



The Impact of English and Indigeneous Languages on the Learning of French: The Case Study of the Nigerian French Language Village, Badagry

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Abstract. This research is to excavate the causes of students' inability to communicate effectively in French language without mixing it up either with English language or their mother tongue amongst tertiary students. The Nigerian French Language Village (NFLV) has been chosen as a case study. The Language village is the center for language emersion of French language students. Different Nigerian universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education send their students there for minimum of six (6) months with the hope of getting better in their level of spoken and written French. This research seeks to establish that the spoken aspect of a language is very vital in the learning of a foreign language. The study lay emphases on effective oral communication amongst students in a bilingual environment and in the same vein recommends some pedagogical techniques in enhancing and promoting effective oral communication in French.

Keywords: Language, French, English, Indigenous Language, Impact

1. Introduction

Language is a tool of communication among humans and it differs from one community to another. Considering the status of French in Nigeria as one of the foreign languages, it is evident that this language cannot be effectively learned alongside with the indigenous and official languages; English and French without enhancement. Base on this fact coupled with the reality that French is hardly used in the school except in the classrooms during lectures. It is evident that the students have their various indigenous languages coupled with English which is their "lingua franca". The domineering effect of the regional languages: Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba and other indigenous languages in the learning of a foreign

language is evident in the linguistic oral production of most Tertiary French students. For decades, French has been made a compulsory subject in the Nigerian education system at the levels of basic 4-9. In addition, the Nigerian universities, polytechnics and colleges of education have included French as a compulsory general course and a core Course of study. From all indications, to effectively learn this subject, certain measures and methodologies must be put in place to facilitate the learning and effective oral communication in the language by students studying the language. Learning a foreign language in a multi lingua, multicultural or bilingual society poses a lot of problems for effective oral communication. The student is bound to be affected or influenced by their indigenous language or even by English language which is the major means of communication in Nigeria, a lot of phenomena occur in a foreign language class when students attempt to communicate in the language whether in class or outside the class; they find a means of finishing the conversation either by code-mixing or code-switching.

Sometimes the learners in the bilingual classes switch language from French to English during learning activity especially when asked to explain or discuss a topic. This is called code switching. Code switching usually occurs in a bilingual or multilingual community as a strategy in communication. Poplack (1980) mentions that, there are three types of code switching namely: extrasentential, intersentential, and intrasentential. Code switching involves the insertion of words, phrases, and sentence level from one language into another, i.e. English into French or vice-versa. There are some reasons why the learners switch the languages in a bilingual class. Reasons we will find out in the course of this research. It is a known form of communication among learners of

foreign languages. Nunan and Carter (2001: 275) describe code switching as “a phenomenon of switching from one language to another language in the same discourse”. It has been observed that most students who attempt to speak French with their course mates sometimes gets stocked in the course of the conversation and then switch to either English or their indigenous language for a smooth flow of the discussion. Code-mixing is the other phenomenon closely related to code-switching. Code mixing takes place without a change of topic and can involve various levels of language such as phonology, morphology, grammatical structures or lexical items Kachru in Nusjam (2004) defines code mixing as the term refers to the use of one or more languages for consistent transfer of linguistic units from one language into another, and by such a language mixture developing a new restricted or not so restricted code of linguistic interaction. Related to Kachru definition above, we can see the reality in the class, when students saying something in French, and then infuse some English words that they don't know how to say in French. Sometimes they go as far as adding some indigenous expressions to drive home their point. With this kind of forms of communication by students of French language, the future of good oral communication in French is brisk. Solution has to be sourced as to how to improve oral communication in French in spite of the environmental influences.

This research is meant to investigate the impact of English and indigenous languages on the oral production of Nigerian students learning French using the Nigerian French Village as a case study. The village is the center for language emersion for most Nigerian universities, polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

1.1 Problem Statement/ Justification

The art of effective oral communication among humans in any given society cannot be over emphasized. French language is an international language and holds so much prospects for its learners. It is a language of diplomacy, politics and business. Nigeria is bordered by francophone countries; this and many more reasons gave rise to Nigeria adopting French language as a second official language in 1996 by late General Sani Abacha. And this declaration brought about the teaching of French language in the country. This study is justified because; oral communication is one of the major competences in learning a language. So, learning a language is for one to be able to communicate effectively in that language. The aim is defeated if a

graduate of French is called upon to give an oral presentation and they are not able to perform well. Writing is good but good or effective oral communication is the hallmark of learning a foreign language.

1.2 Research Question

- What are the factors responsible for students' difficulty in communicating effectively in French amongst themselves?
- What are the possible solutions to the factors responsible for lack of effective communication amongst students?
- What teaching methods/ techniques can be explored or used to improved students' oral output and performance?
- Do Teachers of French language give maximum attention/ priority to the oral aspect in teaching of the language?

1.3 Objectives of study

Haven been a student and now a French teacher for some years, it has been observed that most French students are not able to communicate effectively in the language and this is not limited to the students alone as some French teachers are also victims of the same problem. And oral communication is a major aspect in the teaching and learning of French language. This is a major problem that needs to be tackled fast hence our motivation for this research.

Our main focus in this research is to investigate reasons why tertiary students learning French do not communicate in French amongst themselves. It is also to:

- Identify factors responsible for students not been able to communicate effectively in French in class and amongst themselves outside class.
- Recommend ways of bringing this phenomenon to a barest minimum amongst students.
- Identify new and effective strategies/methods/techniques of teaching French language that will be based on students oral output and performance.
- Help teachers of French language give priority to oral communication in the study of French language.

1.4 Significance of the study

The findings of this research will be of advantage for both the teachers and the learners and for the

development of the teaching and learning of French language in Nigerian tertiary institutions. In addition it will help in the proper planning of the school curriculum in the ministry of education at all levels of education mostly at the tertiary institutions. This will equally help both the Nigerian public and schools to be conscious of the oral competence in the teaching and learning of French. Identifying of the problems will help in recommendations that will bring about measures of solving them.

2. Literature Review

The effect, strategies and policies of the federal government of Nigeria in the educational sector which shows the importance and the pursuance of oral communication in French language since the early 90s, this led to the establishment of the Nigerian French language village, in Badagry to encourage the learning and study of French language. Various pedagogique technics and theories have been applied in various Tertiary Institutions to enhance oral /practical aspect of French and at the language village which is an inter-tertiary Centre for students' linguistic emersion. This research intends to dig deep in a more practical way to develop new strategies on how to address the problem of English and indigenus languages impact as it has to do with oral communication among tertiary institution students, most of whom come to the Nigerian French language Village for their language emersion. Some researches have been carried out by different scholars on the teaching and learning of French language in Nigeria. On the influence of French language by indigenus language or English language, many researchers have carried out contrastive and error analysis. Onah (2019:7) is of the opinion that mother tongue interference is a common issue in learning a foreign language especially in a country like Nigeria where diverse languages exist. "The mother tongue interferes greatly with the English language, national languages (Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba) and even foreign languages like French, German" on the impact of mother tongue interferences, she has this to say "The mother tongue interference disallows the French learners to rethink and reword their thoughts in the target language they are learning (French)". In a research carried out by Adebayo, on mother tongue interferences on French, he opines that, the mother

tongue interference influences the aspects of pronunciation/intonation as phonological interferences, lexical or morphological interferences, incomplete sentences, meaningless and clumsy expressions, (Adebayo (2011). Aito (2005:24) is of the opinion that instead of mother tongues in Nigeria, mostly, English language accounts for structural and lexical errors, a situation further complicated by students' questionable proficiency in it. Adebayo reveals the problems of teaching and students' productivity due to the poor status of French language learning and the Nigerian government poor input factors (Adebayo 2011:3). Other factors influencing the students' academic performance listed includes: poor school facilities, multilingualism in the classroom, multilingualism and linguistic interference (Adebayo 2011:4).

To improve on the teaching and learning of French and especially on the problematic aspect of speaking, some scholars are of the opinion that some sorts of teaching aids and methods will help in improving learners' competence. According to Amanuel (2016) teaching aids or educational resources give opportunities to the teachers and the learners to actively participate in class during lessons, mostly in French oral classes. Eze (2013) is of the opinion that man learns very quickly and easily with the use of educational resources audio-visual in addition to verbal explanation. He is also of the view that people at times find it difficult to understand thins in abstract, which means that it is easier for the learners of French to learn and acquire French very well with the use of audio-visuals resources than abstract explanation. There are situations where the institutions have these instructional/ educational resources but the teachers and learners are faced with the difficulty of usage, Gregory has this to say "Sometimes the teachers may not also be able to make proper use of these materials and may need the teacher to be trained on its use. For example, the projector, computer or laptops or educational tablets, some language laboratory equipments, etc" (5).

3. Research Methodology

Data for the research was collected through questionnaires and oral Interview of Students. Data collected was analyzed accordingly.

3.1 Population of the participants

These are the breakdown of how the members of the participants from the various institutions selected for this research.

The participants in the research

S/N	INSTITUTION	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
1	Universities	70
2	Colleges of Education	40
3	Polytechnics	40
Total		150

3.2 The age range of the participants

The age range of the participants from Nigerian French Language Village of the above tertiary Institutions falls in 18-30.

4. Result Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Response Rate

A total of one hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the students in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in French Village Badagry, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty two copies (122) of questionnaire representing 81.2% were duly completed, retrieved and found useful for analysis. Finchan, (2008) assert that “a response rate of 60% for the survey research.” Thus, the response of 81.2% was adequate. It was sufficient to generalize the results of the target population. Meanwhile, 28 copies of questionnaire representing 18.6% were not returned. Table 1 presented the distribution of the response rate.

Table 1: Response Rate

Number of Questionnaire	Universities		Collages of Education		Polytechnics			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	T	%
Questionnaire Distributed	70		40		40		150	100
Questionnaire Retrieved	61	40.6	28	18.6	33	22.0	122	81.2
Questionnaire not Retrieved	9	6.0	12	8.0	7	4.6	28	18.6

Survey, 2023

The table 1 showed that respondents from Universities in French Village Badagry recorded 61 out of 70 sampled University students. This represents 40.6% of the respondents. At the Collages of Education, 40 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 28 were returned representing 18.6%. While in Polytechnics, 40 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 33 were returned representing 22.0%. This implied that 150 copies of questionnaire were administered to the both respondents of Universities, Collages of Education and Polytechnics students at French Village Badagry studied. The cumulative total returned were 122 copies of questionnaire and the response rate was 81.2%. 28 questionnaire representing 18.6% were not returned. This could be as a result of respondent’s study tight schedule.

4.2 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and it was based on the four (4) research questions that guided the study. The research questions were analysed using Likert Scale measurement. The Benchmark was established using the value of the six (6) points Likert scales rating from; 6,5,4,3,2 and 1. The Mean formula used was $\bar{X} = 6+5+4+3+2+1/6 = 21/6 = 3.5$ Therefore, 3.5 Mean value was used as Benchmark.

4.3 Causal Factors Responsible for Students’ Inability to express themselves effectively in French

The first research question was asked to find out the causal factors responsible for students’ inability to express themselves effectively in French. In order to discover this, the respondents were asked to tick the options among the Six Likert scales of measurements: Strongly Agree=SA; Agree=A; Slightly Agree=SA; Slightly Disagree=SD; Disagree=D; Undecided=U to analyse the responses. The analysis is shown in Table

Table 2: Causal Factors Responsible for Students’ Inability to Express Themselves Effectively in French

Causal Factors	Causal Factors Responsible for Students’ Inability to Express themselves Effectively in French																							
	Universities							Collages of Education							Polytechnics							Bench Mark		
	SA	A	SA	SD	D	SD	\bar{x}	SA	A	SA	SD	D	SD	\bar{x}	SA	A	SA	SD	D	SD	\bar{x}	T	$\Sigma\bar{x}$	A. \bar{x}
English language interferes in students oral production	47	7	7	0	0	0	5.6	13	7	6	1	0	1	5.0	17	11	5	0	0	0	5.3	122	15.9	5.3
Mother tongue interferes in students oral production	26	35	0	0	0	0	5.4	15	10	2	0	1	0	5.3	29	4	0	0	0	0	5.8	122	16.5	5.5
Prior exposure to French in secondary school strengthens learners’ oral expression	26	21	7	0	7	0	4.9	8	14	5	0	0	1	5.0	19	8	4	0	0	0	5.2	122	15.1	5.0
Lack of previous foundation in French is responsible for the inability for students to orally express themselves	21	34	6	0	0	0	5.2	14	9	4	0	0	1	5.2	18	4	5		6		4.8	122	15.2	5.1

Survey, 2023. Key: Total (T); Sum of Mean ($\Sigma\bar{x}$); Average Mean (A. \bar{x})

Based on the Mean Benchmark of 3.5 the table 2 revealed the causal factors responsible for students’ inability to express themselves effectively in French. These factors were mother tongue interferes in students oral production (5.5); English language interferes in students oral production (5.3); Lack of previous foundation in French is responsible for the inability for students to orally express themselves (5.10) and Prior exposure to French in secondary school strengthens learners’ oral expression (5.0); respectively. The high response of above Mean Benchmark of 3.5 on the options by the respondents indicates inability to learn French language. By and large, the respondent might understand it important to speak and express themselves in French because of its impact and place in the society and economy. There is also understanding of the benefits and opportunity it would add to address challenging the respondents are facing in Francophone societies and the real-world.

From the findings, it could be said that respondents from Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Educations revealed that all the identified options for causal factors responsible for students’ inability to express themselves effectively in French are significant. The finding is contrary with that of Adebayo (2011) in their study of “on Mother Tongue Interferences on French in Secondary School Learners of French.” This was because causal factors responsible for Students’ inability to express themselves effectively in French was not only as it revealed by “the mother tongue interference influences as the aspects of pronunciation/intonation and phonological interferences but as a result of lack of previous foundation in French as responsible for the inability for students to orally express themselves.

This finding suggested that, learning French to express oneself should not be begin at Universities, Polytechnics or Colleges of Educations but should take a proactive stance at homes as to create the tacit knowledge to prepare an individual to communicate and express themselves fluently. Besides, Primary and Secondary schools’ curriculums should be made learning French language as compulsory. Meanwhile, institutions could incorporate partner with Primary and Secondary schools in a fashion that will allow learners to continuously connect with appropriate teaching and learning so as to accelerate students’ ability to express their selves effectively in French language that could drive maximum growth.

Communicative Method of Instruction Likely Enhance the Oral Expression of French Language Learners of Tertiary Institution

The second research question was raised to ascertain the communicative method of instruction likely enhance the oral expression of French language learners of tertiary institution. Six Likert scales of measurements: Strongly Agree=SA; Agree=A; Slightly Agree=SA; Slightly Disagree=SD; Disagree=D; Undecided=U were used to analyse the responses.

The analysis was shown in Table 3

Table 3: Communicative Method of Instruction Likely Enhance the Oral Expression of French Language Learners of Tertiary Institution

Communicative Method	Communicative Method of Instruction Likely Enhance the Oral Expression of French Language Learners of Tertiary Institution																							
	Universities							Collages of Education							Polytechnics				Bench Mark					
	S A	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	S A	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	S A	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	T	$\sum \bar{x}$	A. \bar{x}
Students find "jeu de role" (role play) interesting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	15	4	1	0	1	4.8	12	$\frac{2}{1}$	0	0	0	0	5.3	122	10.1	3.3
Students' oral vocabulary improves with the communicative methods of teaching	34	20	7	0	0	0	5.4	15	9	4	0	0	0	5.3	29	4	0	0	0	0	5.8	122	16.5	5.5
Communicative approach enhances learners' confidence in oral expression	34	21	6	0	0	0	5.4	16	8	3	0	0	1	5.3	29	4	0	0	0	0	5.8	122	16.5	5.5
Communicative approach enhances phonological production of French language learners.	27	28	6	0	0	0	5.3	12	14	2	0	0	0	5.3	25	8	0	0	0	0	5.7	122	16.3	5.4

Survey, 2023. Key: Total (T); Sum of Mean ($\sum \bar{x}$); Average Mean (A. \bar{x})

Table 3 established the communicative method of instruction likely enhance the oral expression of French language learners of tertiary institution. Considering the average Mean Benchmark of 3.5, the responses were: Communicative approach enhances learners' confidence in oral expression (5.5); Students' oral vocabulary improves with the communicative methods of teaching (5.5); and Communicative approach enhances phonological production of French language learners. (5.4). meanwhile, Students find "jeu de role" (role play) interesting (3.3) was below the Mean Benchmark of 3.5 respectively. This could be that Students find "jeu de role" (role play) interesting because of the method of instruction in teaching French language learners enhances their oral expression fluently.

Deriving from the result, it can be deduced that the communicative method of instruction enhances the oral expression of French language learners of tertiary institution. The finding is in line with that of Eze (2013) that "man learns very quickly and easily with the use of educational resources audio-visual in addition to verbal explanation." This is because educational resources, audio visual verbal communication would effectively communicate to lanners and answer their query. This suggests that there is need to engage learners in effective verbal and oral commutation in French language Universities, Polytechnics and Collages of Education for effective communicative and oral expression in French. Consistent effective communicative and oral expression in French would positively have influence in their performance especially in areas such as information sharing, learning and research.

Teaching Methods Can Improve the Oral Expression of French Language Learners of Tertiary Institutions

The third research question was formulated to determine the teaching methods that can improve the oral expression of French language learners of tertiary institutions. In order to determine that, Six Likert scales of measurements: Strongly Agree=SA; Agree=A; Slightly Agree=SA; Slightly Disagree=SD; Disagree=D; Undecided=U, options were provided to analyse the responses. The analysis is shown in the Table 4

Teaching Methods	Teaching Methods Can Improve the Oral Expression of French Language Learners of Tertiary Institutions																							
	Universities							Collages of Education							Polytechnics							Bench Mark		
	S A	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	SA	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	S A	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	T	$\sum \bar{x}$	A. \bar{x}
Oral expression is not a key language competence required by French language learners	28	14	0	0	6	1 3	3.3	5	8	0	6	4	5	3.6	0	9	0	4	0	20	2.3	122	9.2	3.0
The evidence of language competence is oral expression	41	20	0	0	0	0	5.6	16	11	0	0	0	1	5.5	25	8	0	0	0	0	5.7	122	16.8	5.6
The evidence of difficulty in language is lack of oral expression	20	41	0	0	0	0	5.3	13	12	3	0	0	0	5.3	24	0	5	0	0	4	5.3	122	15.9	5.3
Multimedia resources are likely to enhance oral expression of French language learners in tertiary institution	48	13	0	0	0	0	5.7	12	10	2	0	3	1	4.9	25	8	0	0	0	0	5.7	122	16.3	5.4

Table 4: Teaching Methods Can Improve the Oral Expression of French Language Learners of Tertiary Institutions Survey 2023. Key: Total (T); Sum of Mean ($\sum \bar{x}$); Average Mean (A. \bar{x})

Table 4 revealed the teaching methods that can improve the oral expression of French language learners of tertiary institutions. Thus, considering the average Mean of 3.5 Benchmark, the responses of the respondent were: The evidence of language competence is oral expression (5.6); multimedia resources are likely to enhance oral expression of French language learners in tertiary institution (5.4) and the evidence of difficulty in language is lack of oral expression (5.4) respectively. On the other hand, oral expression is not a key language competence required by French language learners (3.0); was below the Benchmark. This could be that oral expression to learners could not be a key language competence required by French language learners. The finding is in line with that of Amanuel (2016) that teaching aids or educational resources give opportunities to the teachers and the learners to actively participate in class during lessons, mostly in French oral classes. This finding can be said that the effective use of teaching method could transform the attitude to oral expression of French language particularly in information sharing, peer interaction, and cooperation among their peers. Besides, it can positively improve their corporate network with their colleagues.

Recommendations that will Improve Oral Expression of French Language Learners in Higher Institution

The fourth research question was raised to discover the recommendations to improve oral expression of French language learners in higher institution. Table 5 present the responses.

Recommendations to Improve Oral Expression	Recommendations that will Improve Oral Expression of French Language Learners in Higher Institution																							
	Universities							Collages of Education							Polytechnics							Bench Mark		
	SA	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	S A	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	S A	A	S A	S D	D	S D	\bar{x}	T	$\Sigma\bar{x}$	A. \bar{x}
Communicative approach will enhance oral expression of French language learners	34	20	7	0	0	0	5.4	11	13	3	0	0	1	5.2	12	21	0	0	0	0	5.3	122	15.9	5.3
Students should explore the use of multimedia resource to improve their oral expression	27	34	0	0	0	0	5.4	13	14	1	0	0	0	5.4	29	4	0	0	0	0	5.8	122	16.6	5.5
Emphasis on the use of French in and out of class should be encouraged amongst learners of French language	34	27	0	0	0	0	5.5	21	5	2	0	0	0	5.6	29	4	0	0	0	0	5.8	122	16.4	5.4
Immersion programs in francophone countries should be encouraged	34	27	0	0	0	0	5.5	17	10	0	0	1	0	5.5	25	8	0	0	0	0	5.7	122	16.7	5.5

Table 5: Recommendations that will Improve Oral Expression of French Language Learners in Higher Institution Field Survey, 2023 Key: Total (T); Sum of Mean ($\Sigma\bar{x}$); Average Mean (A. \bar{x})

Based on the Benchmark of Mean 3.5 the table 5 revealed the recommendations to improve oral expression of French language learners in higher institution. They were Immersion programs in francophone countries should be encouraged (5.5); Students should explore the use of multimedia resource to improve their oral expression (5.5); Emphasis on the use of French in and out of class should be encouraged amongst learners of French language (5.4); and communicative approach will enhance oral expression of French language learners (5.3); respectively. The justification of the response of above 3.5 on all the options of recommendations to improve oral expression of French language learners in higher institution by the respondents could be as the results of reality of learners need to express themselves in French language. There could be need for revitalization of teaching method, and need to prioritize French language towards becoming bilingual society.

The finding is differ with that of Amanuel (2016) that teaching aids or educational resources give opportunities to the teachers as teaching method to engage learners actively in oral expression of French language. Similarly, the findings is in line with that of Eze (2013) that learners learns very quickly and easily with the use of educational resources, audio-visual in addition to verbal explanation. This was because multimedia resource aid to improve learner’s oral expression as well as encouraged a learners of

French language to communicate effectively and efficiently.

5. Conclusion

Oral and effective communication is paramount in the teaching and learning of a foreign language. A learner of a foreign language such as student is first expected to express themselves orally before writing takes place. But this seems to be deteriorating today as the oral competence of most French graduates is nothing to write home about. In the light of the above findings, it can be said that no institution would prosper without making good use of its teaching method, multimedia resources, and immersion programs in francophone countries in turning learner’s ability to express themselves in French language. Similarly, Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Educations should not neglect taking the recommendation especially, with the advent of global engagement in becoming bilingual societies.

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