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ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ORAL ASPECT OF FRENCH CURRICULUM OF UPPER BASIC LEVEL STUDENTS IN EDO SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessed the implementation of the practical component of French curriculum in Upper Basic Level in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and two hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The sample comprised 7 teachers and two hundred and fifty three (253) students drawn from public and private secondary schools in Edo South Senatorial District of the State. The purposive sampling technique was used to select teachers while the students were selected using the simple random sampling technique. A checklist titled: Oral French Facilities Checklist (OFFC) and a questionnaire titled: Oral French Lesson Frequency Questionnaire (OFLFQ) were used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using percentages, means and chi-square analysis. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results of analysis revealed among others that the availability of French laboratory facilities in the schools was inadequate for effective implementation of oral French curriculum. The teachers' qualification was significant in the effective implementation of oral French curriculum in schools.

Based on the findings, recommendations were made amongst which is that government should make provisions for adequate French laboratory facilities for effective implementation of Oral French Curriculum.

Keywords

Implementation, Oral Aspect, French, Curriculum

1. Introduction

The history of French language in Nigeria dates back to the 16th century. It was amongst the subjects introduced into Nigerian secondary schools by Church Missionary Society Grammar School, Lagos-Nigeria in 1859. To concretize the teaching and learning of French as a subject in secondary Schools a conference was held in Yaounde in 1961 where the subject was officially recommended that it should be taught and examined as a school discipline in anglophone Africa, including Nigeria. This was done as a result of the important recognition given to the subject. As a result of the values placed on the subject (French language) the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Nigerian French village in 1991 as an inter-university centre for French studies. In furtherance to the importance attached to French language in Nigeria, in 1996, the military President – Late Ibrahim Sanni Abacha declared French language as Nigeria's second official language. This was done so that Nigerians can interact effectively with her francophone neighbors locally and internationally, as this foundation will enable them speak the language fluently.

French is one of the international languages most widely used in commerce, scientific and technological research, administration, education etc. In fact, the need for French language in Nigeria cannot be undermined. Nigeria's geographical educational, diplomatic need make it essential for Nigeria to give all the needed attention to French as a subject in the primary and secondary levels of the national educational system. A solid foundation in the knowledge of French language will no doubt contribute to the development of Nigeria socially, economically and otherwise because language is one of the vital tools of co-existence. Language has been described as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbol, (Sapir, 1921). Still on the definition of language, Bloch and Trager (1942) described it as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates. These definitions clearly support the fact that language is very important to the existence and development of man. Faniran (2016) describes language as the primary mode of human expression. Language no doubt plays a very important role in any society.

Despite its importance in the scheme of things, Nigeria that is surrounded by Francophone neighbors on the North, East, South and West (Republic of Niger, Chad, Cameroun and the Republic of Benin) do not seem to realize the importance of French language.

French Language is considered as one of the most widely used language after English language. Its status in Nigeria is that of a foreign language. The language has gained ascendancy among different international language because of its pertinence in all sphere of life. French is regarded as one of the most important foreign languages used by most countries (Ajoboye, 1999). Despite its importance in the scheme of things nationally and internationally the teaching and learning of French language in Nigerian secondary schools seem not to be effective as secondary school students cannot speak or use the language for any meaningful communication (Tar, 2012). In other words spoken French is not a common phenomenon in the teaching and learning of French in Nigerian Secondary School. In learning a language, communication definitely plays a crucial role because without communication there is no interaction, language teaching or learning (Myslihaka 2016).

2. Review of Literature

Ideally in language teaching the objectives of language teaching syllabus are identified in terms of linguistic competence and communicative competence. For effective teaching of the language syllabus, the teacher must have a realistic objective for language teaching. Thus, the language teacher must have a vivid understanding of the linguistic and communicative competence in order to reflect appropriate contents and activities for second or foreign language teaching. Linguistic competence is also referred to as grammatical competence. It is the ability to use language accurately at sentence level. In other words linguistic competence involves the accurate use of words and structure in second or foreign language. However, for the purpose of this article, communicative competence can be described as the ability to use language in its socio-cultural, interpersonal aspects, beyond the sentence level (Williams, 1990). Simply put, it refers to a learner's ability to use language to communicate successfully. The term "Communicative Competence" is made up of two words, the combination of which means "Competence to Communicate". Competence is one of the most controversial terms in the field of General and Applied Linguistics. Its introduction to linguistic discourse is generally associated with Chomsky (1965) who in his influential book titled "Aspects of the Theory of Syntax" drew what has been today viewed as a classic distinction between competence (the monolingual speaker-listener's

knowledge of language) and performance (the actual use of language in real situations). However there were critiques of this concept of competence and performance. These critiques such as Savignon (1972); Hyme (1972); Yule (1997) etc. came up with their own idea/concept of communicative competence. For instance, Yule (1997) opined that communicative competence enables the learner to know, when to say 'Can I have some drinks? Versus give me some drink'. According to the social context. For Yule, communicative competence is called sociolinguistic competence. Communicative competence to him involves the use of language in extend discourse for various kind of social integration such as appropriateness of usage, 'conventional usage', 'interactional usage' and 'transactional usage'. However, Richards, Plat and Weber (1985) gave the characteristics of communicative competence to include "(a) knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the language, (b) knowledge of rules of speaking (e.g. knowing how to begin and end conversations, knowing what topics that can be talked about in different in different types of speech events, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations; (c) knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts such as requests, apologies, thanks and invitations; (d) knowing how to use language appropriately.

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to mention that communicative competence is not restricted to spoken language, but involves writing as well. However, for the purpose of this paper the spoken aspect of French language teaching is the focus of discourse since the only thing we hear secondary school graduates speak after exposure to French from the lower basic level, through to the middle basic and up to the upper basic and beyond is 'Bonjour, Bonsoir, comment 'tut'appelle' and its response 'Je m'appelle'... This calls for worry, as the art of speaking which is an important aspect of the French curriculum is the most important skill of communication. There are four language skills in any given language – listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four language skills can be grouped into two dimensional schemes which are the receptive and productive dimensions. The receptive dimension include listening and reading skills while the productive dimension include the speaking and writing skills. An ideal, effective language teacher can teach one skill at a time or teach all the skills in an integrative format since all the four skills are interrelated. However, in the normal/actual French classroom in Nigeria the spoken skill is often ignored. This is contrary to the theory of language learning in communicative language teaching which include activities involving real communication, carrying out meaningful tasks and using language that is meaningful to the learner that promotes learning (Nunan, 1999). For this

theory to be effective, the use of materials such as tapes and visuals, language laboratory must come into play. According to Okecha (2005), the secret of language learning is imitation. Imitation can be effectively done with the aid of materials. In other words, materials have important role to play in audio lingualism and communicative language teaching whichever method the teacher tries to adopt (Konomi, 2015, Ezenwa 2004). Instructional materials for teaching French include visual aids such as pictures, posters, postcards, word calendars, realia, charts, graphic organizers, picture books, television, videos from iTunes and computers. Others include visual like maps, diagrams, pictures and other instructional materials that can be drawn from the students' immediate environment as well as ICT resources like audio devices, videos, television, telephone, the computer, the internet, word processor, e-mail, World Wide Web, multimedia and so on (Ezenwa 2018). Central to the effective implementation of curriculum are the educational resources which help in the achievement of the educational objectives. According to Akinsanya (2010) educational resources are important because the goal of any school depends on adequate supply and utilization of physical and material resources as they enhance proper teaching and learning. This was earlier reiterated by Chriswa (2008), who declared that effective teaching and learning depends on the availability of suitable adequate resources such as books, laboratories, library materials and a host of other visual and audio teaching aids which enhance good performance in national examination. Still on the issue of instructional materials in schools, Imoh (2006), in his study stated some of the factors affecting French language teaching, including inadequacy of materials and the incompetency of language teachers among other things. Nigerian education would be better if the government does the right thing by funding (Bakare 2019). The issue of funding was also reiterated by Ugbebor (2019) who declared that education is not well funded in Nigeria.

Oral aspect is a salient component of French subject. Language educators see it as an essential element of good French teaching. Therefore, for effective teaching and learning of this subject, teachers should strike a balance between theoretical teaching, exposure of students to speaking / communicating with the language outside the classroom. The teacher has been described as the hub of the curriculum. The reason is that it is the teacher that implements the curriculum. Curriculum implementation refers to how the planned or officially designed course of study is translated by the teacher into syllabuses, scheme of work and lessons to be delivered to students. A curriculum is said to have been implemented when teachers deliver both the content and instructional strategies of the curriculum in the same way they were designed to be delivered;

and learners acquire the planned or intended experiences, skills, knowledge, ideas and attitudes that are aimed at enabling the same learner to functions effectively in the society. From the foregoing, it means that the teacher's qualification is very important in the effective implementation of the French curriculum. This fact was buttressed by the Director General, Nigerian French village, Badagry, Lagos when he declared that students cannot learn a language properly if there are no good qualified teachers and a language laboratory (Eno-Abasi & Ujumwa 2016). In Nigeria the benchmark for teaching profession is the Nigerian Certificate in Education (N.C.E). Other qualifications include B.A. Ed, B.Ed, B.A/PGDE or B.A, Ph.D. To be qualified to teach French subject, the teacher must have any of the qualification listed above. According to Muhammed & Rashid (2011), academic qualification, professional qualification, refreshal course or trainings and teacher experience are the most important qualities of a teacher. This fact was earlier established in the study of Davis (2002) who declared that trained and qualified teachers impact positively on students' academic achievement. In the study of Juma, Omundi & Onwono (2015) carried out in Kenya, it was revealed that human resources which are the teachers, physical resources have amongst others the most significant relationship with the performance of students in French subject. In the study of Penuel, Fisherman, Yamaguichi and Gallagher (2007), it was discovered that the educational attainment of teachers affect their class performance. In the study of Owushu and Yiboe (2013), it was also discovered that teachers' qualification is the best predictor of French curriculum implementation.

However, the study of Waseka, Simatwa and Okwachi (2016) carried out in Kenya revealed that teachers with higher qualification (M.A, Diploma / M.Ed) do not significantly predict students' academic performance in secondary schools. Whereas teachers with lesser qualifications (B.Ed / B.A. Ed., B. A and diploma) significantly predicted students' academic achievement in French language.

Years of teaching experience is an important aspect that could hinder the effective implementation of oral French in Edo State. Different researchers have given different opinions about teaching experience and students' learning achievement. Adeyemi (2008) declared that teachers' teaching experience significantly influence students' learning outcome. In a study carried out by Campbell (2010) in Carolina, U.S.A, it was discovered that experienced teachers did better than inexperienced teachers. However, the study of Owusu and Yiboe (2013), it was declared that

teachers' years of teaching experience is not a strong predictor of the French curriculum implementation.

Over the years, personal observation by the researcher has shown that Nigerian Secondary Schools students can hardly or barely converse in French language. This fact was corroborated by Ajiboye (1999); Tar (2012); Offorma (2015) and Eno-Abasi; Ujunwan (2016) and lot of other scholars. Scholars have tried to find out the reason behind this poor performance to no avail. It is on this basis that this researcher decided to find out if the availability of French language laboratory facilities, teachers' qualification and teachers' years of teaching experience is responsible for students' inability to perform well in oral French?

Research questions:

- To what extent are French laboratory facilities available for teaching upper Basic classes students in Edo South Senatorial District?
- To what extent are the available French laboratory facilities utilized in Upper Basic classes in Edo South Senatorial District in Edo State?
- Do qualified and unqualified teachers significantly differ in the implementation of oral French curriculum in Upper Basic classes in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State?
- Experience and inexperience teachers significantly differ in the implementation of oral French curriculum in Edo South Senatorial District?

Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference between qualified and unqualified teachers in the implementation of French oral curriculum in upper Basic classes in Edo South Senatorial District.
- There is no significant difference between experienced and inexperienced teachers in the implementation of oral French curriculum in upper Basic classes in Edo South Senatorial District.

3. Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used in this study. The population consisted all the 65 French teachers and all the 2530 upper Basic students in Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 7 teachers and 254 students. A checklist

titled Oral French Facilities Checklist (OFFC) and a questionnaire titled Oral French Lessons Frequency (OFLFQ) was used to collect data for the study. The checklist had sections A and B. Section A contained demographic information of teachers while section B contained a list of laboratory facilities required for the teaching of French and the extent of utilization of the available facilities rated by teachers on a 4-point Likert scale of very frequent, frequent, seldom and very seldom. Similarly, the questionnaire has two sections- A and B. Section A of the instrument contained demographic data of students while Section B contained a list of laboratory activities of which the students were required to assess their level of adequacy on a 4-point Likert scale of very frequent, frequent, seldom and very seldom. The instruments were validated by two experts in the department of Modern Languages and the department of Curriculum and Instruction, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Based on the corrections, some items were modified. In other to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, the test-retest reliability method was adopted and used on a population outside the target population. The reliability value of 0.78 was obtained.

The simple percentage mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions and 1 and 2 while the t-test was used to answer the hypotheses.

4. Results

4.1 Research Question One

To what extent are French laboratory facilities available for teaching Upper Basic class students in Edo South Senatorial District in Edo State?

Table 1: Percentage, Analysis of the Availability of French Laboratory Facilities in Schools

Local Govt. Area	Sampled Schools	Required Lab. Facilities	Available Lab. Facilities	Percentage Available	Remarks
Oredo	Igbinedion Educational Centre	310	216	69.68	Inadequate
Ikpoba-Okha	Edo College	310	150	48.39	Inadequate
Egor	Federal Govt. Girls College	310	176	56.77	Inadequate
Ovia West	Iguobazua Gram. Sch.	310	5	1.61	Inadequate
Ovia North East	Siluko Gram. Sch.	310	0	0.0	Inadequate
Orhiomwon	Abudu Girls Model Sec. Sch.	310	86	27.74	Inadequate

Uhumnode	Igieduma	310	0	0.0	Inadequate
	Gram. Sch.				
Mean Total		310	90	29.2	Inadequate

According to the data in Table 1, the extent of availability of French laboratory facilities in Upper Basic classes in Edo South Senatorial District was inadequate.

Research Question 2

To what extent are the available French laboratory facilities utilized for the teaching of French of the Upper Basic Classes?

Table 2: Mean Analysis of the Utilization of French Laboratory Facilities in Edo South Senatorial District

Local Govt. Area	Sampled Sch.	No. of Teachers	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
Oredo	Igbinedion Educational Centre	1	3.30	0.9345	Frequent
Ikpoba-Okha	Edo College	1	1.325	0.3247	Seldom
Egor	Federal Govt. Girls College	1	2.90	0.8235	Frequent
Ovia West	Iguobazua Gram. Sch.	1	1.28	0.2143	Seldom
Ovia North East	Siluko Gram. Sch.	1	1.00	0.1450	Seldom
Orhiomwon	Abudu Girls Model Sec. Sch.	1	1.025	0.1314	Seldom
Uhumnode	Igieduma Gram. Sch.	1	2.36	0.5812	Seldom
Mean Total		7	1.88	0.4506	Seldom

From the data on table 2, the mean of utilization of available French facilities was 1.88 with a standard deviation of 0.4506. This meant that the utilization of available French language laboratory facilities by teachers in Edo South Senatorial district was seldom.

Research Question 3: Does qualified and unqualified teachers significantly differ in the implementation of oral French curriculum in Upper Basic Class in Edo South senatorial district of Edo State.

To answer this research question, personal auditing was carried out in the various schools to find out the level of adequacy of qualified teachers. Available teachers with B.A (ed) French and above was expressed as a percentage so required and the result is shown on table 3.

Table 3: Percentage Analysis of the Adequacy of Qualified French teachers in Edo South Senatorial District

Local Government	Samples schools	No. of students	Required teachers	Available teachers	Percentage	Remarks
Area	SCHOOLS	students	teachers	teachers	adequacy	
Oredo	Igbinedion Education Centre	35	1	1	100	Adequate
IkpobaOkha	Edo Boys Model College	55	2	1	50	Inadequate
Egor	Federal Government Girls College	40	1	1	100	Adequate
Ovia West	Iguobazua Grammar School	68	2	0	0	Inadequate
Ovia North East	Siluko Grammar School	20	1	0	0	Inadequate
Orhionmwon	Abudu Girls Model Secondary School	18	1	0	0	Inadequate
Uhumwode	Igieduma Grammar School	17	1	0	0	Inadequate
Mean total		253	9	3	22	Inadequate

According to the data on table 3, adequacy of qualified French language teachers in Edo South Senatorial District was 25%. The meant that qualified French language teachers in the schools were inadequate. Looking at it closely, the situation was however different in Igbinedion Educational Centre (100%) and Federal Government Girls College (100%) where they had adequate qualified teachers.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant effect of teachers' qualification on the implementation of oral French practical curriculum in Basic Secondary School Classes in Edo South Senatorial district.

Table 4: Effect of Teachers' Qualification on the Implementation of French Language Oral Practical Curriculum in Schools in Edo South Senatorial District

Qualification Status	Implementate Practical	ion of Fre		X ² (Cal)	df	Sig	
Qualified	Very Frequent Seldom			Very seldom			
	125 (4.90%)	205 (8.10%)	68 (2.70%)	660 (26.10%)	39.137	3	0.000
Unqualified	118(4.70%)	308 (12.20%)	101 (4.20%)	989 (39.10%)			

The data on table 4 shows the summary of the chi-square analysis on the effect of teachers' qualification on the implementation of French language oral practical curriculum in Upper Basic Classes in Edo South Senatorial District. The result showed that there was a significant effect of teachers' qualification on the implementation of French language oral practical curriculum, (p=0.000). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there was no significant effect of teachers' qualification on the implementation of French language oral curriculum in schools in Edo South Senatorial District was therefore rejected. Consequently, the adequacy of qualified teachers was significant in the implementation of French oral practical curriculum in secondary schools in Edo State South Senatorial District.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant effect of teachers' experience on the implementation of French language oral practical curriculum in Upper Basic Classes in Edo South Senatorial District.

Table 5: Effect of Teachers' Experience on the Implementation of French Language Oral Practical Curriculum in Upper Basic Classes in Edo South Senatorial District

French Language Teachers Experience	Implementation of French Language Oral Practical				X ² (Cal)	df	sig
	Very frequent	Frequent	Seldom	Very			
				seldom			
Above 5	34 (1.40%)	78	25	247	0.487	3	0.993
years		(3.20%)	(1.0%)	(10.0%)			
Below 5	165 (6.70%)	435	144	1324			
years		(17.70%)	(5.90%)	(54.0%)			

Significance is at P < 0.05

The data on Table 5 shows the summary of the chi-square analysis on the effect of teachers' experience on the implementation of French Language Oral Practical Curriculum in Upper Basic

Classes of Edo South Senatorial District. The result showed that there was no significant effect of teachers' years of experience on the implementation of French Language Oral Curriculum at (P = 0.992). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there was no significant effect of teachers' years of experience on the implementation of French Language Oral Curriculum in Upper Basic classes in Edo South Senatorial District was therefore retained. Consequently, the experience of teachers was not significant in the implementation of French language Oral Curriculum in Upper Basic classes in Edo South Senatorial district.

5. Discussion of Results

From the analysis of data, the extent of availability of French laboratory facilities in Upper Basic Classes in Edo South Senatorial District was inadequate. This is in line with Imoh (2006) who descried the inadequate French Language laboratory facilities. Eno-Abasi and Ujunwa (2016) also reiterated the importance of language laboratory in the effective implementation of the French curriculum. For Akinsaya (2010) educational resources are important for proper teaching and learning. Also, the study found that the utilization of available French Language laboratory facilities by teachers in Edo South Senatorial District was seldom. This findings is in line with the declaration of Chriswa (2008) who opined that effective teaching is dependent on the availability and utilization of resources such as audio-visual aids, books, laboratories etc. This opinion was also shared by Akinsanya (2010).

The result of this study also showed that qualified French Language teachers were inadequate in the upper Basic classes of Edo South Senatorial District. Further investigation in the study revealed that there is a significant effect of teachers' qualification on the implementation of French language oral curriculum. This finding is in line with the declaration of Eno-Abasi and Ujunwa (2016) who declared that if there are no good/qualified teachers, students cannot learn a language properly. The findings is also supported by the study of Davis (2002); Omundi and Onwono (2015) and Owusu and Yiboe (2013). In fact, Owusu and Yiboe declared that teachers' qualification is the best predictor of French language curriculum implementation. However, the study of Okwach (2016) was of the opinion that teachers with lesser qualification tend to perform better in the implementation of French Language Curriculum.

On the issue of teachers' experience the study revealed that teachers' experience does not significantly influence the implementation of the oral/practical aspect of the French Language curriculum. This findings is in line with Owusu and Yiboe (2013) who declared that teachers'

years of teaching experience is not a strong predictor of the French curriculum implementation. However, the findings of this study on teachers' years of teaching experience is at variance with that of Adeyemi (2008) and Campbell (2010) who declared that experienced teachers did better than inexperienced teachers.

6. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it may be concluded that, French language laboratory facilities are inadequate for the implementation of the oral French language curriculum in Upper Basic classes of Edo South Senatorial District. Where the facilities are available the utilization is very poor. Furthermore, from the researcher's findings, the qualification of French language teachers significantly affected the effective implementation of the oral (practical) French language Curriculum. However, the years of experience of the French Language teachers did not significantly affect the implementation of the oral French (practical) curriculum.

Implications for Research and Practice: Based on the findings,

It is therefore suggested that:

- 1. Concerted effort should be made by all tiers of government responsible for education to provide fund for the provision of well-equipped laboratories in Upper Basic Classes.
- 2. Non-governmental agencies should assist in the provision of French language laboratories in the Upper Basic classes.
- 3. Regular training programmes and retraining should be organized to sharpen the skills of teachers on the proper utilization of the French language laboratory. These training and retraining could be in the form of conferences, seminars, workshops which should be organized periodically by State Ministries of Education, State Universal Basic Boards, Alliance Française etc.

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