

EFFECTS OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON THE PROFICIENT USE OF FRENCH LANGUAGE BY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OWO LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The importance of school environment on student performance in respect of language acquisition cannot be overemphasised. The learning environment in which students learn such as classrooms, libraries, technical workshops, laboratories, playgrounds, conveniences, sanitation maintenance, culture, aesthetics among others, are variables that affect students' learning and academic performance (Duruji et al; 2014). School environment has great impact in the quality of teaching that students receive and the extent of attention they pay to lessons in schools. This implies that schools that fail to provide the necessary learning facilities and create a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning may hardly put in the best in their students especially when it comes to acquiring a foreign language such as French where it is in position of "Langue étrangère" where the most important part is communicative aspect of it. This scenario has been among the reasons for poor proficient use of French Language among the secondary school students in Owo Local Government Area(OLGA), Ondo State, Nigeria. The main thrust of this paper is to investigate the effects of school environment on the proficient use of French Language (FL) "Langue étrangère" (Le) in the study area. Three research questions and three hypothesis guided the study. A total number of one hundred students from ten schools and twenty French teachers of secondary schools in OLGA attempted a 15 questionnaire- test to express their opinion on proficiency in FL and 5minutes interview for teachers to express their ideas live on the probable constraints in speaking French language fluently. Then, the data collected by means of the interview and the

questionnaires were analysed. The results of the study indicated that school, environmental condition, educational facilities and training of teachers in the field have significant influence on the proficient use of French Language.

INTRODUCTION

The French Language is a distinct language, different from any other language of the world. It owes its origin to France. It was from France that French entered other parts of the world; through colonization. French is therefore an adopted official language in France since 1539 through the special linguistic decree referred to as Ordonnance de Villers-Coterets. French owns its status as a medium of communication most especially in other countries where it enjoys the status of official language with another language. Such bilingual countries are Canada, Cameroun, Luxembourg, Burundi, Nigeria among so many others.

Nigeria being surrounded by so many Francophone countries has adopted French Language as its second official Language which has been embraced by the citizens. The environment is therefore having so many influences on the learning of FL especially in Owo Local Government Area which this study analysed.

Fluency is therefore the heart beat of language learning which will justify the acquisition of certain foreign languages. If the language is being taught and certificate is obtained on it, the inability to speak with the language users renders all other benefits irrelevant. Though, an institution dedicated to teaching and learning is expected to be valued and well equipped for positive influenced of student academic performance(Kissau, 2011), if French language is used exclusively as a means of communication by the teaching, administrative and secretariat staff in schools, students would be encouraged to use French by taking after their examples. In schools where English language (and not French) is the official teaching and communication tools, often teachers of French language do not even communicate in the language outside the

classroom session. Hence, the learning environment remains an important factor that should be studied and well managed to enhance student effectiveness in speaking FL. This paper therefore, investigated wider proficient use and what should be done to enhance proficient use. The following areas will be discussed:

- I. Effects of climatic condition of school environment on FL proficiency.
- II. Availability of the educational materials/ facilities
- III. Availability of the incessant training of teachers on the field and administrative staff of the school.
- IV. Orientation of students on the importance of learning FL.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The effect of school environment on proficient use of French language has been an issue of concern to many scholars in the field. This is evident in the rate of mass failure of students in an oral aspect of examination in SSCCE level and a proof of it when students in OLGA involved in an oral competition with other students outside the concerned Local Government Area. The hypothesis has shown that inefficient communication is due to non-conducive learning environment, educational materials inconsistency training of teachers in the field and students interest. Hence, it has been observed with dismay that the school environment in the study area is nothing to write home about. The school environmental condition is not interesting for teaching and learning, educational materials and in availability of instructional materials, teachers ineffectiveness due to lack of spontaneous training. It is on this note that the researcher is motivated to appraise the impact of school environment on proficient use of FL of secondary school students in OLGA, Ondo State.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The research is to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify the effects of school environment on the proficient use of French Language by Senior Secondary School Students in Owo Local Government Area in Ondo State.
2. Examine the ineffectiveness of teachers due to lack of incessant training.
3. Assess the effects of educational materials/facilities on proficient use of French Language by Senior Secondary School Students.
4. Make recommendations on importance of Learning FL to facilitate their interest.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a multiple of data collection method supported with Five minutes oral interview with their teachers. In ten selected secondary schools in Owo. The schools are three private schools namely Dominion Science College,Owo; Radiant Group of Schools, Owo and Adedewe Secondary School,Owo. Also in the study, Seven public schools including St. Catherine Girls College, Owo, St. Louis Girls Grammar School,Owo; Imade College Boys High School, Owo. Experience as well proved that low performances of students in interschools and intraschool competition in debate and symposium. Tables were employed to analyse the variables.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1: SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE VISITED SCHOOLS

NAMES OF PRIVATE SCHOOL	TEACHING FACILITIES						
	Language Laboratory	Library	Classroom	Educative programme	Educational Materials	Teachers Training work	

							school
i.	School A	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Poor
ii.	School B	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair
iii.	School C	Fair	Poor	Poor	Fair	Fair	Poor

TEACHING FACILITIES

	Names of public School	Language Laboratory	Library	Classroom	Sports	Educational materials	Teachers work
iv	School D	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair	Poor
v	School E	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair	Fair
vi	School F	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair	Poor	Poor
vii	School G	Fair	Poor	Poor	Good	Fair	Poor
viii	School H	Poor	Fair	Fair	Good	Poor	Poor
ix	School I	Poor	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor
x	School J	Fair	Fair	Poor	Poor	Poor	poor

(i) Adedewe Secondary (ii) Dominion Science (iii) Radiant Group (iv) Methodist High School, (v) Imade College (vi) Owo High School (vii) St. Louis (viii) New Church School (ix) Ansarudeen (x) St. Catherine.

INDEX: 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair; 3 = Good

The above index status was as a result of the facts identified to have led to the environmental problems affecting the proficient use of French Language by secondary school students as researchers visited the selected schools. For laboratory, having all these variables (Tape recorder, French Oral disc of different concepts, Television set, audio-visual disc on French films showing films by Anglophones and francophone, different French music for school 'Good' 3/5 variables places the school in the 'Fair' category and anything below three variables accords the school 'Poor' status. The table

above shows the status of the majority of the selected schools as poor at least not less than 89% of the schools environment are poor and this implies that the school environment is not conducive for learning if placed on value of conveniences and facilities.

- Language laboratory equipment
- Library is not well furnished with educational material: Good textbooks.
- In availability of classroom equipment.
- Failure of adequate workshops for French Language FL teachers.
- All the interviewed French teachers in the selected schools complain bitterly about inadequate facilities and lack of motivation from schools proprietors and educators, the government inclusive as there was no encouragement for the means of self development.
- Students are not facilitated to speak, no administrative staff speaks French, within the class, no interest and outside classroom setting, there is no urge to speak and it is all about theoretical aspects of the language.

The questionnaires were administered to students and they pin-pointed that; the average secondary school students do not have much knowledge of verb conjugation and they are not versed in basic structures, they therefore find it difficult to speak fluently in French Language when they are called out for self expression. Steadily they lose interest in trying to speak FL. Students tend not to have good knowledge of the importance of learning and speaking French and thereby, perceiving it as stress and problematic.

EFFECTS OF SCHOOL CLIMATIC CONDITION

According to Megan (2002:78), “research on school climate in high-risk urban environments indicates that a positive supportive and culturally conscious school climate can significantly shape the degree of academic experienced by urban students”. In line with this submission, it was discovered that positive climate conditions are protective factors for students learning. A positive climate results in positive outcomes for school

personnel as well. Characteristics of school climate, especially trust, respect, mutual obligation and concern for others' welfare can have powerful effects on educators' and learners interpersonal relationship.

Language Laboratory: It is discovered that most of the secondary school do not know anything about Language Laboratory and those who manage to have one are in poor state due to no available variables, just an empty hall representing Laboratory. It amounts to prejudice. In some cases, there are variables and well equipped LL but the French teacher do not utilise them appropriately and necessarily.

Library: Considering educational facilities in schools, the Library is most important. In the ten selected schools, it was evident that the libraries were ill equipped with French books, teaching aids and tools, which is having negative effect on proficiency in the French language.

Socio-educative Programme: The social educative programme include debate, symposium, Quiz music, dance, involvement in cultural display of francophone drama and the rest have impacts in developing learners' ability in Foreign Languages.

Incessant Training of Teachers: Hardly can one believe that most of the French teachers do not have ability to speak the language fluently and thereby do not even speak to students. Also, teaching in abstract is common among the secondary school teachers as someone who misuses tenses and this could not help but do great harm to the teaching. Learning process (Abioye: 2014:10) "French is a language of culture, encompassing art, dance, fashion, literature, cusine, and cinema". The Cannes International Film festival annually attracts tourists from the nook and cranny. Taking students for acculturation, preparing them for outdoor activities to compete with other students in communicative activities should be encouraged by the school management

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result of the findings of this study, the following recommendations among others are made;

1. The concerned authorities should provide a conducive school environment with good climatic condition for effective teaching and learning. Such environment should comprise well equipped language Lab. Library furnished with good textbooks and educational materials, comfortable classrooms.
2. Adequate plan should be on ground for incessant training of French teachers, orientation for students and probably, parents on the good reasons for learning and speaking French Language.
3. Ondo state Government should provide necessary facilities in senior secondary schools and fund academic competition that could enhance proficient use of French language. All staff should be encouraged to learn French. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA), philanthropist and other charitable organizations are also implored to complement the effort of the government to facilitate proficiency of French Language among secondary school students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that proficiency in foreign language cannot be acquired without effective act of sharing from the educators. The conducive school environment, provision of well equipped facilities for teaching and learning situation boosts the interest of secondary school students in Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Complete the following questions as appropriate;

1. Age:.....
2. Sex: (a) Male [] (b) Female []
3. How long have you been studying French? Yes or No
4. Do you respond to your teachers' questions? Yes or No
5. How often does your teacher speak French to you? Yes or No
6. Does your French teachers' speaks fluently? Yes or No
7. Do you have any other person outside the classroom to speak FL to? Yes or No
8. Is there language lab in your school? Yes or No
9. Do you have any periodical educative programme on FL in your school?
Yes or No
10. Have you watch any film on francophone civilization? Yes or No
11. Do you have good and comprehensive textbooks for your French studies?
Yes or No
12. Will you be bold to represent your school in French Language debate or
symposium? Yes or No
13. Do you often go on acculturation to francophone country? Yes or No
14. Have you been educated on the importance of FL? Yes or No
15. Will you like to further your education in FL at higher level? Yes or No