

THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE LABORATORY IN THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN FRENCH LANGUAGE IN EDO STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The poor performance of Nigerians and the lack students' interest in French language is a major concern to this research. Thus, this study is geared towards investigating the influence of the French language laboratory on students' academic achievement in French. Research question was developed to give a direction to the problem under study and one hypothesis was formulated to focus on the problem. The Quasi – experimental design was used for the study. The population for the research was the 8391 students in the 13 Public Junior Secondary Schools in Oredo Local Government Area. Using the Purposive sampling technique, 2 Juniors Secondary Schools were selected and their 120 students consisted, the sample for the study. The instruments used for the study was the French Achievement Test (FAT). To analyze the data, the t-test was employed. Alfa level was set at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis showed that students' academic level in French is significantly influenced by the use of Language Laboratory. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Government should provide Language Laboratory in both Primary and Secondary Schools.

Keywords: French, language, laboratory, academic, achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Efficient communication skills are indispensable for the success of any nation. To achieve efficient communication skills, education is required. Therefore education is an important tool for development. One of the clogs in the wheel of progress in Nigeria's development today is the fact that she is surrounded by countries whose official medium of communication is the French language, yet majority of Nigerians are illiterate in the Language. To reach out to people, Language is needed for communication. According to Elaho (1995), "if you ask most Nigerians" Parlez-vous Francais? The obvious answer for many is "No", not even "Non", not to talk of "Qui". However, this is not the case with most people from the neighbouring French speaking countries surrounding Nigeria (Republic of Benin, Republic of Chad, Niger and Cameroon). This fact was further buttressed by Elaho "1995" when he cited the official visit to Nigeria of President Nocolphore Soglo of the Republic of Benin, who addressed his Nigerian audience in impeccable English. This situation has never happened amongst past and present leaders of Nigeria which is regarded as the giant of Africa.

According to the Federal government of Nigeria (2004), education is an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development. In the national policy on education, French

language is a compulsory subject to be offered at the primary and the junior secondary school level. It can be offered as a non- vocational / elective subject. In line with this policy, the federal Government in collaboration with the French Government tried to promote the learning of French language through various means. However, there is one major issue which these Governments have failed to address. This is the language laboratory (laboratoire de langue).

According to the oxford advanced learners dictionary, Language Laboratory is a room in a school or college that contains special equipments to help students learn foreign languages by listening to tapes, CDs, watching of videos or DVDs recording themselves etc. Language laboratories according to David Wilson and Thayalan (2007) provides a facility which allows students to listen to model pronunciations, repeat and record the sounds, listen to their performance and compare with the model and do self assessment.

The language laboratory gives every learner the freedom to learn at their own pace. It does not require the teacher's presence at all times. Teachers can however, assistance to students individually or collectively. In fact, the language laboratory is a very helping tool for practicing and assessing one's speech in a language. Language laboratory is used learning pronunciation and all other aspect of the phonetics of a language. The significance of a language laboratory can not be overemphasized in the domain of communication. The language laboratory, exist to help one use technology effectively to communicate. According to Richards (2001) to acquire the sensibility of the sounds and rhythm of a language, one has to hear the best samples of all spoken language. This declaration was further corroborated by David Wilson and Thayalan (2007) who opined that language laboratory is required by any language learner to have a good command of the language for communication purposes, with clarity and accuracy being vital for effective and efficient communication.

Language laboratory among other facilities is very important in the effective implementation of the French language curriculum in Nigeria (Adebayo 2007). This view was further stressed by Mambo (2004) who described the language laboratory as one of the foundation of language instruction. Thus, language laboratory is seen as an important instructional tool for language teaching. A language laboratory is an environment designed to enhance foreign language learners' skills. It is generally equipped with analog and digital hardware and software (tape recorders, video cassette recorders and computers). Language laboratory provides practice in listening comprehension speaking (listening and repeat), with the goal of reinforcing the grammar, vocabulary and function (grammatical structures) presented in class. The language laboratory is an audio or audio visual installation used as an aid in modern language teaching.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of learning and speaking French language has been addressed by various scholars in one way or the other. Elabo (1995), Okeh (1997), Alufohai (2010). Despite these studies, the effective teaching, learning and speaking of French language in the nation's school is still a mirage. It is on this basis that this researcher decided to find the influence of the use of language laboratory in the effective implementation of the French curriculum. The problem of the statement therefore is: is the absence of French language laboratory in Nigerian schools responsible for the inability of students to learn and speak French?

Research Question

Does French language laboratory influence students' academic achievement, in French language in Edo state junior secondary schools?

Hypothesis

There is no significant influence of the French language laboratory on the academic achievement of students in French language.

Method of Study

The design of the study is the Pre- test control group quasi – experimental design. This is diagrammatically represented by table one below.

Table 1: Diagrammatic Representation of Research Design

Group Pre –test	Language Laboratory	Classroom Teaching	Post – test
Expt Group A X	X	X	X
Control Group B X	—	X	X

The population and sampling of study comprises of all public junior secondary schools in Oredo local Government area of Edo state. There are 8391 junior secondary school students in the 13 public schools located in the Oredo ministry of Education (2012) local Government area of the state. Using the purposive sampling technique, two junior secondary schools were selected. In one of the schools, there is a language laboratory while the other school had no language laboratory. 60 students were used from each school, making a total of 120 students. The difference in the pre – test scores of the two schools are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Distribution of subjects

Schools	Exp. Group A	Control Group B
A	60	—
B	—	60

Table 3: Pre – treatment Achievement of Group A & B

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	Mean Difference
A	60	7.49	4.46	1.98
B	60	5.91	5.42	

The pre - treatment mean scores of Group A and B are 7.49 and 5.91 respectively. The research took note of the mean difference in scores.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was titled French Achievement Test (FAT). It was made up of one section of thirty questions. Students were expected to supply the answers to fill in the blank space. FAT was developed by researcher to measure the students' ability or knowledge of French language. The Cloze test procedure was used to measure FAT.

The Cloze passage chosen from students JSS III French text book in order to test their (students) language competence. In preparing the Cloze passage, nothing was deleted from the first sentence and the last sentence of the passage, but counting from the first word in the second sentence, every seventh word in the entire passage was deleted. In this study, thirty blank spaces were created in the test and were scored by exact word method the test – retest method of establishing reliability was used to establish reliability (two weeks interval) and the reliability estimate yielded 0.76 which shows the instrument is reliable.

Procedure

The French teachers in the two public schools used for this study were approached through their principals. The reason for the study was made known to the teachers. The teacher therefore, assisted the researcher in administering the achievement test to their students. The duration of the test was for thirty minutes. At the end, the instruments were collected, scored and analyzed.

Data Analysis and findings

The statistical tool utilized in analyzing data in this study is the t –test. T – test was used to compare the post – test achievement score of Groups A & B.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference influence of difference between the achievements of students expected to language laboratory and the students not expected to language laboratory.

Table 4: Comparison of post – test score of Groups A and B. t – test Analysis of students taught using language laboratory and students taught in the classroom

Groups	N	Mean	Mean Difference	S.D	T - cal	P. Value
Group A	60	12.416		7.21	10.1	.001
Group B	60	7.200	4.96	5.22		

The above table indicates the achievement mean score for each group.

Key

Group A = those taught in the classroom and the language laboratory.

Group B = those taught in the classroom only.

The above result indicates that students taught in the language laboratory and classroom rank higher in effectiveness with a mean score of 12.16. Students' taught in the classroom only had a mean score of 7.20. The table shows a (t–test) value of 10.1 and a P – value of 0.001. Testing at alpha level of 0.05, the P – value is less than alpha value and T – Value of 10.1 > P – Value of 0.001. Thus, null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of French language is rejected. Consecutively, there is a significant difference between the students taught in the laboratory and classroom to that of those taught in the classroom only. The students taught in the laboratory cum classroom achieved better in French language than those taught only in classroom. Therefore, the language laboratory is an important factor in the effective learning of French language. A look at the study also indicates that at the beginning of the experiment, (Pre–test) students' mean score in Group A was 7.49 and at the end of (post–test) student's mean score became 12.16, giving mean gain score of 4.67 in achievement after experiment. Also at the beginning of the experiment (pre–test) in Group B, students' had a mean score of 7.20. This means a mean gain score of 1.29. These results indicates' that there is a significant difference between the pre and post test achievement score of the students in the experimental and control groups.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study were based on the hypothesis addressed at the beginning of the work and analyzed in tables. The result showed that the students taught in the language laboratory cum classrooms achieved better in French language than those taught in classrooms only. This is an indication that the language laboratory is very important in the effective implementation of the French curriculum. This result agrees with Adebayo (2007) who declared that language laboratory among other facility is very important in the effective implementation of the French language in Nigeria. Still in line with the findings of this study, is the study of Mambo (2004) who described the language laboratory as one of the foundation of language instruction. At this end, there is need for language laboratory in the effective implementation of the French curriculum in the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for the improvement of French language in Nigerian schools and Nigeria as a nation

1. Government should as a matter of urgency direct her attention to the provision of language laboratories in primary and secondary schools. The responsibility of realizing this herculean project is by involving non-governmental organizations and the government of France.
2. Outstanding French teachers should be sent out on training outside the country (French speaking country) to see and learn how Language Laboratories are used.
3. Regular training and re-training programs should be organized to sharpen the skills of teachers to ensure better performance. These training and re-training could be in the form of conferences, seminars, workshops organized periodically by Ministry of Education in conjunction with French embassy in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Findings of this study specifically revealed the importance of Language Laboratories (Laboratoire de Langue) in the academic achievement of students in French subject / Language. From the foregoing, one can rightly conclude that French Language Laboratory has a lot to do with the academic achievement of students in French.

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