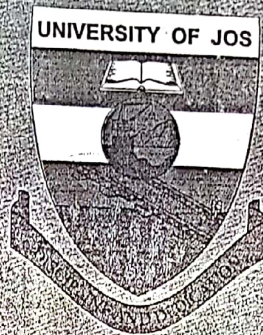


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*L. A. Hardy*

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## EDITORIAL

This edition of JES is as usual aimed at furthering the course of research and development in education. The articles which cover different facet of the Education enterprises are aim at facilitating and highlighting the inter-relatedness among various areas of education. They are either research findings or well researched theoretical papers.

We thank our numerous readers for their patronage as we look forward to more quality contributions in the future. HAPPY READING

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**Factors Influencing Effective Reading of French Textbooks Used in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin South Local Government Area Kwara State, Nigeria**

*A. Zeinhab. A., S. Abubakar & A. Bosede D.*

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**ABSTRACT**

Understanding what is read is essential to academic success in general and literacy development in particular. The aim of any textbook, especially French language textbooks for second language learners is to help readers improve their French language competence. This aim is defeated when students cannot read texts intended for them. Against this backdrop, this study examined the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic schools in Ilorin South L.G.A., Kwara State. All Upper Basic school students in Ilorin South Local Government Area constituted the population for this study. Ten (10) schools were randomly selected from the population. Ten (10) respondents were then selected from each school using the stratified random sampling technique, making it a total of one hundred (100) respondents. The instrument used for data collection was researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Factors Influencing the Effective Reading of French Textbooks in Upper Basic Schools Questionnaire (FIERFTUBSQ)". The statistical tools used in analyzing the data collected included the mean rating which was used to answer the research question one and the t-test which was used to test the two hypotheses. It was revealed that there was a significant difference in the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic school based on gender. It was also revealed that there was a

significant difference in the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic school based on school type. Based on the findings, it was recommended that French teachers should empower themselves with information on proficient reading and reading difficulties in order to evaluate the students and identify deficiencies in certain skills.

### Background to the Study

The role of language cannot be over-emphasized in a dynamic and progressive country like Nigeria where education is considered as an instrument 'par excellence' for effecting national development. More importantly, one cannot talk of globalization, technological breakthrough and economic progress without language, a communicative tool. Language plays a central role in the formation of the political, cultural, economic, professional developments and ethnic identities of the world. It is more than a tool for communication; it forms the basis of intercultural and international relationships. Language gives access to perspectives and viewpoints that might otherwise have remained inaccessible.

Meanwhile, the main channel of information flow is communication thereby making communication a pre-eminent factor in developmental efforts. If effective communication is the basis of development, then language related issues could not be toyed with since language enjoys the sine qua non position in communication. Furthermore, language proficiency is considered to be a human capital development instrument and one cannot ignore the fact that human capital development is a current need among Nigerians today.

Language serves two major functions in a nation's educational system; it serves as a subject on the curriculum and a medium of instruction. These two functions are not necessarily mutually exclusive as language may

function as situations demand. The place of language in Nigerian education and the importance of language study in the nation's educational process are recognized and clearly stated as follows in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (FGN, 2013):

Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion; and preservation of culture. Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools but a non-vocational elective at the senior secondary school. It has become expedient to take an objective look at the status and relevance of French language in Nigeria. French was introduced in very few institutions such as missionary and public schools or in the schools frequently attended by European children (Araromi & Igweike, 2002). There was evidence that the early missionaries taught French in some elite schools in 1859. For example, Kings College, Lagos and Government College, Ibadan served as one pioneering secondary schools where French was taught and studied (Adejo, 2004). Perhaps, the need for the study and learning of French may be as a result of the fact that Nigeria is surrounded by French speaking countries such as Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Thus in a way, Nigerians are like people on an English island surrounded by a sea of French speakers (Araromi, 2002 & Sonuga, 1995).

According to Moreau (2003), French is the second most frequently taught foreign language in the world and the most accessible institution for

the development of such skills in French is the school. In Nigeria's present educational policy, French is to be officially introduced to learners in Primary IV. Unfortunately, not only is the teaching of French completely absent at this level in public primary schools, it has also been observed that most Nigerian public secondary schools do not offer French, and those that do so lay a lot of emphasis on the use of textbooks. This implies that textbooks serve as the basis for most of the language input learners receive and the language practice that take place in the classroom. Most worrisome is the fact that after such exposure of students to French, they are still unable to use the language for meaningful communication. Realization of language objectives in education depends largely on learner's ability to read French language that serves as a school subject in Nigeria.

Reading is comprehension intended. This means that without comprehension, reading is reduced to a meaningless skill (Olajide, 2013). This is so because the essence of reading is to gain understanding or comprehend the text read. Thus, it implies that one of the goals of reading is to understanding and make a new connection to our life and world. There exist various models to reading especially in French language. Linguistic models see reading as an activity taking place in the mouth. To this school of thought, reading is mere interpretation of phonetic symbols. But Goodman (1987) presented reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, a process in which readers sample the text, make hypotheses, confirm or reject them and make new hypotheses. He concludes that interaction of the mind with the text enhances comprehension and not just mere interpretation of the language symbols in the mouth as held by the linguistic theory. Comprehension is at the centre of reading. Collins and Cheek (1999) described reading as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units and comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message. According to

Rubin (2002), reading is a total integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the affective, perceptual, and cognitive domains. Okebukola (2004) affirmed that through reading, humans have the tools to transmit knowledge to each succeeding generation; it allows one to listen to the wisdom and people of the ages. Reading is the access to language in education. As crucial as reading is to educational attainment, the skill is not primordial to Nigerian culture. Reading, which is the third skill in language learning, is viewed as a tool used in learning other subjects in the curriculum (Lawal, 1990) and as such, the crux of intellectual development of the individual (Olajide, 2013). Lawal (1999) established that a large proportion of Nigerian children live and grow up in homes without books while most children with learning disabilities have problems with reading and related language skills.

Research findings have shown that junior secondary school students may have difficulty with reading French textbooks for various reasons. Adams (1990) proposed that complexity of a language's orthography, writing or spelling system determines how difficult it is to read in that language. French has an alphabetical orthography, it is a complex or deep orthography that employs spelling pattern of several levels, letter-sound correspondence, syllables and morphemes. These orthographical patterns had to compete with structure and orthographic patterns of the reader's mother tongue which in most cases differ in all aspects.

It has been observed that there are many factors influencing the effective reading of French language in junior secondary schools as enumerated by researchers such as Araromi & Igweike (2002), which attributed lack of students concentration in the classroom, inability of the students to understand French words, lack of instructional materials (textbook, both audio and audio-visual materials), inadequate teachers, ineffective method of teaching, lack of control over the attitudes of students

and teachers and among others.

Teachers' methodology may also contribute to reasons why adolescent struggle with reading. Neal (2001) held the view that the kinds of instruction provided for struggling readers might also explain their limited improvement in reading. According to him, most often teachers tend to concentrate solely on the few children who are able to read relatively well and ignore those they regard as 'too dull' to read. Lawal (1990) corroborated Neal's position in his findings that many teachers often start their career without a good understanding and appreciation of the enormity of the reading task. He concludes that teacher training institutions particularly colleges of education have not made the teachers in Nigeria aware of their potential roles as initial, development and remedial reading instructors. Adams (1990) opined that students who are deficient in reading are able to memorize and recognize letters of the alphabet, identify vowels and consonants, and are also able to recognize and memorize simple one syllable words. He concludes that student fail to comprehend a text because it is composed of unfamiliar words having combination of letters.

Researchers have conducted studies on gender in the area of reading. Some of the studies highlighted the superiority of male over female while others emphasized that girls are better language learners than boys and some found that gender is irrelevant in reading (Llach & Gallego, 2012). Sallaba (2008) investigated the effect of students' gender on the process of reading comprehension and developing attitude towards reading. The study reveals differences between male and female students where the girls are shown to be better at reading comprehension than boys. Gender in the study was also found to affect attitude towards reading. Batter (1987) established differences between boys' and girls' attitude towards language learning activities. According to him, boys enjoy classroom activities at all levels (speaking, reading, writing and listening) but girls enjoy speaking activities

the most. Strickland and Marrow (2000) in their research involving boys and girls reported that females have consistently better scores than boys in test of verbal skills as well as those who require some types of memory and recall, but that males are better than the females in tasks involving arithmetic and manipulation and spatial relationship.

School factor is another predictor of students' academic achievement in school. The three major factors that constitute school factors are structures, composition and climate which in turns predict the academic success of students. Barry (2005) observed that the type of school whether public or private influences educational outcomes and academic achievement. Similarly, Blevins (2009) opined that children academic potentials are greatly determined by the environment (i.e. school environment) they are exposed to. This was collaborated by Agagu (1994) that the quality of education a child receives depends largely on the community in which he grows up and, the quality of school he or she attends. According to him, the quality of school is evident in its products and, in how well it can produce high potentials. To this regard, Barry concludes that a school can either open or close opportunities that can encourage and lead to academic achievement.

This brings to the fore the potential influence of school types on the reading achievement of students in the Nigerian educational setting. The issue of private schools students performing better than their counterparts in public schools has been generating a lot of controversies. The fact remains that Nigerian public schools are staffed with qualified and more experienced teachers; the sector is however bedeviled with incessant strikes and ill-funding. Murray (1999) in his findings on National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that progress do not indicate that private schools are superior to public schools. He argued further that advantaged

students do marginally better in public schools, while disadvantaged students do slightly better in private schools. He concluded that the difference is insignificant in either case.

Textbooks are teaching and learning materials that are most commonly used in every teaching and learning process. Although many innovative media have been developed to help the educators to teach in new ways. They are kind of printed materials that play important part in teaching and learning process. According to Tomlinson (1999), textbook is the learning material that is primarily used by teachers and students. For the students, textbook can be the guidance to organize their learning both inside and outside the classroom. It helps them to learn the material better, faster, clearer, and easier (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994).

The indigenization of French language teaching in Nigeria is perceptible in two facts:

- (i) The objectives of French language teaching in Nigerian secondary schools as laid down by the official curriculum for secondary education in the French subject;
- (ii) The overriding philosophy of French language textbooks (*On y va!*, *Nouvel Horizon*, *Trans Afrique*) have been recently adopted in pedagogic situations in Nigerian secondary schools. These textbooks are clearly in line with the philosophy of indigenization.

*On y va!*, *Nouvel Horizon*, *Trans Afrique* are the French language textbooks presently used in all secondary schools in Nigeria. Its aim is also to widen the scope of the learner's knowledge about French and the French speaking community (Federal Ministry of Education, 2001).

Many Nigerian students cannot read or speak French language before their enrollment in secondary schools. Oyinloye (2008) describes reading as language skill not naturally acquired as speaking but learnt. It is a skill whose mastery is facilitated by speaking as findings from Lawal (1990)

indicated that students read better in a language they can speak. Reading in French language is a problem to junior secondary school students. This problem increases daily in Nigerian schools as most students who could not read well in French language at primary school level transfer to secondary school that are ill-equipped to address their reading problems. Textbooks have been observed to be the major resource used in the Nigerian French language classroom in the Junior Secondary School (JSS). Those who are presently being taught French at this level do not demonstrate communicative proficiency in it. Yet, the stipulation of the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) that French is the second official language in Nigeria implies that learners are expected to be able to use the language for effective communication. It is assumed that an average Nigerian French student does not speak or read French because the textbooks used, which are a major resource in the Nigerian classroom at this level, may not have appropriate communication activities and exercises that may promote such communication. It is therefore necessary to assess the activities and exercises in the recommended French textbooks for Upper Basic students.

### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin South L.G.A, Kwara State. This study specifically examines:

- (a) factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic school in Ilorin South L.G.A.
- (b) factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic school based on gender,
- (c) factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic school based on school type.

## Research Questions

The following questions were answered in the study.

- (a) What are the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic schools in Ilorin South L.G.A?
- (b) What are the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic schools based on gender?
- (c) What are the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic schools based on school type?

## Hypotheses

The following are the research hypotheses;

Ho1 There is no significant difference in factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic schools based on gender.

Ho2 There is no significant difference in the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic schools based on school type.

## Methodology

Descriptive survey research type was adopted to carry out this study. All Upper Basic school students in Ilorin South Local Government Area constituted the population for this study. Ten (10) schools were randomly selected from the population. Ten (10) respondents were then selected from each school using the stratified random sampling technique to respond to the research instrument, making it a total of one hundred (100) respondents.

The instrument used for data collection was researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Factors Influencing the Effective Reading of French Textbooks in Upper Basic Schools Questionnaire (FIERFTUBSQ)". This questionnaire was divided into two sections; A and B. The section A of the

questionnaire provided information about the biodata of the respondents such as: sex, school type. And the section B of the questionnaire contained twenty (20) items which made up of statements on a four (4) point likert scale. The statistical tools used in analyzing the data collected included the mean rating which was used to answer the research question one and the t-test which was used to test the two hypothesis with the two corresponding research questions.

## RESULTS

Three research questions were generated; research question 1 was answered with the use of mean rating, while the remaining research questions 2 and 3 with corresponding hypotheses were tested with the use of the t-test statistical techniques.

Research Question 1: What are the factor influencing effective reading of French textbooks in Upper Basic schools in Ilorin South LGA.?

**Table 1: Ranking Order of Factors Influencing Effective Reading of French Textbooks in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin South LGA**

| Item No | Factors                                                                                    | Mean | Ranking          |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------------|
| 1.      | French is an interesting subject                                                           | 3.13 | 4 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 2.      | My French textbook is functional                                                           | 2.92 | 12 <sup>th</sup> |
| 3.      | I frequently make use of the French textbook                                               | 3.00 | 7 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 4       | The language in the textbooks are clear, readable and understandable                       | 2.84 | 15 <sup>th</sup> |
| 5       | The print is clear and bold enough for reading                                             | 3.12 | 5 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 6       | The French textbooks are easily accessible in the market                                   | 3.00 | 7 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 7       | The price of the textbook is affordable                                                    | 2.86 | 14 <sup>th</sup> |
| 8       | My French teacher uses textbook to teach French                                            | 3.17 | 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |
| 9       | I am always eager for the French lesson period                                             | 2.88 | 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| 10      | I always read French textbook during and after the French class                            | 2.52 | 16 <sup>th</sup> |
| 11      | My parent(s) bought French textbooks for me                                                | 2.41 | 18 <sup>th</sup> |
| 12      | We have French lesson more than twice in a week in my school                               | 2.99 | 9 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 13      | My school principal supervises us while in French class                                    | 2.01 | 20 <sup>th</sup> |
| 14      | My teacher is always encouraged by my attitude while in French class                       | 2.96 | 11 <sup>th</sup> |
| 14      | My French teacher corrected my reading abilities                                           | 3.22 | 1 <sup>st</sup>  |
| 16      | The French teaching class is very interesting                                              | 3.18 | 2 <sup>nd</sup>  |
| 17      | My French teacher uses different methods to motivate you in reading French                 | 3.09 | 6 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 18      | My French reading enhances and influences my academic performance                          | 2.97 | 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| 19      | There are many students learning French in the S.S.S. classes almost as the J.S.S. classes | 2.47 | 17 <sup>th</sup> |
| 20      | I will like to study French language in my higher education (University)                   | 2.15 | 19 <sup>th</sup> |

Table 2 indicates that 100 respondents participated in this study. The main factors influencing effective reading of French textbooks in Upper Basic schools in Ilorin South LGA. was that my French teacher corrected my reading abilities which has a mean score of 3.22 (1st), while The French teaching class is very interesting with a mean score of 3.18 comes 2nd, my French teacher uses textbook to teach French with mean score of 3.17 comes 3rd, French is an interesting subject which has a mean score of 3.13 was (4th), The print is clear, the print size and spacing is bold enough for reading of the learners which has a mean score of 3.12 was (5th), my French teacher uses different methods to motivate me in reading French which has a mean score of 3.09 was (6th), I frequently make use of the French textbook for French class and the French textbooks are easily accessible in the market which has a mean score of 3.00 was (7th), I offer French language more than twice in a week in my school which has a mean score of 2.99 was (9th), my

French reading enhances and influences my academic performance which has a mean score of 2.97 was (10th), my teacher is always encouraged by my attitude while in French class which has a mean score of 2.96 was (11th), my French textbook is functional which has a mean score of 2.92 was (12th), I am always eager for the French lesson period which has a mean score of 2.88 was (13th), The price of the book is affordable which has a mean score of 2.86 was (14th), The language in the textbooks are clear, readable and understandable which has a mean score of 2.84 was (15th), I always read French textbook during and after the French class which has a mean score of 2.52 was (16th). Other statements have mean score below the benchmark of 2.5.

### Hypotheses

Two research hypotheses were postulated in the course of this study, and were tested using the t-test at 0.05 alpha levels.

**HO1:** *There is no significant difference in the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic school based on gender.*

**Table 2: The t-test Analysis of Difference in the Factors Influencing the Effective Reading of French Textbooks Used in Junior Secondary School Based on Gender**

| Gender | No | Mean  | Std.  | Cal.t-Value | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Decision             |
|--------|----|-------|-------|-------------|----|-----------------|----------------------|
| Male   | 51 | 70.41 | 7.81  | 13.21       | 98 | 0.00            | $H_{01}$<br>Rejected |
| Female | 49 | 42.82 | 12.62 |             |    |                 |                      |
| P<0.05 |    |       |       |             |    |                 |                      |

Results on table 3 shows t-value = 13.21 with p-value =  $0.00 < 0.05$  alpha level of 0.05. Since 0.00 is lower than 0.05 alpha level, hypothesis one is rejected. This indicates that there was a significant difference in the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in junior secondary school based on gender. Male respondents with mean score of 70.41 is greater than mean score of female respondents which is 42.82. This finding supports that of Bielinski and Davidson (2001) and Boardman, Kosanovich, Murray, Robert, Vaughn & Wexter (2008) who found out that there was a significant difference in the factors influencing the effective reading of English Language in Upper Basic schools based on gender.

**HO2:** *There is no significant difference in the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in Upper Basic school based on school type.*

**Table 3: The t-test Analysis of Difference in the Factors Influencing the Effective Reading of French Textbooks Used in Upper Basic School Based on School Type**

| School Type | No | Mean  | Std.  | Cal.t-Value | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Decision                    |
|-------------|----|-------|-------|-------------|----|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Private     | 60 | 68.15 | 9.01  | 13.19       | 98 | 0.00            | H <sub>02</sub><br>Rejected |
| Public      | 40 | 40.00 | 12.31 |             |    |                 |                             |

P<0.05

Results on table 4 shows t-value = 13.19 with p-value =  $0.00 < 0.05$  alpha level of 0.05. Since 0.00 is lower than 0.05 alpha level, hypothesis two is rejected. This indicates that there was a significant difference in the factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks used in junior secondary school based on school type. This is in favour of respondents from private schools with mean score of 68.15 greater than mean score of 40.00 of respondents from public schools. This is in support of the findings of Bello (2011) who found that students of private schools performed better than their public school counterparts in reading comprehension.

### Conclusion

French language is only being learned in a few public and private primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Many Nigerian schools have no French teachers while some students did not have French textbooks due to insufficient fund, ignorance and unseriousness. To this fact, the researchers examined some factors influencing the effective reading of French textbooks in Nigerian secondary schools

## Recommendations

- a.) teachers should empower themselves with information on proficient reading and reading difficulties in order to evaluate the students and identify deficiencies.
- b.) learners should explore different forms of reading materials to boost their interest in reading.
- c.) parents should spend more time talking and reading with their children in order to enhance their language development. This would also spur their interest in books.
- d.) Parents should also work with teachers to know about their children's attitude to reading at school and how to help them.
- e.) Textbook Writers should concentrate and channel their writings to all categories of readers (that is independent, instructional and struggling Readers), as an understanding of one gives an in-depth understanding of the other.

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