

ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to find out the strategies for teaching and learning of French language at the junior secondary school level. The influence of gender and school location was also explored. To carry out this survey research, twelve research questions and eight hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Population of the study consisted of 39 teachers and 1030 students from six government owned secondary schools (3 in urban and 3 in rural areas) in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. Questionnaire and Observational Rating Scale were used for data collection. The instrument was face validated by experts and its reliability index was 0.64. The instrument was administered to the teachers and students and collected at the spot. The analysis was done using mean and standard deviations. Major findings of the study are: Most of the metacognitive strategies are in use by the learners of French language, French language teachers used cognitive learning strategies, students of French used cognitive learning strategies, students made use of some socio-affective learning strategies, there was slight influence of gender on teachers' use of cognitive learning strategies it was not significant, there was no significant difference in the mean rating of learning strategies used by male and female French language students, school location had significant influence on cognitive strategies used by the French teachers and there was a significant difference between the mean ratings of urban and rural French students on the usage of learning strategies. Based on the findings, it was recommended among other things that French language teachers in the rural schools, should be trained and encouraged to employ different teaching and learning strategies in order to enhance teaching and learning of French language.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Teaching could be seen as a process of inculcating worthwhile knowledge by the teacher into the learner. This is to train the learner so that he or she can stand on his or her foot in the society. In teaching, three aspects are involved; they are the teacher, the learners and the learning materials. Theodore (2014) refers to it as the process of impacting knowledge and skills from a teacher to a learner. To him it encompasses the activities of educating or instructing. It is an act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. Ugwu and Eze (1999) are of the same opinion as they saw teaching as the act of educating, training and molding of the character and attitude of an individual towards a desired goal.

Teaching cannot take place without the participation of the different persons, the teacher who is a mature and experienced person that is capable of combining different skills,

techniques, and strategies to impart knowledge to the immature individual who is at the help of the mature one to learn. In the light of this Aguokogbuo (2000) opines that teaching is a deliberate effort by a mature or experienced person to impart information, knowledge and skills to an immature person. The act of teaching is a highly skilled professional activity which involves curriculum design, exposition of information and knowledge through diversified teaching strategies and using of variety of instructional materials to get the message across to the learner. An acceptable teaching brings about learning.

Learning has been variously defined by various authors. It could be seen as acquiring information, knowledge and skills that will bring about a change in behaviour. The learner learns from a more experienced person. Kirkpatrick (1985) saw it as a knowledge gained from teaching. Nsude (1998) argued that learning is much more than that. To her learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour which occurs as a result of experience or some level of practice. It is worthy of note here that any learning that does not bring about a change in behaviour is not learning. This is because if any learning has taken place it is expected that it will influence the behaviour of the learner either positively or negatively. It is the outwardness of what is learnt that will help anybody around to know that learning has taken place. In our schools today learners learn different subjects taught by the teachers such as English language, mathematics, music etc which French language is one of them. The teaching and learning of French language in English speaking Africa was not wide spread until 1960 when most African countries got their independence. It was not until around 1960 that Nigeria began to feel a great need for a change in the language teaching policy. Nigeria like other new independent African nations realized that they are surrounded by fellow Africans with whom they could not communicate due to language barrier.

It was during the colonial era that most of the communications between French speaking and English – speaking countries of Africa were channeled to their respective European capitals, thus creating a state of isolation between the two linguistic groups. Therefore a cultivation of the languages used by the groups in their interactions is necessary and French language is one of them.

Nigeria is an Anglophone country surrounded by French speaking nations such as; Niger in the north, Chad in the north-east, Cameroon in east, Republique du Benin in the West and then the Atlantic ocean in the south. “So Nigeria can be described as a “Linguistic Island” surrounded by “French seas” (Offorma, 2009:13. To her there is need for neighbours to live harmonious with one another and this will be effective if the parties have a common medium of communication. She opines that “the co-existence of Nigeria and these countries revolves around economic, political, social and cultural exchanges “ (Offorma, 2009:13).

Ogah (1984) opined that after the independence, the new African nations reacted swiftly against this state of isolation of African Nations from their neighbours because of the differences in their languages. The West African countries led the movement

of technical co-operation African nations, the objective of which was to break the language barrier and within a few years, they were joined by the East African countries. In 1963, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) officially approved a policy in Addis Ababa which advocated French-English bilingualism for all African Countries.

Offorma (2009) expatiated on this by saying that “the Addis-Ababa conference on Education and the Yaounde Conference of 1961 recommended that Anglophone African introduced French language as a mandatory subject in her school system and Francophone African introduced English as the second European language as a means of communication and understanding between the people of these two linguistic sectors”. That was important for African countries more so as no African language was developed to meet the purpose. The two most developed African languages are Hausa and Swahili which are still regional language in west African and East African respectively” (Offorma, 2009;14). It is based on this that Nigerian government declared in the National policy on Education (2004:10)

For smooth interaction with our neighbors, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and shall be compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools but non vocational elective at the senior secondary school.

Mbukko (2001) noted that there were about 4000 secondary schools in Nigeria that allowed the teaching and learning of French language in their schools including those of the private schools who even taught it at the primary school level.

In Enugu state French is taught to primary 4, 5 and 6 pupils as it is compulsory. This is important as one cannot engage in inter-regional and intra-African affairs without the knowledge of French. People complain that this language is difficult but notwithstanding the difficulty involved, it has numerous advantages.

There are many French establishments in Nigeria such as Peugeot Assembly of Nigeria (PAN), Michelin, Total, la Belief saving Nigeria limited, banks like la Societe Generale, le Credit Lyonnais and (ECOBANK) Nigeria Public Limited Company, a subsidiary of ECO-Transitional incorporated. To be employed in one of these establishments, the knowledge of French language is required. French language is a diplomatic language. The air and marine transporters make use of it.

So Nigeria needs French language not only to communicate with her Francophone neighbours but also to communicate with other nations of the world. It is also seen as a language used in business and working places. It is a living and modern language. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) records that French language is one of the principal world language used for communication. This is why after independence in Nigeria, efforts were made and are still being made to train French language teachers to teach the language in primary and secondary schools

and other schools of higher education.

Some colleges of education admit even students who have no pre-knowledge of French language to train as future French language teachers to see if there will be enough teachers of French to help educate the people in the language. It is because of the importance of this language, that undergraduate French language students are made to undergo compulsory one year abroad programme in order to improve on their proficiency. Of course, it is not possible for all Nigerians to learn to speak French but it is necessary that as many Nigerians as possible should know how to speak and write sound French language.

The possibility of this depends on the number of students that are willing to study French language at higher level (at least above the junior secondary school level). Unfortunately, practical evidence shows that at the senior secondary school where French is made elective, many students drop from French in Junior West School Examination, now Basic Education Certification Examinations. They attribute their drop-out from French to the difficulty of the language and ignorance of what job opportunities that a graduate of French language has. The researcher is of the opinion that poor teaching and dearth of French language resources in the schools could cause students to drop from French language classes. This is because if the teacher is not the master of his or her subject, it becomes difficult for the students to understand what he or she is teaching and this makes them to opt for another subject. Also when these students seek for the resources such as textbooks, radio set, tapes and others that will help them learn, they will always find out that they are costly. They may not also find them in schools as most school libraries do not have current books. For instance the "On y va!" textbooks that is being used in Secondary Schools can be seen in very few schools libraries while other still have France Afrique and the likes. In most of those schools language laboratories are nowhere to be found and these make it difficult for the students of French to learn. As a result of this, some drop-out from French language classes. Teachers of French language in junior secondary schools must be aware of the use of some strategies to deliver their lessons and make their lessons interesting to the learners. Strategy is a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose. It can also be seen as a process of planning something or putting a plan into operation in a skillful way.

In education, strategy can be described as all available procedures and techniques used by individuals and groups at different levels of the educational system to reach desired objective (Nwafor 2007).

There has been a prominent shift within the field of language learning and teaching over the last twenty years with greater emphasis being put on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching. In parallel to this new shift of interest, how learners process new information and what kinds of strategies they employ to understand, learn or remember the information has been the primary concern of the researchers dealing with the area of

foreign language learning.

Research into language learning strategies began in the 1960s. particularly, development in cognitive psychology influenced much of the research done on language learning strategies (Williams and Burden 1997:149) In most of the research on language learning strategies, the primary concern has been on identifying what good language learners report they do to learn a foreign language or in some cases, are observed doing while learning a foreign language (Rubin and Wenden 1987:19).

In French language teaching and learning like every other foreign language, learning strategies are specific actions, behaviours, steps or techniques students use to improve their progress in comprehending, internalizing and using the foreign language. To Cohen (1998) learning strategies can be seen as those processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a second foreign language like French, through the storage, recall and application of information about that language. A learning strategy is considered to be the process of using or combining various aspects of thought to complete a task or to solve a problem.

To learn French language effectively, there is need for learning strategies that will help facilitate learning.

Language learning strategies have been classified by many scholars (Wenden and Rubin 1987: O'Malley and Chamot 1990: Oxford 1990: Stern 1992; etc). However, most of these attempts to classify language learning strategies reflect more or less the same categorizations of language learning strategies without any radical changes. The classification made by Rubin (1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990) and Stern (1992) the taxonomies of language learning strategies include such learning strategies as cognitive learning strategies, metacognitive learning strategies and socio-affective learning strategies,

Cognitive learning strategies are those language learning strategies that involve step or operations used in learning or problem-solving that requires direct analysis, transformation or synthesis of learning materials. They are limited to specific learning tasks and they involve more direct manipulation of the learning materials itself. They include: repetition, note taking, memorization, matching, making associations, imagery, practice, deductive reasoning, applying knowledge from one's language and translation.

Metacognitive learning strategies are those learning strategies that require planning for learning, thinking about the learning process as it takes place, monitoring of one's production or comprehension and evaluating learning after an activity is completed. They could be referred to as those learning strategies that are used to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning. They include; selective attention, planning and organizing one's learning, monitoring one's learning, self evaluation, and self-management.

Socio-affective learning strategies are those learning strategies that involve learners' personalities and their maturity level as it relates to the acquisition of the second and third language as the case may be. They include such strategies as; verification/ clarification, co-operating with others, risktaking and developing a positive attitude in using the language.

These strategies are used to teach and learn different aspects of French language as a foreign language such as oral expression, conjugation of verbs, essay writing, songs, oral communication, comprehension, reading, etc.

To make use of any of these strategies in-depth knowledge is needed. It is only an experienced and qualified teacher and learner that can handle these strategies to get maximum result in the classroom. Using some strategies requires a conducive environment. This is because a strategy that works well in one location may not work well in another.

Location can be defined as a place where something happens or exists. In this work, location is all about the places or the classrooms where these strategies will be used by the teacher and students to teach and learn. The location could be urban or rural. Urban environments are referred to the places where most social amenities are likely to be available. In such places one is likely to find pipe born water, electricity, access roads, information centers like libraries, ICT centers, schools both public and private well staffed with qualified and competent teachers. To urban French learners, French language is the second language (L2) they are acquiring English language being the first.

On the other hand rural environment is referred to a place where all these social amenities are not found. In some places where they exist they are difficult to be accessed as they are very far from the communities. For instance in some communities before a child could get to the school he or she would trek at least 20 to 50 kilometers. In some of these schools there are no libraries. French language learners here acquire French as third language (L3) Igbo language being the first and English being the second.

Ene (2002) through one of her findings demonstrated that location was a significant factor in the achievement of students in English reading comprehension. Ngwoke and Eze (2004) are of the opinion that individual inheritance sets the limit within which one can achieve one's potentials, but the inherited factors cannot function unless the environmental forces are able to play their roles. From their view, one would understand that no matter how gifted a child may be, the environment in which he/she operates matters a lot in his/her performance in life.

Location has been pointed out by various researchers as having great effect on the students' performances and achievements. Agada (2004) found through one of her studies that location also had significant effect on the achievement of the students as those in the urban schools achieved higher than those in the rural schools.

Also another research conducted by Okoh and Onah (2011) indicated that teachers in the urban area accepted all the methods while the rural counterparts accepted only three.

There could be also gender influence on the use of these strategies. Gender is the fact of being male or female. It can also be seen as a range of characteristics distinguishing between male and female, particularly in the cases of men and women and the masculine and feminine attributes assigned to them (Wikipedia 2011).

As gender is an issue with important theoretical and pedagogical implication in second language learning strategies research such as (Oxford, 1993; Oxford, Young, Ito, and Sumrall, 1993; Oxford 1995, Young and Oxford 1997). These studies have found that gender has a significant impact on how students learn a language.

Also Tercanlioglu (2004) found that there are gender differences, favouring males, in students' strategy use. Oluikpe (2004) found out that female students achieved higher than the male students. Therefore gender could influence teaching and learning.

From the foregoing, it is evident that a lot of factors could impinge on the effective teaching and learning. These factors range from physical environment, availability of instructional materials and lack of motivation to qualification and experience of teachers. Also gender and location could influence teaching and learning. Hence this study focuses on finding out the strategies that are used for teaching and learning of French language in junior secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Today, the heavy drop-out of students from French language classes after the first three years of exposure to the language has been a concern. The teachers only discover that most of the students have opted for other subjects. Very often the performance of students is the reflection of their teachers' ability to demonstrate skills, knowledge and competences on the use of different strategies for teaching and learning as required in a given school subject.

The report of the Chief Examiners of Junior West African School certificate Examination, now Basic Education Certification Examination over the years showed that the performance of the student in French language is poor. For instance in 2010 only 42.82 percent passed French also in 2011 and 2013 33.36% and 51.55% respectively passed French. From this report one will now see that there is generally poor performance of students in French Basic Education Certification Examinations which may be as a result of strategies used by the teachers.

Therefore, the problem of this study is, what are the strategies used for teaching and learning of French language at junior secondary schools?

Purpose of the Study

The general objective of this study is to determine the strategies for teaching and learning of French language at the junior secondary school level. Specifically the objectives are to find out

1. The metacognitive learning strategies used by the French students in learning.
2. The cognitive learning strategies used by the students of French to learn different aspects

of French language.

3. The cognitive learning strategies used by the teachers of French to teach different aspects of French language.

4. The socio-affective learning strategies applied in learning of French language.

5. To compare cognitive strategies used by urban and rural French teachers.

6. To compare cognitive strategies used by urban and rural French students.

7. To compare metacognitive strategies used by urban and rural French students.

8. To compare socio-affective learning strategies used by urban and rural French students.

9. To compare cognitive strategies used by male and female French teachers

10. To compare cognitive strategies used by male and female French students

11. To compare metacognitive learning strategies used by male and female French students

12. To compare socio-affective learning strategies used male and female French student

Significance of the Study:

This research work is focused on identifying those strategies that teachers and learners of French used in teaching and learning of French language. Those that will benefit from this research work include: teachers, students, workshop organizers, curriculum planners, course book writers, teachers' trainers and government

The result of this study will help teachers in the field to improve on their teaching skills and methods. As different strategies for teaching and learning of French will be discovered, it will help the teachers to plan their lessons properly and make use of appropriate strategies to deliver their lessons. It will also make them to allow active participation of students as the teachers will only be seen as facilitators of learning.

The strategies for teaching and learning of French identified in this study will help to improve students' involvement in French language classes. This is because the students will now see themselves at the centre of learning as learning will be students' centered and no longer teacher-oriented. Sometimes, they will discover that without them the teaching and learning activities will not progress. Also students in colleges of education and faculties of education (pre-service teachers) will find the result valuable as it will help them to know the strategies to be applied when they go to the field and get prepared on how to make use of them for better teaching and learning of French.

The strategies identified will serve as areas of emphasis in in-service training of teachers. They will help the workshop organizers, who always want new things that will improve teaching and learning. During their workshop, they will emphasize these strategies and also how they will be better applied. This will help the participants to improve on their teaching strategies when they get back to their schools.

The result of this study will also help the curriculum planners to know which strategies are appropriate to be used in teaching a particular topic, so that they will be included in French curriculum planning.

The strategies identified will assist the course book writers. They will help them to arrange their contents using the appropriate strategy. They will help the teachers' trainers in training the future French teachers in tune with these strategies. They will also help the government in formulating and executing educational policies involving French language. The study will be a guide for achieving the objectives of teaching and learning of French language according to the National Policy on Education.

Scope of the Study

This study was carried out in Nsukka Education zone of Enugu State. The content is limited to finding out strategies for teaching and learning of French language at the junior secondary school level. It also includes: the metacognitive strategies, the cognitive strategies, the socio-affective strategies used in French classes. It compared the strategies used by urban and rural French teachers and also the ones used by male and female French teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research.

1. What are the metacognitive learning strategies used by French students in learning?
2. What are the cognitive strategies used by the students of French to learn different aspects of French?
3. What are the cognitive strategies used by the teachers of French to teach different aspects of French?
4. What are the socio-affective learning strategies applied in learning of French language?
5. What are the cognitive strategies used by the urban and rural French teachers?
6. What are the cognitive strategies used by urban and rural French students?
7. What are the metacognitive learning strategies used by urban and rural French students?
8. What are the socio-affective learning strategies used by urban and rural French students?
9. What are the cognitive strategies used by male and female French teachers?
10. What are the cognitive strategies used by male and female French students?
11. What are the metacognitive learning strategies used by male and female French students?
12. What are the socio-affective learning strategies used by male and female French students?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the research; they were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁ There is no significant difference in mean rating of the metacognitive learning strategies used by male and female French students.

HO₂ There is no significant difference in mean rating of cognitive learning strategies used by male and female French teachers

HO₃ There is no significant difference in mean rating of cognitive learning strategies used by male and female French students.

HO₄ There is no significant difference in mean rating of socio-affective learning strategies used by male and female French students.

HO₅ There is no significant difference in mean rating of metacognitive learning strategies used by urban and rural French students.

HO₆ There is no significant difference in mean rating of cognitive learning strategies used by urban and rural French language teachers.

HO₇ There is no significant difference in mean rating of cognitive learning strategies used by urban and rural French language students.

HO₈ There is no significant difference in mean rating of socio-affective learning strategies used by urban and rural French language students.

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