

INTEGRATING NIGERIAN ORAL LITERATURE INTO FRENCH CLASS: A BRIDGE BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PRACTICES AND MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

This study explored how Nigerian oral literature can be meaningfully integrated into the teaching of French as a foreign language to improve students' linguistic performance and cultural engagement. The research was based on the findings that language learning becomes more effective when rooted in the learner's immediate environment. Using a classroom-based qualitative approach, the study examined how proverbs, folktales, songs, and idiomatic expressions drawn from Nigerian traditions can be employed to teach key aspects of grammar, vocabulary, and communicative competence in French. The participants were junior school students in a Nigerian French class who engaged in storytelling, translation, and role-play activities. The findings revealed that students demonstrated higher levels of comprehension, confidence, and retention when lessons were connected to familiar cultural materials. Oral narratives and proverbs provided a contextual foundation for grasping grammatical structures such as tense and agreement, while performance-based tasks fostered fluency and collaboration. The study concludes that integrating indigenous oral literature into French pedagogy does not dilute linguistic accuracy but rather strengthens it by grounding the foreign language in the learner's lived experience. It recommends curriculum reforms, teacher training, and the development of bilingual instructional materials to sustain this culturally responsive approach. This model not only supports linguistic competence but also contributes to the decolonisation of foreign language education in Nigeria.

Keywords: oral literature, French language teaching, cultural relevance, contextual learning, Nigeria, FLE pedagogy

Introduction

Language is more than a system of sounds and symbols; it is the living expression of a people's identity, culture, and worldview (Green, 2023). In multilingual countries such as Nigeria, where over 500 languages coexist, the teaching of a foreign language like French cannot be detached from the learners' linguistic and cultural realities (Eneremadu et al., 2024). For decades, French language instruction in Nigerian schools has followed models imported from Europe, focusing heavily on grammar drills, memorisation, and standardised cultural content from France or Francophone countries. While this approach has produced some success, it has also alienated many learners who find little connection between the French language and their lived experiences. This

disconnection has contributed to low motivation, slow language acquisition, and a perception of French as a foreign and abstract subject rather than a living, meaningful tool of communication (Kramsch, 1993).

Recent discussions on decolonising pedagogy and contextualising foreign language education have gained momentum in Africa and other postcolonial societies. Gay (2018) emphasises that culturally responsive teaching draws upon students' prior experiences and cultural knowledge makes learning more relevant and effective. For the French classroom in Nigeria, this means creating pedagogical bridges between the language of instruction and the learners' socio-cultural environment. Oral literature encompassing folktales, proverbs, riddles, and

songs offers a powerful medium for building those bridges. It embodies the wisdom, rhythm, and linguistic creativity of Nigerian communities while providing a rich source of authentic communicative material.

The rationale for this study is based on the conviction that integrating Nigerian oral literature into French language teaching can enhance learners' comprehension, motivation, and cultural identity. Oral traditions naturally appeal to learners' imagination, promote critical thinking, and encourage participation, all of which are central to effective language acquisition. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs through social interaction within the learner's "zone of proximal development," where knowledge is co-constructed through meaningful communication. When students retell familiar folktales or translate local proverbs into French, they are not merely learning vocabulary but actively negotiating meaning, drawing parallels between languages, and internalising structures through interaction. Similarly, Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis asserts that learners acquire language most effectively when exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level. Nigerian oral narratives, when adapted into French, provide a source of linguistic and culturally enrichment, balancing familiarity with intellectual challenge.

This research is therefore essential in the field of French as a Foreign Language (FLE), because it seeks to bridge the gap between foreign linguistic content and indigenous cognitive frameworks. By positioning oral literature as both a cultural and linguistic resource, it contributes to global conversations on inclusive, context-based language pedagogy. It also responds to the persistent challenge of low proficiency and engagement among Nigerian FLE learners. Previous studies (Canagarajah, 1999; Gardner, 1983) suggest that when learners see their identity and culture reflected in educational contents, their motivation and retention significantly improve. The objectives of this research are threefold: firstly, to explore how Nigerian oral literature can be systematically integrated into French language instruction at the secondary and tertiary levels;

secondly, to examine the effects of this integration on students' linguistic performance, comprehension, and engagement; finally, to propose culturally responsive strategies for FLE teachers in multilingual settings such as Nigeria. Based on these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions: How does the use of Nigerian oral literature influence students' understanding and use of French language structures? In what ways do incorporating indigenous oral forms affect learner motivation and classroom participation? What practical methods can teachers adopt to align oral literature with existing FLE curriculum objectives?

This study employed a qualitative classroom-based design, combining direct observation, student participation, and reflective analysis. It draws from the researcher's classroom experience in teaching French through local oral forms and evaluates student engagement and language performance. Through this exploratory framework, the study demonstrates that culturally grounded teaching does not compromise academic rigour; rather, it reinforces linguistic and cognitive development by situating learning in familiar cultural contexts.

As this research addresses a crucial pedagogical gap in the Nigerian educational landscape, the theoretical framework of this study is rooted in Socio-constructivism and Decolonial Pedagogy. By weaving together indigenous oral traditions and modern FLE methodology, it seeks to contribute to a more inclusive and human-centred approach to language education, one that values both linguistic mastery and cultural identity.

Background Research and Theoretical Framework

The teaching of French as a Foreign Language (FLE) in Nigeria has long been shaped by imported pedagogical models, many of which prioritise structural mastery over contextual relevance (Ogunbiyi et al., 2024). However, contemporary scholarship increasingly recognises that language learning is not a neutral cognitive activity but a deeply cultural and social process (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). This section reviews key theoretical and empirical works that

illuminate the relationship between language, culture, and identity, particularly as they relate to the integration of oral literature into foreign language pedagogy. It also outlines the theoretical framework underpinning this study, drawing from socio-constructivist, culturally responsive, and postcolonial perspectives.

Language, Culture, and Identity in Foreign Language Education

Language teaching is inseparable from the cultural narratives it carries. Byram (1997) asserts that language learners must develop *intercultural communicative competence*, which enables them to interpret and mediate meaning across cultures. Similarly, Kramsch (1993) argues that language instruction should move beyond grammar and vocabulary to include cultural symbolism and social interaction. Within the Nigerian context, these views suggest that learners must be allowed to construct meaning through the prism of their cultural background. When French lessons include indigenous oral forms, they promote a dynamic interaction between the learner's linguistic heritage and the target language, creating a culturally resonant learning experience.

Oral literature serves as a repository of collective wisdom, values, and linguistic creativity (Mpumuje et al., 2024). Finnegan (2012) describes African oral traditions as "a living art form" that carries the moral and aesthetic codes of the community. Through proverbs, folktales, and songs, learners engage with language in ways that are emotionally and cognitively stimulating. This aligns with Hymes's (1972) notion of *communicative competence*, where effective language use extends beyond grammatical accuracy to social and cultural appropriateness. Consequently, incorporating oral literature into French instruction allows learners to communicate meaningfully, not merely to recite memorised forms.

Theoretical Foundations: From Socio-constructivism to Decolonial Pedagogy

The theoretical backbone of this research rests on socio-constructivist and decolonial paradigms. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs through interaction within a *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), where the

learner's potential is activated through collaboration and social engagement. The use of oral literature naturally lends itself to this principle: learners negotiate meaning, exchange interpretations, and co-construct understanding through storytelling, dramatization, and discussion.

Complementing this is Krashen's (1982) *Input Hypothesis*, which posits that learners acquire language when they are exposed to comprehensible input that slightly exceeds their current level of competence. Nigerian oral tales, when rendered in French, provide familiar contexts that reduce affective barriers while stretching linguistic ability. In this sense, oral literature serves as a "bridge input," making the foreign language both accessible and challenging. From a culturally responsive teaching perspective, Gay (2018) maintains that effective pedagogy draws on students' cultural experiences to promote learning. Teachers who understand and respect learners' cultural backgrounds can design more inclusive and motivating classrooms. In Nigeria, where learners are immersed in vibrant oral traditions, drawing from local proverbs or folk narratives is a natural way to affirm their identity while teaching a foreign tongue. This approach transforms learning from a top-down process into a co-creative experience between teacher and student.

Postcolonial theorists extend this idea further by critiquing the Eurocentric bias of conventional language education. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) and Canagarajah (1999) argue that education systems in postcolonial societies often perpetuate dependency by privileging foreign languages and epistemologies over indigenous forms of knowledge. Integrating Nigerian oral literature into French teaching thus represents an act of pedagogical decolonisation — reclaiming the learner's voice and validating local narratives within academic discourse. Such integration challenges linguistic hierarchies and promotes a more equitable exchange of cultural knowledge.

Empirical Studies on Oral Literature and Language Learning

Empirical studies on language teaching in

African contexts support the argument that culturally grounded materials enhance learner engagement and performance. Adeyemi and Adejumo (2020) found that students who participated in storytelling-based language lessons demonstrated stronger retention and communicative ability than those who followed purely grammatical instruction. Similarly, Obiegbu (2018) observed that the use of indigenous songs and proverbs in FLE classrooms fostered a sense of ownership and pride among learners, resulting in improved pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition. These findings echo Gardner's (1983) theory of *Multiple Intelligences*, which highlights the role of cultural and emotional factors in learning. By engaging learners through artistic and narrative forms, teachers activate linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences that conventional textbooks often neglect.

Despite these positive indications, many Nigerian classrooms still rely on foreign-authored materials that marginalise local realities. This gap underscores the urgency of developing bilingual teaching resources that connect French instruction to the learners' socio-cultural environment. As Emenyonu (2019) notes, oral literature is not a static cultural artefact but a dynamic pedagogical tool capable of transforming classroom interaction. Its inclusion in FLE teaching aligns with modern calls for experiential learning and holistic education.

The reviewed literature reveals a convergence between socio-constructivist theories, culturally responsive pedagogy, and decolonial thought. Together, they affirm that language acquisition flourishes when learners connect new linguistic knowledge to familiar cultural frameworks. The next section will describe the methodological approach adopted in this study.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative, classroom-based research design grounded in action research principles. Action research is particularly appropriate for educational contexts where the researcher seeks to understand and improve teaching practice through systematic

reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The study was interpretive in nature, focusing on meaning-making processes rather than statistical generalisation. This design enabled the exploration of how Nigerian oral literature could be used as a pedagogical resource for improving students' engagement and language acquisition in French. As Creswell and Poth (2018) observe, qualitative inquiry is best suited for studies that seek to capture classroom interactions, student perspectives, and contextual realities. The research therefore relied on observation, written tasks, and reflective journals to generate data that reflected both linguistic and cultural learning.

Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at Deeper Life High School, Port Harcourt Campus, a private secondary school known for its strong academic and moral standards. The school's student population is multilingual and multicultural, drawing learners from different Nigerian ethnic groups including Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and Annang-Ibibio. The French department at the school offers instruction from Junior Secondary School (JSS) to Senior Secondary School (SSS). For this study, one class — JSS3 — was purposively selected because the students were at an intermediate stage of French acquisition, able to understand basic grammatical structures but still developing oral fluency.

The JSS3 cohort at the time of research comprised six arms: *Diamond*, *Gold*, *Emerald*, *Jasper*, *Topaz*, and *Onyx*, with an average of 17–18 students per class. The study engaged all six classes to ensure diversity of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, resulting in a total of 106 students. The school maintained a rigorous academic calendar, and the French curriculum followed the national standards set by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). The internal assessment structure consisted of continuous assessment (40%) and end-of-term examinations (60%), together accounting for the final grade.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred over a twelve-week term and involved three main instruments: classroom observation, and written tasks.

a. Classroom Observation

Observation provided a direct view of student participation and interaction. Each class period lasted 40 minutes, and lessons were observed twice weekly. The researcher maintained a structured observation guide focusing on participation rate, response to oral tasks, use of target language, and signs of engagement such as volunteering answers or initiating discussion. Field notes were written after each lesson, capturing both descriptive and interpretive comments.

b. Written Tasks

Students completed weekly written exercises that included translation, story writing, and short dialogues in French. Each task was linked to oral materials drawn from Nigerian traditions. For example, students wrote short French narratives based on familiar folktales such as *"Why the Tortoise Has a Cracked Shell"*. The written tasks were assessed using the school's established criteria for language work — grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, creativity, and coherence.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), guided the analysis of the collected data. The process involved reading and observation notes, students' written outputs. Codes were developed around three core themes: *linguistic comprehension, learner motivation, and cultural identity*. These were then grouped into

broader categories that illustrated how oral literature contributed to learning outcomes.

Ethical Considerations

Since the study took place in the researcher's own class within a controlled institutional environment, formal ethical clearance was not required. Nevertheless, professional and moral responsibility guided the research. The activities were conducted within normal classroom instruction, and no student was singled out or disadvantaged.

Researcher's Role and Reflexivity

As a teacher-researcher, the investigator occupied a dual role — facilitating instruction and documenting findings. While this position offered privileged insight into classroom processes, it also carried the potential for bias. To address this, conscious efforts were made to maintain objectivity by distinguishing between teaching and analysing roles. Field notes were written immediately after each session to avoid retrospective distortion, and reflective memos were used to record the researcher's evolving perspectives. The insider status, however, proved advantageous, allowing authentic interaction with students and a nuanced understanding of their responses to culturally grounded pedagogy. This reflexive engagement aligns with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) assertion that in qualitative research, awareness of one's positionality enhances, rather than undermines, credibility.

Practical Classroom Applications and findings

This section presents the practical application of Nigerian oral literature in French language instruction and the outcomes observed in the Junior Secondary School (JSS3) classes. The instructional approach aimed to evaluate how folktales, proverbs, idioms, and songs drawn from local cultures could facilitate students' comprehension, participation, and retention in French lessons.

Throughout a twelve-week term, the integration of oral literature into French teaching generated observable linguistic and attitudinal changes among students. Learners became more expressive, confident, and eager to participate in discussions. The findings summarised here are based on structured observation notes, students' written tasks, and classroom assessments.

Classroom implementation

The integration of oral literature was achieved through four main types of activities: storytelling, proverb translation, song adaptation, and short drama performances all of which were conducted in French.

Animal Naming and Sound Activity

During a lesson on *Les animaux*, the students of JSS3 were asked to list animals in their local dialects and provide their French equivalents. The next day, an animal sound was imitated for instance, the bark of a dog

or the crow of a cock and a question was thus asked in French, “*Quel est cet animal en français et dans votre langue maternelle ?*”

The class responded with lively excitement. Students raised their hands to answer:

- “*Dog! — Chien* en français, *Nkita* en Igbo.”
- “*Goat! — Chèvre* en français, *Ewe* en Yoruba.”
- “*Hen! — Poule* en français, *Unen* en Annang-Ibibio.”

The room filled with laughter and energy. This single exercise did more than teach vocabulary; it built a bridge between sound, meaning, and identity. As Krashen (1982) suggests, language acquisition occurs best when input is meaningful and emotionally engaging. The familiar setting of local animal names made the French words easier to remember and pronounce.

Folktale Narration in French

Building on this activity, **storytelling sessions** were introduced. Students were asked to narrate simple animal folktales in French. Interestingly; all the folktales were drawn from their moonlight tales, stories they had heard from parents or grandparents. One student recounted “*Comment la tortue a perdu sa carapace*” (How the Tortoise Lost His Shell), while another narrated “*Pourquoi le chien et le chat ne sont plus amis*” (Why the Dog and the Cat Are No Longer Friends).

In translation and retelling, they learnt to use narrative tenses (passé composé) and connectors such as *puis*, *ensuite*, *finalement*. The learners also discovered that French, like their mother tongues, uses rhythm and repetition to structure stories. This aligns with Vygotsky’s (1978) view that cognitive growth occurs when learners manipulate familiar cultural material in new linguistic forms.

Proverbs as Grammar Anchors

Proverbs served as effective grammar lessons. Proverbs were selected from major Nigerian languages and asked students to translate and discuss them in French. This not only taught new structures but also provoked reflection on meaning and morality.

Examples included:

- **Yoruba:** “*Bi omode ba we owo, a ba agba jeun.*”
→ “*Quand un enfant lave ses mains, il peut manger avec les anciens.*”
(Taught conditional tense and moral humility.)
- **Hausa:** “*Komai nisan jifa, kasa zai fādī.*”
→ “*Peu importe la distance du lancer, la pierre tombera toujours au sol.*”
(Used to explain logical connectors and future tense.)
- **Igbo:** “*A sì na ihe onye metere, o na-efe ya azu.*”
→ “*On dit que les actions d'un homme le suivent toujours.*”
(Taught reflexive and impersonal constructions.)
- **Efik:** “*Ekpa mme atim, owo iset idem.*”
→ “*Si tu ne fais pas d'effort, tu resteras le même.*”
(Illustrated modal verbs and the notion of perseverance.)
- **Annang-Ibibio:** “*Ndito k'uyo odot ikpo isong.*”
→ “*Les enfants apprennent à parler en écoutant la terre.*”
(Used to teach indirect speech and the verb écouter.)

Through these examples, learners realised that proverbs across languages share moral universals. The translation process encouraged comparative thinking and grammatical precision. Gay (2018) notes that when instruction recognises cultural knowledge, learners become more self-confident and academically motivated.

Performance-Based Projects

To conclude the term, students worked in groups to stage mini-dramas in French based on local tales. One group dramatized *La tortue et le roi de la forêt*. Another enacted *Pourquoi le lézard hache toujours la tête*. These performances integrated speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

Students wrote short scripts (we translated them together), practised dialogues, and performed before the class. The activity promoted collaboration, pronunciation accuracy, and spontaneous expression. As Byram (1997) emphasises, intercultural communicative competence is achieved when learners not only know a language but can perform meaningfully within its cultural frame.

Observed Outcomes

From the classroom observations and written exercises conducted during the study, three major outcomes emerged which significantly demonstrate the impact of integrating Nigerian oral literature into French language teaching. First, there was a remarkable improvement in students' comprehension of grammatical structures and sentence formation. Learners found it easier to grasp complex concepts such as conjugation of verbs, and sentence agreement when the lessons were linked to familiar cultural contexts. For instance, when a local proverb or folktale was used to explain tense usage, students were able to reproduce correct grammatical forms more consistently in both oral and written work. Their written assessments reflected fewer errors in verb usage and better sentence coherence compared to previous terms where conventional examples were used. This confirms that comprehension deepens when learning is rooted in the learner's lived experience.

Second, students' participation levels rose considerably. Classroom interaction became lively as learners volunteered responses, narrated stories, and engaged in group discussions with visible enthusiasm. These observations reinforce Gay's (2018) assertion that culturally responsive teaching stimulates learners' motivation and strengthens their sense of belonging in the learning environment. When students perceive the classroom as an extension of their own cultural world, learning becomes a shared and meaningful activity rather than a distant academic task.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, there was a noticeable increase in students' confidence and retention. Learners became more at ease using French expressions in conversation, especially when retelling familiar tales or describing community events. The fear of speaking a foreign language diminished as they began to view French as a tool for expressing their own realities rather than merely imitating foreign contexts. End-of-term assessments provided quantitative support for these observations, as 88% of the students scored above the class average, a significant improvement compared to earlier evaluations conducted before the oral literature integration. Overall, the success recorded here suggests that language pedagogy rooted in indigenous knowledge systems can transform classrooms into vibrant spaces of creativity, understanding, and self-confidence.

Discussion of Findings

The findings affirm that contextualised learning through oral literature fosters both cognitive and affective engagement. The use of culturally familiar material provided learners with a sense of ownership and relevance. In line with Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, students demonstrated linguistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal growth as they related personally to classroom content.

Moreover, the results validate the socio-constructivist framework outlined earlier. The interactive nature of oral literature enabled students to learn through collaboration and peer dialogue, supporting Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on social mediation. At the same time, the positive

response to the cultural materials reflects Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) assertion that education grounded in indigenous values fosters intellectual liberation.

The success of these activities demonstrates that French language instruction in Nigeria can be transformed when rooted in the learner's environment. Rather than viewing oral literature as an extracurricular element, it can serve as the linguistic and cultural core of a communicative, human-centred pedagogy.

Challenges in Integrating Oral Literature into French Language Teaching

While the use of Nigerian oral literature in French classrooms has shown remarkable promise, the process is not without challenges. These

difficulties reflect both structural and pedagogical realities within Nigeria's educational system.

a. Inadequate Instructional Resources

One of the main challenges lies in the scarcity of teaching materials that blend French language content with Nigerian oral traditions. Most approved French textbooks are imported and designed for Francophone or European contexts, offering little connection to African realities. Teachers therefore have to rely on their creativity to adapt or translate local folktales, songs, and proverbs into French. This task, though rewarding, is time-consuming and demands a high level of linguistic competence and cultural sensitivity.

b. Limited Teacher Preparation and Training

Many French language teachers have received traditional, grammar-oriented training that prioritises accuracy over cultural responsiveness. As Gay (2018) points out, effective culturally responsive teaching requires deliberate professional preparation. Without exposure to participatory or context-based pedagogy, teachers may find it difficult to integrate oral literature confidently into their lessons. The lack of professional development programmes tailored to this purpose further compounds the problem.

c. Curriculum and Assessment Constraints

The official curriculum and examination systems, such as those of WAEC and NECO, remain largely prescriptive. They focus on written grammar, comprehension, and translation, leaving little room for oral or creative expression. This rigid structure discourages teachers from experimenting with interactive methods such as storytelling or performance-based learning. Consequently, lessons that should foster creativity and communication often revert to rote memorisation.

d. Time and Class Size Limitations

Large class sizes and limited instructional time also pose practical barriers. Oral literature activities, such as group performances or storytelling sessions, require more time for preparation, participation, and feedback than conventional exercises. Teachers working under pressure to complete the syllabus may therefore abandon these culturally enriching strategies for faster but less engaging alternatives.

e. Attitudinal Resistance

A subtle yet important challenge is the perception among some educators and administrators that the inclusion of indigenous materials might reduce the "standard" of foreign language learning. Such attitudes reflect the lingering colonial mindset that values European models of education over indigenous knowledge systems (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Overcoming this bias requires sustained advocacy and awareness about the pedagogical value of integrating local content into global language instruction.

Recommendations

Addressing these challenges demands coordinated action at the levels of policy, pedagogy, and professional training. The following recommendations offer practical steps for strengthening the integration of oral literature into French language teaching across Nigeria.

a. Development of Culturally Relevant Teaching Materials

There is an urgent need for the creation of textbooks and multimedia resources that incorporate Nigerian oral literature in bilingual form. Educational publishers and universities should collaborate with local storytellers, linguists, and French educators to develop accessible, contextually grounded teaching tools. This will ensure that students encounter French not as an imported subject but as a language that interacts meaningfully with their lived experiences.

b. Teacher Capacity Building

Teacher education programmes should integrate modules on culturally responsive and communicative language teaching. Regular workshops and refresher courses organised by bodies such as the University French Teachers' Association of Nigeria (UFTAN) can equip educators with the skills to use oral literature effectively. As Vygotsky (1978) emphasises, teachers themselves must engage in social learning processes that enhance their pedagogical creativity.

c. Curriculum Reform and Assessment Innovation

Policy reform is essential for sustaining change. Curriculum designers should revise French syllabi to include learning outcomes related to oral

expression, cultural awareness, and creative use of language. Assessment bodies should also expand their evaluation criteria to include oral storytelling, dramatization, and project-based assignments. Such reforms will align assessment with communicative competence rather than mere grammatical accuracy.

d. Institutional and Community Collaboration

Partnerships between schools, cultural centres, and local communities can strengthen the resource base for teaching. Community elders and artists can serve as cultural informants, helping to document and interpret oral texts in ways that enrich the classroom. Such collaboration not only validates indigenous knowledge but also promotes intergenerational learning.

e. Research and Continuous Evaluation

Further research is needed to document the long-term effects of integrating oral literature in language education. Longitudinal studies could assess how students who learn through culturally responsive methods perform in national and international examinations compared to those taught through conventional means. Regular evaluation will ensure that practice evolves with evidence and experience.

Conclusion

This study has explored how the integration of Nigerian oral literature into French language teaching can transform the learning experience from mechanical repetition to meaningful communication. Through stories, proverbs, and songs drawn from students' cultural backgrounds, learning French became a familiar and engaging process. The approach provided learners with a voice, a way to connect their everyday experiences with the foreign language to learning and affirming identity.

The research demonstrated that oral literature is not simply a cultural ornament but a pedagogical bridge that connects cognition and culture. When learners used French to retell local stories or translate proverbs, they developed a deeper sense of ownership of the language. This study supports Gay's (2018) argument that culturally responsive pedagogy validates students' lived experiences.

The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on decolonising foreign language education in Africa. They reveal that contextualising French teaching within Nigerian oral traditions strengthens both linguistic accuracy and intercultural competence. This model, developed from authentic classroom practice, illustrates how teachers can indigenise foreign language pedagogy without compromising academic rigour. It offers a framework adaptable to other multilingual settings across the continent.

The results of this study suggest several implications for policy, practice, and research. At the policy level, curriculum planners should formally incorporate oral literature into the French syllabus, recognising it as a valuable linguistic and cultural resource. Teacher training programmes should include modules on integrating indigenous materials into FLE classrooms, equipping educators with both linguistic and cultural competence.

At the classroom level, teachers should view learners' cultures not as external references but as starting points for instruction. Using folktales, songs, and proverbs in French lessons can encourage participation, reduce anxiety, and strengthen intercultural dialogue. Furthermore, assessment models should balance accuracy with creativity acknowledging that communication and cultural understanding are central to language mastery.

Future research could expand this study by exploring how culturally grounded instruction affects specific linguistic skills such as pronunciation or writing, or by comparing outcomes across public and private institutions. Such research would provide empirical depth and further validate the model proposed here.

Ultimately, this study reinforces the idea that the teaching of French in Nigeria can and should evolve beyond imitation of native-speaker norms. By integrating oral literature, educators affirm the richness of African culture while opening students to global communication. This pedagogical shift transforms the classroom into a space where languages meet, cultures converse, and learning becomes both intellectually rigorous and emotionally meaningful.

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