must have studied French language up to the university level before he could secure job with it. Gone were those days when graduates of French used to find job easily in the embassies or in the private French companies where they were paid fat salaries. Worse still, French is unlike English, which is compulsory for students seeking admission to higher institutions. Failure in French in the Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) does not affect students' grade at the end of their secondary education. For this reason, students treat the learning of French with levity since they do not see the need for fighting tooth and nail to pass it. Unlike English, to which they know their attitude is warmer because they know it is a good determinant of their success in the SSCE. Had it been that French enjoyed the same status of the determining the student's success in their terminal examination; more attention will be paid to it. If, at least, a "pass" in French should be compulsory for students in their certificate before they can gain admission to any higher institution, they will be motivated to learn it as much as possible.

Moreover, many students find it difficult to relate what they have learnt with what they see outside the classroom, this made it difficult for them to transfer knowledge during examination. That is why they usually leave the important aspect of their questions unanswered. Babalola (2006) was of the opinion that learners should be helped so as to develop the right attitude so as to obtain or achieve good performance. Attitude is very necessary in doing things. It is the duty of parents, teachers and government therefore to help in improving the attitudes of our students by motivating them to learn. They could do this by setting a good example for them to follow. This example should show them the necessary technique for learning. They could also make provision for their needs. Stakeholders in education in the same vein should endeavour to have a positive attitude towards the teaching and learning of French language so that they could achieve better performance.

Performance is the action or process of performing a task or function. It is completion of a task with application of knowledge, skills and abilities. It is a settled way of thinking or feeling about something. It is a position of the body

indicating a particular mental state. It can be a role agnostic, which means to carry out any task doesn't need only to be physically capable of executing it out, but require someone to be mentally apt, emotionally tolerant and spiritually guided in such a way that the task aligns with one's personal values and beliefs. General Studies programme is compulsory in the University purposely because the skills and knowledge obtained in completing the courses provide students with the necessary tools to be productive employees, leaders and citizens.

Felleke (2005) states that education is an instrument adopted by nations of the world to direct human resource along an appropriate path to achieve productive and growing societies. The outcomes are design to incorporate the foundational knowledge and skills that have enduring societal value in other to prepare students to survive and thrive in a complex, diverse and dramatically changing world. Life after college does not consist of a job; as a young graduate; he is expected to effectively demonstrate certain knowledge and skills. The Nigeria University Commission (NUC) in 1989 issued Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) to Nigerian Universities whereby the General Studies Programme (GSP) was introduced. This was later reviewed by the NUC to become Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) in 2007.

According to NUC (2007), the General Studies Programme is to equate Nigerian graduates from Universities with appropriate knowledge and skill, competence and dispositions to make them globally competitive and capable of contributing meaningfully to Nigeria's socio-economic development. Nweke and Nwoye (2016) ascertain that an early and appropriate investment in education is an essential mobilizer of developmental potentials in a country bearing in mind that as education derives inspiration from society, likewise it reciprocally contributes to societal growth and development. General Studies Programme (GSP) is an aspect of the educational policy of the country (Nigeria) covering a set of identified courses to be general applicability to undergraduates of Universities in Nigeria apart from their normal respective disciplines. This is to broaden the range of all students and harness such acquired knowledge to impact positively the development of the country.

Adejo (2006) asserts that the primary aim of the General Studies Programme is to produce graduates that are versatile and veracious judging by the deficient motivational and learning environment coupled with inadequacies in the physical and material resources meant for the teaching and learning of French Language. He further stated that General Studies Programme was established by the National Universities Commission to regulate the running of Universities in Nigeria. This Organisation conceived general studies as a versatile programme designed to expose undergraduate students to a wide range of general, non-specialty courses which are carefully designed to widen their knowledge base beyond the narrow confines of their specialization areas. Nigerians need to learn French Language as it is believed that it will serve as an instrument of unity and a tool for global partnership among nations of the world.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Introducing French Language to the undergraduate students as a general course seems to be a strange course to

offer for them. They believe French Language is a difficult course and show negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of the Language. Observation revealed that, lecture and discussion method was used to impart French Language to the students without using projector and other audiovisual instructional materials which can make the students have interest while teaching. With the adoption of French Language in the General Study Programme of the Federal University Oye, the attitude and performance of undergraduate students to the teaching and learning of French Language in Federal University Oye, Ekiti State, seems not to be encouraging, this appears to create a big problem and burden to these students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate the attitude and performance of undergraduate students towards the teaching and learning of French Language. The study will help students to enhance good spoken French while they show total commitment to the teaching and learning of French language.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (a) Did the undergraduate students have interest in the teaching and learning of French Language?
- (b) What are the undergraduate students’ attitude towards learning French Language as a general study?

- (c) Is there any difference in the attitude of male and female undergraduate students towards French language?

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female undergraduate students towards the teaching and learning of French Language.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive research of a survey type. The research made use of 300 undergraduate students of Federal University Oye which formed the population of the study. 75 students were randomly selected from each of the four Departments offering French as general study course and this formed the sample of the study. The instruments used for the study was a questionnaire titled Attitude and Performance of Undergraduate Students to the Study of French Language (APUSSFL) it was used to generate information from the students on their interest and attitude towards learning French Language. The questionnaire contains 20 items on the interest and attitude of students towards learning French Language. The data collected were subjected to simple percentages and t-test.

RESULTS

Research Question 1:

Did the undergraduate students have interest in the teaching and learning of French Language?

Table 1: Summary of simple percentage showing undergraduate students’ interest in the teaching and learning of French Language.

	ITEMS	Agree	Disagree
1	French language is very easy to learn.	75 (75%)	25 (25%)
2	I like to speak French language fluently.	49 (49%)	51 (51%)
3	I wish to study French language all the time.	68 (68%)	32 (32%)
4	I like people that speak French language.	54 (54%)	46 (46%)
5	I like to be in French language class always.	60 (60%)	40 (40%)
6	I like my French teacher.	58 (58%)	42 (42%)
7	I always revise my French note after each French class.	60 (60%)	40 (40%)
8	I listen to French language programs on the radio and television.	55 (55%)	45 (45%)
9	I go extra mile by reading other materials to improve my spoken French	62 (62%)	38 (38%)

The table showed that 75(75%) students agree that French language is very easy to learn, while 25 (25%) students disagree. 49 (49%) students agree that they like to speak French language fluently, while 51 (51%) students did not. 68 (68%) of the students wish to study French language all the time, while 32 (32%) have no interest, 54 (54%) students like people that speak French Language while 46 (46%) did not. 60 (60%) students like to be in French Language class always, while 40 (40%) disagree. 58 (58%) students agreed that they

like their French teachers while, 42 (42%) students disagree. 60 (60%) students always revise their French note after each French class while 45(45%) students did not. 55(55%) students listen to French language programmes on the radio and television while 45(45%) students did not. 62(62%) students go extra mile by reading other materials to improve their spoken French while 38 (38%) students disagree.

Research question 2:

What are the undergraduate students’ attitude towards learning French Language as a general study course?

Table 2: Summary of simple percentage of undergraduate students' attitude towards teaching and learning French Language.

		Agree	Disagree
1	When it is time to study French language, I feel sad.	50 (50%)	50 (50%)
2	French Language is a difficult course.	52(52%)	48(48%)
3	I hate learning French Language.	51(51%)	49(49%)
4	Learning French Language amounts to wasting of time.	56(56%)	44(44%)
5	French Language will add more value to my career.	56(56%)	44(44%)
6	I wish I have the opportunity not to learn French.	58(58%)	42(42%)
7	The knowledge gained in French Language daily helped me.	53(53%)	47(47%)
8	I read my French notes only during examination period.	52(52%)	48(48%)
9	I hate French Language right from my secondary School.	56(56%)	44(44%)
10.	Learning French Language programmes is of no importance to my future.	58(58%)	42(42%)
11.	I hate myself when I learnt French Language is compulsory in the universities.	58(58%)	42(42%)

50(50%) Students agree that when it is time to study French, they feel sad while 50(50%) students did not. 52(52%) Students agree that French Language is a difficult course while 48(48%) students did not agree. 52(52%) students hate learning French Language while 48(48%) students did not. 56(56%) students agree that learning French Language amounts to wasting of time while 44(44%) disagree. 56(56%) students accept that French Language will add more value to their career while 44(44%) did not accept. 58(58%) students wish they have opportunity not to learn French while 42(42%) students wish to have opportunity to learn French. 53(53%) students agree that the knowledge they gained in French

Language daily helped them while 47(47%) students did not agree. 52(52%) students read their French notes only during examination period while 48(48%) students did not. 56(56%) students hate French Language right from their secondary school while 44(44%) students did not. 58(58%) students agree that learning French Language programs is of no importance to their future while 42(42%) did not. 58(58%) students hate themselves when they learnt French Language is compulsory in the University while 42(42%) students did not.

Hypothesis (1)

There is no difference in the attitude of male and female undergraduate students towards French language

Table 3: T-test showing mean difference on the attitude of undergraduate students towards French Language based on gender.

Variation	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t-cal	t-tab
Male	100	47.070	13.569	298	0.307	1.960
Female	200	47.550	12.328			

$P > 0.05$

(Result not significant)

Table 1 shows that the t-cal (0.307) is less than the t-tab (1.960), the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference between male and female undergraduate students' attitude towards teaching and learning of French Language.

DISCUSSION

In table I, student find French language easy to learn through the help of the teacher, who has been making use of projector and other audio visual aids in impacting French fluently, they wish to study the language at all times, they like to be in French class at all times, they have interest in their French teacher, they revised there notes, they listen to French programmes on the Radio and television and have interest in going extra mile to read other materials to improve of their spoken French.

Table 2: The table shows the attitude of students towards learning French using projector and other audio-visual materials, some of the students feel declare that they feel sad when they have French. They believe French is a difficult course and hate it. Also some read the notes only during examination period and learning it has no importance to their

future. Some of them wish they don't study it. Majority of the student after teaching them with the audio instructional materials and projector, they accept that French language adds more value to their career, the knowledge gained from learning the course helped them.

Table 3: This shows that there is no significant difference in attitude and performance of Male and Female undergraduate students towards the teaching and learning of French language both Male and Female students perform well there is no gender bias.

CONCLUSION

From the finding of the study it shows that the attitude of the undergraduate French student towards the teaching and learning of French language were negative. Through the use of projector and other audio- visual instructional materials used in teaching the students, the student attitude change, they have positive attitude while teaching them.

The researcher is of the opinion that the use of audio-visual instructional materials to project the lecture will help the students to change their attitude positively and have good performance in French language

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations were made based on the finding of this study:

- Audio-visual instructional materials with projector must be provided for the teaching and learning of French language.
- Teaching and learning of French language using audio-visual instructional materials change the attitude of students.
- The teacher should try and project the lecture programmes so that the students can understand and perform well.
- The teacher is employed to vary the method of teaching so that students would understand the language.

REFERENCES

1. Ade Ojo, S. (2006) *Venez parler Français avec moi. An inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Lagos, University of Lagos Press.*
2. Adebayo, A. (2008) *Instructional approaches methods and principal's yearbook PP 90 – 97.*
3. Araromi, M.O. (2013) *The challenges of introduction of French Language as core subject in the new 9 – years basic education curriculum structure UNAD Journal of education 5 (i); 218 – 224.*
4. Eveyik E. (1999): *Development of an attitude Bogazici Universities sosyal bilimler enstitüsü.*
5. Felleke S. (2005) *Education and modernization: an examination of the experience of Japan and Ethiopia, African and Asian Studies Vol. 4(4).*
6. James, S. (2006) *Reading for academic purpose, London, Edward Aradd.*
7. Nweke, C. and Nwoye, C. (2016) *Journal of African Studies, Vol, 1, No 6.*
8. Olorunsola E.O. (2005) *Classroom management and the teaching of Yoruba language in school. Journal of research in curriculum studies 4 (1): 49 – 55.*
9. Seweje R.O. (2004) *the art of teaching, ado Ekiti, Green line Publisher.*

Questionnaire

		Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
1	French language is very easy to learn.				
2	I like to speak French language fluently.				
3	I wish to study French language all the time.				
4	I like people that speak French language.				
5	When it is time to study French I feel sad.				
6	I like to be in French language class always.				
7	French language is a difficult course.				
8	I hate learning French language.				
9	Learning French language amount to wasting of time.				
10	I like my French teacher.				
11	French language will add more value to my career.				
12	I wish I have the opportunity not to learn French.				
13	The knowledge gained in French language daily helped me.				
14	I read my French notes only during the exam.				
15	I always revised my French note after each French class.				
16	I hate French language right from my Secondary School.				
17	I listen to French language programs on the radio and television.				
18	Learning French language programs is of no importance to my future.				
19	I go extra mile by reading other materials to improve my spoken French.				
20	I hate myself when I learnt French is compulsory in the Universities.				