

## Motivation as a Tool of Improving Learners' Performance in French Language in Ekiti State Secondary Schools

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined motivation as a tool of improving learners' performance in French language in Ekiti State secondary schools. The study specifically examined factors influencing French Language learning, important characteristics of teacher that can motivate the learner and ways French language learners can be motivated in the class. The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population consisted of all junior secondary school students from public secondary schools in Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 200 students drawn from ten public secondary schools using Multistage sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire tagged "Motivation and French Learning Questionnaire (MFLQ)" was used to collect relevant data for the study. The responses obtained were collated and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that teacher's teaching method, giving feedback on performance, availability of textbooks, and good relationship with the students and competence to manage the class motivates French language learners to learn in the classroom. Based on the findings, it is therefore recommended among others that French language teachers should use appropriate teaching method and find ways to strengthen students' self-perceptions so that the students become self-motivated to make an effort and therefore become active participants in learning of French language

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most pronounced changes in learning French is that it has become a global language. French is not only used as an official language in many nations, but also has influence on many different cultures in a large number of countries; it is a central language of communication world-wide. The expansion of French language has rapidly increased the needs to gain better communication skills in French because the aptitude to use French is very much needed for further studies, journeys to other countries as well as for social and professional global contacts of different kinds. A study carried out by Ogunbiyi (2012) discovers that French language is generally used as an international language for communication among people from different language backgrounds in all parts of the world.

In the same vein, French language is a global language which can be used for communication with native-

speakers and non-native-speakers worldwide. People's demands toward French language in many countries in the world make French language a key factor and become an international language that spreads quickly (Ogunbiyi, 2012).

One of the objectives of teaching and learning French at the secondary school level is to facilitate interaction with the neighbours who are French-speaking countries like Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Benin. The precise objective of French at the Junior Secondary School level has been outlined in the (Ogunbiyi, 2012). It is believed that by the end of their three years, learners should be able to:

- i. understand French expressions necessary for seeking and obtaining solutions to their immediate personal problems and satisfying their needs such as, attracting peoples' attention, asking for information etc.

- ii. understand verbal narration of events, within their range of experiences that have already taken place.
- iii. to understand simple verbal introductions of events, plans and projects yet to take place.
- iv. to read correctly with understanding including oral and written French, appropriately to the situations outlined in (i-iii) above.
- v. to use intelligently and appropriately, oral expressions and structure that are related to the situation outline (i-iv) above.
- vi. to be good in conventional letter writing, French language activities in the situation outlined in (i-iv) above.

There are numbers of factors that influence the learning of language which is not the language of mother tongue. However, what is often singled out as the most significant factor in the overall process of language acquisition is motivation and desire to learn a particular language. The researchers observed that students' poor performance in learning French as a foreign language is majorly as a result of lack of motivation in language learning process. It appears that many students think French is only a school subject and they don't see its significance for their prospective employment to work with multinational or national companies where French Language is employed.

Motivation is often cited as a key contribution to help language learners succeed and improve (Brown, 2007). Thus, motivation refers to a process that starts with a need and leads to a behaviour that moves an individual towards achieving a goal. It has been observed by the researchers that without adequate motivation, French learners with distinctive talents will not be able to fulfil such objectives, even if they have a good curriculum and teachers.

In foreign language acquisition, not only do students know about the importance of motivation in language learning, but teachers and parents are concerned about its effects on the students' learning progress as well. In addition, keeping students interested in school and motivating them to succeed are always challenges for teacher, parents, and students. The effect of motivation on foreign language acquisition, according to Zhou (2012), indicates that among the things that clearly affect the mastery of a foreign language is the type of motivation that a learner has.

In foreign language acquisition, these types of motivation came from cognitive and social psychology. In cognitive psychology, two types of motivation are involved; instrumental and integrative

motivation while in social psychology; two main types of motivation are considered: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Zhou, 2012).

Integrative motivation is defined as an individual's desire to learn a language because of its value in helping him integrate with speakers of the target language as well as for cultural enrichment. In other words, integrative motivation is described as learners' desired aspiration to identify with the culture of the foreign language community (Ellis, 2008). Therefore, when foreign language learners are highly motivated interactively, the goal is perceived as more significant and valuable, which in turn will encourage successful learning.

Integrative motivation has a link with intrinsic motivation as both are derived from within the individual which is especially important for encouraging students' success in foreign language learning. The activity itself, not the reward, interest students to learn the language or make them better in the language learning. Factors influencing students' intrinsic motivation are physical conditions, teachers as well as their teaching methods.

Loewen and Reinders (2011) explain that instrumental motivation refers to a need of fulfilment towards some objective or the motivation that is derived from a perception of the real benefits that learning the foreign language might bring about. In short, instrumental motivation includes a group of factors that associate with motivation arising from external goals, for instance, passing examinations, or obtaining financial rewards, occupying good positions or accomplishing a school requirement. Thus, some argue that instrumental motivation in a foreign language setting has a greater influence on foreign language learners.

Instrumental motivation could be linked with extrinsic motivation because both arise from external factors. Extrinsic motivation happens when external factors make the person do something that comes from an external source. This encourages or fosters an individual to succeed. Extrinsic motivation comes from such factors outside the classroom as parents, teachers, friends, or their previous learning, but most often involves subjects in a reward and punishment system.

The major factors influencing the types of motivation discussed above are teachers as well as their teaching methods. Students' level of interest and desire to engage in learning of French are heavily influenced by some factors, such as teachers, administrators, the school environment and their classmates. However, among these factors, teachers seem to be the strongest

one because their roles are very important in students' learning of French. Pearse (2000) also points out that teachers' feedback mostly affects students' learning motivation especially when they are aware of their own progress. For teachers, the key to foster motivation and engagement in French learning can lead to good teaching method as well as good teachers, both of which attract students a lot in their learning of French Language. If students find their teachers' methodology boring, they will not be motivated whereas if they are interested in the method, they will find it motivating and this prompts them for better learning.

Besides, French Language teachers should vary their activities, tasks, and materials because students are reassured by the existence in classroom routines that they can depend on. However, lessons, which always consist of the same routines, patterns and formats, have been shown to lead to a decrease in attention and an increase in boredom. Thus, varying the activities, tasks, and materials can help to avoid non-motivation and increase students' interest levels in French Language learning.

At present, it appears that many numbers of students have failed in their French language learning because of lack of motivation from some elements such as family background, social-environment, physical environment, culture, methods of learning and so forth (Dembo, 2004). Motivation can influence students' freedom, attention, attempt, and patience, the frequency of using learning strategies, leads to effective learning process. Learners have pleasure for a second or foreign language learning when they receive motivation, especially internal motivation because it could be well predicted by perceived second language ability and independence (Zhou, 2012). The aim of this study is therefore to investigate motivation as a tool of improving learners' performance in French Language.

The researchers observed that there was a low performance in the outcome of teaching and learning process in French language as a result of lack of motivation, this study was carried out with the following in focus:

1. Factors influencing French Language learning;
2. The important characteristic of a teacher that can motivate the learner

3. Ways by which French language learners can be motivated in the class

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions addressed the research problem

1. What are the factors influencing French Language learning in classroom?
2. What are the important characteristics of a teacher that can motivate the learners?
3. What are the ways by which French language learners can be motivated in the classroom?

## 3. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted which enabled the researchers to collect and analyze data from a sample of the entire population without any manipulations.

The population for the study was all French students in public Junior Secondary school in Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 200 students selected from 10 public secondary schools in two local government areas of Ekiti State. The sample was selected via multi stage sampling procedure.

### 3.1 Instrumentation

A well-constructed and self-developed questionnaire titled "Motivation and French Learning Questionnaire (MFLQ)" was used to get the desired information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was for collection of information on personal data of respondents, Section B consisted of 20 items that elicited responses from the respondents with response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The face and content validity was ascertained by giving the designed questionnaire to experts of Tests and Measurement for vetting before distributing it to the respondents. Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

## 4. RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** What are the factors influencing French Language learning in classroom?

Table 1: **Descriptive Statistics of the Factors Influencing French Language Learning in Classroom**

S/ N	Items	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Mean	S.D.	Rank
1.	Previous Learning Experience	148 (74%)	52 (26%)	2.99	0.5	4 <sup>th</sup>
2.	School Facilities	133 (66.5%)	67 (33.5%)	2.81	0.6	5 <sup>th</sup>
3.	Availability of Textbooks	172 (86%)	28 (14%)	3.29	0.5	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4.	Teacher's Teaching Method	200 (100%)	0 (0%)	4.00	0.0	1 <sup>st</sup>
5.	Feedback on Performance	194 (97%)	6 (3%)	3.74	0.4	2 <sup>nd</sup>

**Mean Cut-off: 2.50**

Table 1 shows the factors that influence French Language learning in the classroom. The table revealed that 148 representing 74% of the respondents agreed that previous learning experience influence French language learning in the classroom while 133 respondents representing 66.5% and 172 respondents (86%) agreed that school facilities and availability of textbooks respectively influence French language learning in the classroom. All the respondents agreed that teacher's teaching method influence French language learning and 194 respondents representing 97% agreed that feedback on performance influence French language learning in the classroom.

Based on the respondents' view, it can be concluded that teacher's teaching method is the most important factor that influence French Language learning in the classroom. This is closely followed by feedback on performance, availability of textbooks and previous learning experience. The least factor that influence French language learning in the classroom is school facilities.

**Research Question 2:** What are the important characteristics of a teacher that can motivate the learners?

Table 2: **Descriptive Statistics of the important characteristics of a teacher that can motivate the learners**

S/N	Items	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Mean	S.D.
1.	Good Teaching Method	200 (100%)	0 (0%)	4.00	0.0
2.	Good personalities	89 (44.5%)	111 (55.5%)	2.39	0.5
3.	Good relationship with students	200 (100%)	0 (0%)	4.00	0.0
4.	Competence to manage the class	127 (63.5%)	73 (36.5%)	2.74	0.5
5.	Teachers' Gender	46 (23%)	154 (77%)	1.94	0.6

**Mean Cut-off: 2.50**

Table 2 shows the important characteristics a French language teacher should possess which can motivate the French language learners. All the respondents agreed that good teaching method and good relationship with students can motivate French language learners in the classroom. 89 respondents representing 44.5% agreed that good personalities of the teacher can motivate students to learn French language while 127 representing 63.5% of the respondents agreed that teacher's competence to manage the classroom can motivate learners and only 46 respondents representing 23% agreed that teacher's

gender can motivate learners to learn French Language.

Based on the mean cut-off point of 2.50, the important characteristics of a teacher that can motivate learners to learn French language are good teaching method, good relationship with the students and competence to manage the classroom effectively.

**Research Question 3:** What are the ways by which French language learners can be motivated in the classroom?

Table 3: **Descriptive Statistics of the ways by which French Language learners can be motivated in the classroom**

S/N	Items	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Mean	S.D.
1.	Role Playing in the classroom	147 (73.5%)	53 (26.5%)	2.99	0.5
2.	Group and pair work in the classroom	138 (69%)	62 (31%)	2.88	0.5
3.	Using of multimedia gadgets in the classroom	200 (100%)	0 (0%)	4.00	0.0
4.	Giving bonus marks to students in the classroom	98 (49%)	102 (51%)	2.47	0.6
5.	Designing challenging exercises	152 (76%)	48 (24%)	3.04	0.3
6.	Paying more attention to low performing students	144 (72%)	56 (28%)	2.96	0.4

7.	Helping students with their difficulties in French Language	200 (100%)	0 (0%)	4.0	0.0
8.	Praising and rewarding performing students in the class	200 (100%)	0 (0%)	4.00	0.0
9.	Using of different approaches to teach French Language	96 (48%)	104 (52%)	2.44	0.5
10.	Assisting students to set learning goals in French Language	200 (100%)	0 (0%)	3.94	0.1

**Mean Cut-off: 2.50**

Table 3 shows the ways French language learners can be motivated in the classroom. The table revealed that 147 representing 73.5% of the respondents agreed that role playing in the classroom can motivate French language learners in the classroom while 138 (69%) of the respondents agreed that group and pair work in the classroom can motivate learners in the classroom and all the respondents agreed that using of multimedia gadgets in the classroom can motivate French language learners.

Less than half of the respondents (49%) agreed that giving bonus marks to students in the classroom can motivate French language learners. 152 (76%) and 144 (72%) of the respondents agreed that giving challenging exercises and paying more attention to low performing students respectively can motivate French language learners in the classroom while 96 (48%) of the respondents agreed that using of different approaches to teach French language can motivate French language learners in the classroom. All the respondents agreed that helping students with their difficulties in French Language, praising and rewarding performing students in the class, and assisting students to set learning goals in French Language can motivate French language learners in the classroom.

Based on the mean cut-off point of 2.50, role playing in the classroom, group and pair work in the classroom, using multimedia gadgets in the classroom, designing challenging exercises, paying more attention to low performing students, helping students with their difficulties in French language, praising and rewarding performing students in the classroom and assisting students to set learning goals in French language can motivate French language learners in the classroom.

**4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This high endorsement of teacher's teaching method in table 1 (accounting for 100%) reflected that students knew the importance of teaching methods in their French language learning. Thus, with this finding, to enhance and motivate students in French language learning, teachers should help students find out effective ways of learning French language. Feedback

on performance and availability of Textbooks were the second and the third influential factors influencing students' French language learning. The finding was consistent with the view of Harmer (2002) who puts it that teachers and the teaching method play important roles in language learning classroom such as a controller, a prompter, a participant or a tutor. Sparks (2000) also concludes that one of the most important factors in improving students' learning is using an appropriate teaching method.

Also, in table 2, it revealed that good teaching method, good relationship with the students and competence to manage the class are important characteristics of a teacher that can motivate French language learners to learn in the classroom. Ogunkeye (2007) indicates that in the classroom, a good teaching method, sympathetic teachers and good class control have a similarly supportive effect on students' learning.

In table 3, it was revealed that role playing in the classroom, group and pair work in the classroom, using multimedia gadgets in the classroom, designing challenging exercises, paying more attention to low performing students, helping students with their difficulties in French language, praising and rewarding performing students in the classroom and assisting students to set learning goals in French language can motivate French language learners in the classroom.

**5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It can be concluded that teacher's teaching method, giving feedback on performance and availability of textbooks influences students' French language learning. Also, good teaching method, good relationship with the students and competence to manage the class are important characteristics of a teacher that motivates French language learners to learn in the classroom.

Role playing, group and pair work in the classroom, using multimedia gadgets in teaching activities, designing challenging exercises, paying more attention to low performing students, helping students with their difficulties in French language, praising and rewarding performing students in the classroom and assisting students to set learning goals in French

language motivate French language learners in the classroom.

Based on the findings it is therefore recommended that:

1. French language teachers should use appropriate teaching method in the teaching of French language in the classroom.
2. French language teachers should cease every opportunity to make students aware of their performance.
3. French language teachers should find ways to strengthen students' self-perceptions so that the students become self-motivated to make effort and therefore become active participants in learning, both the French language, and throughout their learning experience.
4. French language teachers should motivate learners by applying various motivational activities as indicated in the findings of this work.
5. The government should provide facilities that can motivate students in learning French Language.

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