

final examinations for senior secondary education, a candidate can only choose or register a minimum of eight and a maximum of nine subjects. Unfortunately, four of the subjects (English, General Mathematics, Business and Entrepreneurship, and Civics) are usually registered by default because they are compulsory. This implies that it would be extremely difficult for a student, particularly in the sciences, commerce, or even the humanities, to want to study French. In a way, the choice of French as a subject can now be left to those who are genuinely or specifically interested in a career in French at higher education levels.

It would be good if the government reconsiders or revises this policy by making French a compulsory subject because of its strategic importance. It is only a matter of time before the situation also has a negative impact on teachers.

Student Enrolment

Language policies in terms of their implications for student enrolment can be illustrated fairly well with the current reality in the French department of the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. As a general rule, students enroll in the University of Ilorin, as they do in all other universities in the country, with the aim of acquiring higher education.

In the course of this study, we observed that the number of enrolments for undergraduate program in the French department has been very inconsistent over the last five years. The information found at the university undergraduate students' portal reveals what we have in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Undergraduate Enrolment into French Program at University of Ilorin, 2019–23

Academic Year	Remedial Program	UTME	Direct Entry	Total Number of Students Admitted
2018/2019	1	15	6	22
2019/2020	1	11	4	16
2020/2021	3	17	3	23
2021/2022	1	10	2	13
2022/2023	0	24	2	26

Source: Table created by the author.

The table clearly shows that students' enrolment in French is not only discouraging when it is compared to other departments in the humanities but also inconsistent. In the same 2022/2023 academic year, for example, the University of Ilorin undergraduate portal reveals that the Department of History enrolled 272 students for its first year while the Department of French has only 24 students. Unfortunately, if the department fails consistently to attract students at the current rate, it will definitely not be too good for the future of French in the country.

The French Teachers

According to the NPE (2013), teachers generally have the responsibility to interpret and communicate the curriculum. By doing so, they ensure the effective use of the country's investment in education and act as role models for learners, passing on the values of society from generation to generation. One of the many objectives of education in Nigeria is to provide equal access to quality educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, both within and outside the formal school system. In addition to the current official status of French in Nigeria, this educational objective also seems to be in favor of French like any other subject when one considers where it emphasizes "the provision of equal access" NPE (2013, 14). Unfortunately, we still see low participation in French classes compared to other subjects in the same field of humanities. Although, the low rate of participation recorded in French classes in recent years is attributable to the current state of the French language, as specified in the sixth edition of the NPE (2013). It should be noted that citizens, that is, school owners, will often choose to invest in education for personal gain and advantage. The resulting effect may not be overly positive for French teachers, even if the quantity of their service is generally less when compared to other teachers who teach compulsory subjects.

While teachers of compulsory subjects may be struggling with fifty or more students, their French counterparts may sometimes not even boast of ten, which is just 20 percent of fifty. Perhaps it's not their making but the way the curriculum is designed in accordance with the national policy. The overall effect is that the French teacher is either redundant or underused, which one day could lead to his disengagement from the service. He could choose to resign because of excessive boredom or poor remuneration. Apart from the possibility of losing