STUDENTS' ATTITUDE AND TEACHING METHODS AS DETERMINANTS OF STUDENT'S PERFORMANCE IN FRENCH LANGUAGE IN AKWA IBOM STATE

BY

BASSEY, FAITH SAMUEL
DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES
AKWA IBOM STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AFAHA NSIT

ABSTRACT

The study assessed students' attitude and teaching methods as determinants of student's performance in French language in Akwa Ibom State. Data for the study were collected from 400 randomly selected respondents through the use of Students' Attitude and Teaching Method Questionnaire (SATMQ). Two research hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The results indicate that students attitude has significant influence on student's performance in French language. It also proved that there is significant relationship between teachers teaching method and student's academic performance in French language. Based on the findings of this study, one of the recommendations was that students should develop positive attitude towards French as it a very important discipline to identify with as it will also help them improve upon their performances in the subject.

KEY WORDS: Students attitude, teaching methods, students performance, French language, Akwa Ibom State.

INTRODUCTION

Many Nigerians do be business in Francophone countries and business transactions cannot be appreciated through an interpreter. Speaking foreign language would make the owner of the language love the speaker. Language builds bridges and cements friendship. It is the vehicle of promoting social interaction, national cohesion, cultural preservation, functional literacy and phatic communion. With the attainment of independence in the 60s by many African countries, it was recommended in an international conference at Yaounde in 1961 that English Language be studied in francophone countries while French Language be studied in the Anglophone countries as an element to encourage understanding and cooperation among African countries.

In a report on the position of modern language in the education system of great Britain, it was decided that modern language which French is one of them are needed for scientific instruction and information as well as for the civil, diplomatic and armed service for "they alone can give us intimate knowledge of foreign countries and of the best thoughts of the citizens" Knowledge of French language enhances diplomatic ties and ensures job opportunities in foreign missions. The study of French language also has intellectual and educative advantages. If it is

properly taught, will train the students in habits of accuracy and clarity of thoughts expressions. As such, it cuts across subject boundaries.

The psychological environment is an umbrella of the level of speed of teaching cohesiveness, distraction, interests, motivations, anxieties, confusion and difficulty of classroom learning activities. When there is effective teaching and learning one of the outcome of that situation is high academic performance across all subjects. For a school environment to be conducive for learning particularly foreign language like French there must be adequate provision of these infrastructures and a well equipped language laboratory.

Statement of the Problem

Classroom experience has shown that French teachers are often faced with students who are unwilling, discouraged and uninterested to learn. Teaching and learning of French as a foreign language in any country especially in Nigeria is an extremely difficult task to undertake both on the part of the teacher and the student. This is evidenced in the general low performance of students in the subject at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) level in both public and private schools over the years. In most developing countries, the level of performance of students is low in the elementary phase of schooling. The main question arising from these revelations is: why are there such remarkable weaknesses in performance? This situation can be attributed to several factors, many of which relate to the teaching methods. Apart from that this challenge is partly caused by negative attitude of the students towards French.

An in-depth analytical assessment of the ESP reports for the last three years has revealed some problems in the teaching and learning in Nigeria such as lack of instructional supervision in schools, inadequate teaching learning resources, poor learning environments, and poor managerial practices among others. These have given rise to poor performance of students at the examinations. With respect to French, this phenomenon has not only negatively affected students' performance at the external examination but it has also rendered them incapable of communicating in basic French. Some public commentators have blamed the failure to the increasing ineptitude of French teachers not forgetting the inadequate teaching methods and learning materials which affect the quality of teaching in school. In fact, general interest of students in French has in addition, been inexplicably waning. Some pundits have attributed failure of junior secondary school students to the teaching methods employed by French teachers. In some cases too, head teachers wrongly reassign French-trained teachers to teach other subjects than French and this has also exacerbated the situation. Hence, the problem of this study is to determine students' attitude and teaching methods as determinants of student's performance in French language in Akwa Ibom State

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. To determine the relationship between students attitude and students performance in French language.
2. To determine the relationship between teachers teaching method and students performance in French language.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study.

1. What is the relationship between student's attitude and student's performance in French language?
2. What is the relationship between teachers teaching method and students performance in French language?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study.

1. There is no significant relationship between student's attitude and student's performance in French language.
2. There is no significant relationship between teachers teaching method and students performance in French language.

Literature Review

Attitude of Students and Effective Learning of French Language

Right attitude of the students is one of the keys that triggers effective learning. Tyler (2002) postulated that the right attitude enhances the students learning strategies. Students do not passively receive and process information, they are active participants in the learning process. Students with a well-developed ability to manage their own learning are able to choose appropriate learning goals to use their existing knowledge and skills direct their learning, and to select learning strategies appropriate to the task at hand.

In the statement of Piaget (1955), it has been evidenced that cheating by students in the examination, test is one of the wrong attitudes of students that sets the pace for failure. This is as a result of poor learning habit inculcated by students. When a student thinks that he has 'the privilege to cheat each time he is writhing examination, he refuses to study and prepare for the examination. Cheating is essentially an attempt to get a high grade without having to study for it. If a student is genuinely interested in learning, he will not cheat because he realizes that he would be cheating himself or the knowledge he did not acquire.

Effective learning of French is also affected by how easily distracted the students would be. According to Garrison (2000), distraction and disturbances noticed be the significant factors that make learning of a particular topic, subject null and void. Effective learning cannot be attained when a student put the radio, television or any sound system on while reading. The calmness and activeness of the mind is achieved in a non-disturbance and non-noisy environment. Concentration, focus and great assimilation requires a conducive environment for learning. Sometime a student may not be distracted by a sound system but other non-concentrated students or people around the learning environment may get his attention and focus deviated and attached to their fun or any form of disturbances while in the process of studying. A student who wants to achieve much in his learning must provide himself or herself a good or non-distracted environment.

Alternatively, moral judgment and conduct is a great determinant factor for effective learning. Tyler (2002) postulated that moral judgement refers to the students evaluation of the "rightness" or goodness" of behaving in a particular way in a particular situation. The emphasis is on the student's thoughts, his personal judgement which determines his behavior and thus affects his effective learning and achievement. On the other hand, moral behavior is the individual's ability to do what is right and avoid what is evil even when there are imposing temptations for evil behavior. Students perceive that their wrongness or rightness has nothing to do with their capability to learn effectively, but it does affect. And this ignorant attitude brings low academic achievement of course less achievable learning of French. Another attitudinal factor that deter effective learning is fear. Fear of whether the student will be able to learn and speak French very well like the teacher or French speaking person. With this attitude, the belief system that he can do well if he sits down and study French is destroyed. Also when the student is made to know the subject content, it brings unexplainable fear. He thinks that French is a language of foreigners and not his mother tongue. Just like other subject like mathematics, English et cetera, the attitude of fear in student is sometimes fueled by the teacher who teacher the subject. It is worthy of note here that teacher's professionalism, qualification and approach to teaching commands great changes and performance in students academic achievement. Effective learning of any subject can be brought to bear if fear of failure is eliminated by the teacher and the students.

Teachers Teaching Method and Academic Performance of Students in French Language

Teaching involves the interaction of three elements, the teacher, student and the object of knowledge. Meaning that for teaching to take place and also be effective, these three elements must be properly harnessed. Ayeni (2011) viewed teaching as a process that involves bringing about the desirable changes in learners so as to achieve specific outcome. Here the essence of teaching at any level of education is to bring a fundamental change in the learner. To facilitate this process, teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods. In order for the method used for teaching to be effective, Adunola (2011) maintains that teachers need to be conversant with numerous teaching strategies and methods that take recognition of the magnitude of complexity of the concept to be covered and that regular poor academic performance by the majority of students is fundamentally linked to application of poor teaching methods by teachers in impacting knowledge to learners.

In the traditional epoch, many teaching practitioner widely applied teacher centered method to impact knowledge to learners. In French, teachers adopted "Grammar-translation" method in teaching, this method emphasized learning of the grammatical rules and the use of the sources language in teaching the target language. This approach did not help the learners to use the language or to communicate in the language. However, there is a shift in paradigm, the teaching of French is experiencing an innovation called communicative approach. This method is an attempt to the teaching and learning of the language relevant to both the teachers and learners with the necessary communicative competence. This method aims at equipping learners with the necessary communicative competence. It emphasizes communication in the target language of the learner. This method is learner oriented and even employs the mother tongue to educate difficulties in language learning. Here the teacher does not translate as in traditional method but asks questions to give the learner clues to meaning of what is being presented.

Another interesting aspect of this method is that it involves all the four language skill i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. It tries to bring into the classroom the learners life experiences and relates what they experience outside the school to what they do in the school. One of the objectives of this method is to make learners to be able to use French language in real situations, to express themselves orally and written forms. Consequently, learners imbibe the unique lexical, grammatical and physiological aspect through what is called "les actes de parole".

In teaching French using this method, the teacher uses realistic sentences not artificial ones. To be close to reality, the teacher uses exercises which stimulates the learners to participate. For oral work, plays, song, dialogue are used while for writing, learner could be asked to reply to a letter or to fill a form. These are the activities they will encounter in real life situations real objects, documents such as pictures, newspaper, cuttings, notices, telephone cards et cetera are used as instructional materials (Offorma, 2000).

Method

Population of the study

The target population is all junior secondary school classes in Abak Local Government Area being approximately 9.750 students (source of the information LEC, Abak).

Sample /Sampling Technique

Multistage sampling technique was adopted. At first stage purposive sampling technique was used to select schools that offer French language and note taken of their respective class size at the junior secondary school level. At stage two, stratified random sampling was used to select classes based on size thirty five as small, wile above is large. At third stage, based on stratified simple random sampling, a proportionate sample size of 250 students per stratum was selected which made a total sample size of 500 students.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection for this study was tagged: Students' Attitude and Teaching Method Questionnaire (SATMQ). The data collection was based on variables such as student attitude, teaching methods and academic performance. The extracted data was limited to the above variables in two academic sessions which are 2013/2014 and 2016/2017 respectively. The instrument was a validated questionnaire and was divided in two parts. Section "A" was based on demographic data of the respondents while section "B" contained (10) items of closed ended typed questions based on four points are modified techniques for eliciting disagree: SD (1) Interview schedules was done while teachers on learning environments.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was given a face and content validation by the supervisor and two other lectures in the Department of language studies. Correlations were made by the experts and thereafter, the corrections were affected by the researcher.

Reliability of the instrument

A pretest was conducted using a sample of 30 respondents who were not part of the main study. A reliability index 0.69 was obtained using Pearson correlation or a determinant index for the reliability of the research instrument for the study.

Research Procedure

A letter of permission from the head of Department of language studies was addressed to the head of the school involved. Permission was given to carry out the study. The records were retrieved by the assistance of the clerical officer.

Method of Data Analysis

The records gotten was analyzed using T-test and Pearson product Moment Correlation Statistical tool to analyze the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significant.

Presentation of Results

Data generated in the study were analysed and summarized as follows.

Data Analysis and Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between student's attitude and student's performance in French language.

Table 1.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between student's attitude and student's academic performance in French language.

Variables	r.cal	r.crit	Dec
Students Attitude (x)			
	0.79	0.139	*sign
Student's Performance of French (y)			

*Significant at 0.05 level; df =398; N = 400, r-crit = 0.139, r-cal = 0.79

Table 1 presents the test (0.79). This value was compared with the critical Table value of 0.139 at 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom 398. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This is in line with the claims of Piaget (1995) that cheating by the students in examination is one of the wrong attitudes that make a student indicate poor learning habit which

would obviously result in poor performance. This fact was in agreement with the stated hypothesis calculated.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between teachers teaching method and student's academic performance in French language. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as follows:-

1. Teachers teaching method as the independent variable

2. Student's academic performance in French language as the dependent variable

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was then used to analyze the data in order to determine the relationship between the two variables (see table 2)

TABLE 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between teachers teaching method and student's academic performance in French language.

	r.cal	r.crit	Dec
Teachers teaching method (x)			
	0.95	0.098*	*Sign
Student's academic performance in French language (y)			

*Significant at 0.05 level; df =398; N =400, r-crit = 0.139, r-cal = 0.79

Table 2 presents the obtained r-value as (0.95). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.098) at 0.05 levels with 398 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.95) was greater than the critical r-value (0.098). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant relationship between teachers teaching method and student's academic performance in French language. The result was in agreement with the research finding of Adunola (2011) which states that regular poor academic performance by the majority of students is fundamentally linked to application of poor teaching methods by teachers in impacting knowledge to learners.

Conclusion

1. There is significant relationship between student's attitude and student's performance in French language.
2. There is significant relationship between teachers teaching method and student's academic performance in French language.

Recommendations

1. Students should develop positive attitude towards French as it a very important discipline to identify with. This will also help them improve upon their performances in the subject.

2. Teachers should adopt appropriate teaching techniques that encourage student to perform better in French.
3. Government should provide a conducive learning environment to enhance effective teaching and learning.

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