

Problems of Teaching and Learning French Language in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

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Abstract

The study examined the problems of teaching and learning of French language in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAAU). Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 9 lecturers and 5,245 year one students. A sample size of 520 students was drawn using simple random sampling techniques to derive 40 students each from 13 colleges. A structured questionnaire developed was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by two French lecturers and a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability was determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which yielded value of 0.78. Some of the findings were students' negative attitudes towards French language and unconducive teaching environment which led to students' problem of learning the language. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that MOUAAU authorities should provide available public address system for large French classes and standard language laboratory.

Keywords: Teaching, learning, French language. Problems

Introduction

The multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature of Nigeria polity and the absence of an indigenous language as an official language brought about foreign languages like English and French as a medium of intra-national and international communication (Fakeye, 2006). The French language is a language of communication (official language) in over twenty-six African countries. It is the second "lingua franca" of Nigeria after English language. The French language is a core subject in primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria (FRN, 2014).

French language is very important, interesting and affects our social activities especially around Nigeria neighborhood. According to Borode (2014) French language has also become a significant factor in international unity because half of the world's scientific literatures are written in French language and it is a language of large commercial and industrial enterprise. According to Akudolu (2004) Nigeria as a member of African Union (AU), and other international organizations, sees the need for its citizens to learn French language.

The teaching of French language in Nigeria can be dated back to the colonial period. The language was taught first at CMS (Church

Missionary Society) Grammar School, which was established in 1859 in Lagos (Borode, 2014). The importance of French language has been increasing since it became a subject in school curriculum in 1956 (Akudolu, 2004). Since French language has been rated as the second world most popular language of the internet and communication from one continent to another, there is need in teaching and learning of French language in schools. French language according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) is for smooth interaction with her neighbors, it is desirable for every Nigeria to speak French. Therefore, French language shall be compulsory in primary and junior secondary school.

In Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, French language is one of the compulsory General Studies courses (GSS 114 and GSS 124). The School of General Studies courses are designed to make students of the university versatile in different areas of studies. For students to graduate, they are required to register and obtain reasonable credits in relevant School of General Studies courses including French language. However, some departments like Hostel Management and Tourism offer French language till their third year (MOUAAU,



2012).

A number of factors threaten the effective teaching and learning of this French language in the University. There is problem of lack of interest and poor performance of students in French language examinations. Another problem is not determining the root causes of students' poor performance (Okafor, 2015). The success in learning a second language depends not so much intellectual capacity but on the attitude of the learner towards the particular language. There is also problem of students' poor reading and learning culture. Students tend not to read and study for subject mastering or for examination. They lack confidence on themselves.

According to Okafor (2015) lecturers and teachers of French language lack teaching materials, conducive language laboratory and classrooms for learning. The performance of students in French language had made teachers of the language to be worried and to find out the causes of students' poor performance in the language. From the above situation of learning the researchers decided to investigate the problems and suggest possible ways in which the problems could be successfully solved.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the problems militating against teaching and learning of French language in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the problems that affect the teaching and learning of French language.
2. Suggest measures to improve the teaching and learning of French language.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the problems of teaching and learning French language in MOUAU?
2. What are the possible measures to improve teaching and learning of French language in MOUAU?

Literature Review

Literature review on difference works related to the study were done to find out if there are similarities, differences in problems in teaching and learning of French language in schools.

Gella and Kwaja (2017) published a paper on the problems of teaching French language in secondary schools in Adamawa state. The paper focus on problems militating against the teaching and learning of French language which include lack of infrastructure, inconducive learning environment, inadequate period of learning, learners problems, lack of enough teachers, learners' attitude etc. They suggested training for French language teachers through seminars, workshops and in-service programmes, textbooks, modern French laboratories and libraries in schools to facilitate teaching and learning etc.

Kolawale (2015) carried out a research on the problems facing the teaching and learning of French language in colleges of education in Oyo State. The study adopted descriptive survey to collect data for the analysis. Forty participants were involved in the study as results of limited number of French students in the colleges. Questionnaires on the teaching and learning of French language were used to gather data. The research shown that there are problems such as negligence on the part of government toward the language, unfavourable mode of admission, joblessness on the part of the French graduates, poor learning environment, lack of infrastructures, lack of motivation, attitude of parents and other problems.

From the literature, the researchers presented a number of empirical studies related to the work. The empirical studies are found to be valid and highly reliable. Some of the study showed that there are possible solutions to problems of teaching and learning of French language in schools. This review indicated that a variety of studies have been carried out on problems of teaching and learning in some specific subjects and courses, but very few are focused on French language therefore constituting an educational gap. Thus, the



researchers deem it necessary to conduct a research on problems of teaching and learning of French language in Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

Method

The descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study. The design is appropriate for the study because the researchers collected data from lecturers and students in the unit in order to find out the problems of teaching and learning of French language in MOUAU. The population of the study comprised of 9 lecturers and 5,245 year one students. The sample size is made up of 9 lecturers and 520 students in French Unit (MOUAU). The simple random sampling was used to derive 40 students each from 13 colleges. (Faculties). The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers. The questionnaire was structured using the four-point rating scale of

strongly Agreed (SA) = 4 points, Agreed (A) = 3 points, Disagreed (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1 point.

The instrument was validated by two experts in French language and one expert from the department of Measurement and Evaluation. Their corrections and suggestions were effected before the final draft of the instrument was made. The test-retest method of reliability was used and the scores from the two tests were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which gave the value of 0.78.

The instrument was administered to the lecturers and students involved in the sample size. Weighted mean was used in answering research question 1 and 2. The calculated mean (\bar{x}) that was equal or above 2.50 was agreed while calculated mean (\bar{x}) below 2.50 was disagreed.

Results

Research Question One

What are the problems of teaching and learning of French language in MOUAU?

Table1: Mean scores of lecturers and students on the problem of teaching French language in MOUAU

S/N	ITEM DESCRIPTION	\bar{x}	DECISION
1.	Unavailability off public address system.	3.2	Agreed
2.	Power failure.	3.6	Agreed
3.	No incentive for lecturers.	3.4	Agreed
4.	Lecturers do not give regular assignment.	2.2	Disagreed
5.	Lecturers use inappropriate instructional assignment.	2.4	Disagreed
6.	The learning environment is not conducive for effective teaching.	3.6	Agreed
7.	Inadequate time allocation for French language.	3.3	Agreed
8.	Unavailability of functional language laboratory.	3.6	Agreed
9.	Problem of linguistic/language interference.	3.2	Agreed
10.	Negative attitude of students towards learning of French language.	3.3	Agreed

Table 1 above, the mean scores of 2.2 and 2.4 are not the problems of teaching and learning of French language in MOUAU; the respondents disagreed that lecturers of French language do not give regular assignment and that lecturers do not use appropriate instructional materials, while the respondents with the mean scores of 3.2, 3.6, 3.4, 3.6, 3.3, 3.6, 3.2, and 3.3 agreed that the problems of teaching and learning of French language in MOUAU is associated with unavailability of public address system for the large class, power failure, the learning environment is not conducive, inadequate time allocation, no functional language laboratory, problem of linguistic and language interference and negative attitudes of students



towards learning of French language.

Research Question Two

Table 2: Mean scores of Lecturers of possible measures to improve teaching and learning of learning of French language in MOUAU.

S/N	ITEM DESCRIPTION	\bar{x}	DECISION
1.	Teaching environment should be made conducive for learning/teaching of French language.	3.8	Agreed
2.	Availability of French books and resources materials.	3.4	Agreed
3.	Lecturers should make students do practical works.	3.2	Agreed
4.	Lecturers should use appropriate teaching methods.	3.6	Agreed
5.	Lecturers should seek advice from school colleagues.	2.9	Agreed
6.	Lecturers should use formative evaluation to assess students' learning.	3.3	Agreed
7.	Lecturers should give immediate feedback.	3.2	Agreed
8.	More lecture time allocation to French language study.	3.6	Agreed
9.	Availability of functional language laboratory.	3.8	Agreed
10.	Classification of words (gender) in French language.	2.7	Agreed

Table 2 above showed that the respondents agreed that there should be conducive learning/ teaching environment for French language, availability of French books and resources materials, lecturers should make students do practical works, lecturers should use appropriate teaching methods, lecturers should seek teaching advice from School Colleagues, lecturers should use formative evaluation to access student learning process, lecturers should give immediate feedback, more lecture time allocation to French language study, availability of instructional laboratory and also teaching of words classification (gender) while teaching.

Discussion of Findings

The results of research question one revealed that there were problems of unconducive teaching environments, power failure, inadequate time allocation for French language classes, unavailability of functional language laboratory, no incentive for lecturers, problem of linguistic/interference and students negative attitude towards learning of French language .The findings are in line with Okafor (2015) who observed that poor language laboratory and

students attitude towards French language is the major problem in learning French language. Chidigbo (2012) noted that the use of poor instructional materials and non-use of instructional materials is another problem of teaching and learning second language. Therefore, lecturers should ensure proper use of instructional materials and good language laboratory should be available in schools.

Conclusion

Basically, from the study and findings, it was found out that problems associated with the teaching and learning of French language in MOUAU is lack of instructional materials/teaching aids, standard language laboratory and students' negative attitude towards the learning of French language.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations were made:

1. Lecturers should give students assignments, immediate feedback on questions during classes and tests.



2. School authorities should provide public address system for large class and standard language laboratory that can be used in teaching French language.
3. Students should be engaged on short drama activities during their French language classes.
4. Students should be sensitized on the importance of French language in order to prevent negative attitudes of students towards learning of French language.

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