

EFFECT OF COMPETENCY BASED LEARNING ON STUDENTS PERFORMANCE IN FRENCH IN PUBLIC JUNIOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BAYELSA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This research looked at the effects of competency-based education on students' French language skills in Bayelsa State's public middle schools. The investigation adopted a quasi-experimental strategy. The research includes four null hypothesis tests. Students from Bayelsa State's Public Junior High II were all included in the study's 1,289 participants. Ninety local second graders participated in the research. The data was gathered by administering the French Performance Test (TPT). The device was validated by French language specialists. The coefficient of dependability for this instrument is 0.71, therefore it can be safely used in the study. Both an independent samples t-test and an analysis of covariance were performed to assess statistical significance ($\alpha = 0.05$). The results showed that students of both sexes and from coeducational institutions benefited greatly from using a competency-based approach to education. Results suggest that junior highs in Bayelsa State should prioritise providing a French curriculum based on students' demonstrated ability to do so.

Keywords: Competency Based Learning, Discussion Method, Academic Performance, French etc.

INTRODUCTION

When employing a competency-based approach to teaching French, it is essential to track student progress. The very survival of the human race is at stake. Learning encompasses a variety of concurrent or sequential actions and behaviours within the framework of a conventional schooling system. Nwabuochi (2019) cites Hilgard and Bowser, who note that learning presents many difficulties, including (i) a shift in conduct, (ii) the maintenance of an association, and (iii) the impact of prior experience. Awotua-Efebo (2002) defines learning as "the process by which an individual undergoes a change as a result of gaining knowledge, skills, and other forms of competence" (p.). The process of learning involves a person's cerebral, physical, and emotional elements, and vice versa. Learning therefore has a cognitive component. This level includes a person's elusive inner workings. Internal processes used by a learner include perception, concepts, language acquisition, thought, memory, and intellectual capacity. Included are the entire information processing process and all of its structural, psychological, and physiological components. Learning has an affective component because the learner interacts with a complex emotional system while developing a repertoire of practical behaviours and abstract concepts. Such emotions have the potential to either speed up or slow the learner's progress. Emotions can be used to realise, improve, speed up, or slow down the learning process. Numerous psychomotor activities that are involved in learning can help it in the long run.

With its illustrious past, enviable supranational and international appeal, coordinated global legislative and administrative attention and care, enduring semantic richness, alluring rhythmical beauty, and undeniable magnetic pull for both academics and language lovers, it is no surprise that French language and culture classes are commonly offered in schools around the world. Its unique intrinsic and extrinsic traits also set it apart from the vast majority of modern languages. All of these factors, and more, lead to the deep and abiding affection that more over 300 million native speakers and language aficionados have for it (Ojo, 2001).

Despite its derivation, French has provided a sense of belonging to its speakers in a way that few other languages have. The French language has been carefully nurtured from its birth, and as a

result, it has gained and displayed distinctive features, such as an uncanny capacity to convey ideas exactly as they should be understood. These are only some of the many reasons why English has become the de facto language of choice for international accords. Together, these factors have made French the de facto language of international communication today (Ojo, 2001). The majority of the population of Nigeria does not speak French. Because of its proximity to other French-speaking countries, French is extremely important to Nigeria's social, political, economic, and international ties. The main purpose of revising the French curriculum was to enhance secondary school French instruction and student achievement. Courses in French for students in middle school and high school can be found here.

Many various approaches of education can be applied. Education can be both active and passive. One such proactive approach is competency-based education. Competency-based learning, as defined by Gervaise (2016), is an approach to instruction, assessment, and reporting that stresses the importance of students' demonstration of knowledge of course objectives. This method is very different from the norm in the classroom. Skills like critical thinking, questioning, creativity, self-aspiration, and model construction are more easily implemented when taught via a competency-based approach. Competency-based education emphasises group work and curricular adherence among its students. Self-directed learning, as defined by Confidence (2017), is an approach to education in which students are prompted to acquire knowledge and skills outside of traditional classrooms.

Hall and Kremer (2014) state that the term "competency-based education" can be interchanged with several others. Several different ways of focusing on what students need to learn are characterised by different labels, such as standards-based, outcome-based, performance-based, proficiency-based, and mastery-based. According to a 2018 infographic from the American Council on Education, competency-based learning is a strategy for training students in the development of actual talents as opposed to generic knowledge. Nguyen and Losec (2016) argue that students benefit from competency-based learning because it allows them to move at their own pace towards subject mastery. It's a way of learning that helps people mature more quickly and learn the skills they need to do their jobs. The following are associated with competency-based education, per Gervaise (2016):

Because it tailors its suggestions for further study to each student's particular strengths and weaknesses, it can be thought of as either diagnostic or prescriptive:

- i) Students are encouraged to develop a sense of belonging by being given options in learning resources and delivery styles based on how much they identify with other students in their cohort or group and the programme or curriculum.
- ii) Since it was designed with several learning strategies in mind, the content can be applied in a number of different ways, depending on the needs of the individual student.
- iii) This allows kids to tailor their education to what interests them the most.
- iv) Each student can receive tailored messages and alerts, ensuring they receive information that is both current and relevant to their needs.
- v) Competency-based education gives students with helpful feedback, guidance, and opportunities to practise in order to help them grow in their knowledge.
- vi) A competency-based education encourages students to take responsibility for their own growth, to think critically and creatively, and to create real-world events from theoretical concepts. Ideas, approaches, and methods that have been tested and found to be effective are more likely to be widely adopted.

Skills-building lessons that are delivered over the phone. According to Orobor (2009), collective intelligence occurs when multiple people work to build upon each other's knowledge about a given subject. According to Izuagba (2012), this is a method in which students cooperate in small groups to complete assigned tasks. The premise is that all learners have something to offer. It places the focus on the student as an individual with a genuine curiosity for and interest in their community. Using the discussion technique with underachievers, however, may lead to inferiority complexes,

aversion to the subject, and, in the worst case scenario, student attrition or mediocre performance, as pointed out by Anyanwu in Izuagba (2012). Victor-Ishikaku (2018) argues that students who are naturally articulate and articulate tend to overshadow those who are merely ordinary or below. When the goal of schooling is to acquire a particular set of abilities, this is clearly not the case. Kolawole and Oyadonghan (2014) argue that competency-based learning allows students to learn at their own speed without sacrificing quality. Therefore, competency-based education fosters learning flexibility, skill development, and the possibility of individualised instruction

Competency-based education, according to Oyedirun (2016), gives students the tools they need to settle disagreements over what they've learned. Mushin district pupils in Lagos State who have access to competency-based education fared better than their peers in English as a result. Okachukwu (2017) investigated how competency-based education affected pupils' proficiency in mathematics in the Orlu West Local Government Area of Imo State. Academic outcomes for students who were exposed to competency-based learning were shown to be significantly different from those of students who were exposed to the lecture technique. Local male and female students who were exposed to the method showed no discernible performance differences. Ogunyemi (2017) looked at the effects of competency-based education on students' grades in Osun State. The author of the study claims that there were no discernible variations in student performance between all-male and all-female institutions. The effects of competency-based education on the academic performance of biology students in the Zaria Metropolitan Area were investigated by Ahmadu (2013). There was a major difference between the experimental and control groups, as shown by the results of the study. In the control group, neither men nor women performed significantly differently from one another.

Learning through inactivity has been proved to be counterproductive, while active learning has been shown to improve knowledge retention and application. When students aren't engaged in the learning process, they aren't engaged in the learning materials, and they don't have a positive attitude towards academic pursuits, among other things. They lead to demotivation in the classroom and perhaps school dropout. On the other hand, an active learning strategy involves keeping your natural curiosity alive, maintaining your discipline, and taking an interest in what you're studying. A competency-based approach to education aims to boost students' ability to pick up French. The goal is to help students learn more efficiently and rapidly by giving them the best possible start. Children who are ready for school are those who can concentrate properly.

Numerous academics have studied how competency-based education alters the dynamics of the traditional lecture hall. Oyedirun's (2016) research on the effects of competency-based education on students' grades found positive results. Ahmadu (2013) found that in the Zaria Metropolitan Area, students majoring in biology saw substantial improvements in their performance after adopting a competency-based approach to education. Ogunyemi (2017) looked at the effects of competency-based education on students' grades in Osun State. The studies show that competency-based education has a major impact on student success statewide. Competency-based education did raise pupils' arithmetic scores, according to research conducted by Okachukwu (2017) in the Orlu West Local Government Area of Imo State. Bayelsa, a state whose official language is French, was not the subject of these inquiries. This study analysed the impact of competency-based education on students' French grades at the intermediate level in public schools in Bayelsa State.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research is to analyse how teaching to competencies affects students' proficiency in French as a foreign language while they are in junior high school in Bayelsa State. The specific goals of the study were to:

- i) Examine the impact of competency-based education on French student performance.
- ii) Examine the pre- and post-competency-based training French grades of the Boys School's experimental and control groups.

iii) Evaluate the influence of competency-based education on the academic outcomes of French-speaking female students attending schools for girls by comparing the results of the experimental and control groups.

iv) Analyse the academic gains made by students in the experimental and control groups after receiving French instruction based on demonstrated competence.

Hypotheses

The following set of hypotheses was tested during the inquiry.

1. Students' mean performance in French class is about the same whether teachers use a discussion-based learning strategy or a competency-based one.
2. Secondary school boys who were taught French through either the conversation method or competency-based learning performed similarly on post-tests.
3. Results showed no significant difference between females' high school students who learned French through the conversation method and those who learned the language through a competency-based approach.
4. In secondary schools with mixed-gender student bodies, students' proficiency in French did not differ according to whether they were exposed to the language through a discussion-based or competency-based curriculum.

Methods

A quasi-experimental approach was taken for this investigation. When a regulated experiment is out of the question, researchers turn to this method. When conducting an experiment to determine a cause and effect is impossible, Obilor (2010) recommended using a quasi-experimental research approach instead. Researchers can examine the impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable by dividing participants into experimental and control groups. The technique used is appropriate for the stated goal of the study, which is to determine whether or not competency-based education improves students' academic performance in Bayelsa State's public junior high schools

UBE, Yenagoa, 2019 found that 18,289 students from Bayelsa State's public junior secondary schools 2 were included in their sample. The 2018-2019 school year was JSS2 for this group of kids. A total of 90 students participated in the study, 30 each from Epe High School (located in Opolo), St. Jude's Girls Secondary School (located in Amarata), and Bishop Dimeari Grammar School. The study's sample was selected using a simple random sampling process. That way, everyone in the population has an equal shot at making the cut. The "French Performance Test (RPT)" was invented by the researcher. A comparison was made between the two tests. After administering a pretest to the students selected for the study, the researcher instructed them for six weeks (three times a week) in order to collect data. Students from each institution were randomly split into an experimental group and a control group. Both groups were taught, however the experimental group was taught using a competency-based method while the control group was taught using a discussion-based approach. Native French speakers validated the accuracy and utility of the instrument. To determine the instrument's trustworthiness, we employed the Kuder-Richardson 21. The instrument's reliability for this investigation was calculated to be 0.71, which is quite high. We used the t-test and the ancova in SPSS at the 0.05 level of significance to evaluate the null hypotheses.

Results

Hypotheses One

There was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores of students in the experimental and control groups who were exposed to French.

Table 1: A Summary for French Students

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig	Partial Eta
Corrected Model	8464.311	4	2116.08	25.004	.000	.243
Intercept	1971.6132	1	1971.6132	23.297	.000	.422
Pre-test	334.56	1	334.56	3.953	.000	.521
Treatment	2893.4281	1	2893.4281	34.189	.000	.072
Error	22342.512	264	84.631			
Total	10522.136	269				
Corrected Total	34752.47	268				

Adjusting R² to .231 yields a value of 248.
 (F(1/264) = 34.189; p < .05)

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed on treatment outcome data, and the results are summarised in Table 1. F(1/264) = 34.189; p .05 indicates that students' French test results were significantly improved as a result of the intervention. It is not possible to accept the null hypothesis that therapy had no main influence on students' French skills.

Hypothesis Two

There was no statistically significant difference between post-test results on the French language between the experimental and control groups of male secondary school students.

Table 2. T-test findings comparing post-test mean scores between the two groups of male students are displayed

Group	n	\bar{x}	S	Df	Cal.t	Sig (2-tailed)	Level of Significance
Experimental	23	64.12	6.08				
Control	22	49.83	5.88	43	8.166	0.00	0.05

Table 2 displays the results of a t-test performed on independent samples to test the null hypothesis. By comparing the post-test mean scores and standard deviations of the two groups, we find that the male students in the experimental group fared better (mean: 64.12, SD: 6.08) than their counterparts in the control group (mean: 49.83, SD: 5.88). Table 2 shows that the t-value is 8.166, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative. The results of this hypothesis testing suggest that competency-based education has a substantial effect on the academic success of male students studying the French language.

Hypothesis Three

There was no statistically significant difference between post-test scores for women in the experimental and control groups.

Table 3 displays the results of a t-test comparing the mean differences in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups of female students.

Group	n	\bar{x}	S	Df	Cal. t	Sig (2-tailed)	Level of Significance
Experimental	23	69.73	6.67				
Control	22	52.58	5.94	43	8.562	0.00	0.05

Table 3 displays the outcomes of an investigation using the independent sample t-test to determine if the null hypothesis should be rejected. Compared to the control group, the average and standard deviation on the post-test for the experimental group of female students is 69.73 and 6.67, respectively. The t-value (8.562) in Table 3 is significantly different from zero, as denoted by the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is preferred above the null hypothesis as the most plausible explanation. This hypothesis suggests that competency-based education has a significant effect on the academic achievement of female students studying French.

Hypothesis Four

Students in both the experimental and control groups showed no significant differences on the French post-test administered at coed secondary schools.

Table 4. Students in the experimental and control groups who both attend mixed-gender schools have their post-test mean scores compared

Groups	n	\bar{x}	S	Df	Cal.t	Sig (2-tailed)	Level of Significance
Experimental	15	67.98	6.43				
Control	15	53.61	5.96	28	5.358	0.00	0.05

The t-test findings for rejecting the null hypothesis are shown in Table 4. Coeducational students in the experimental group had post-test averages and standard deviations of 67.98 and 6.43, while students in the control group had means and standard deviations of 53.61 and 5.96. The t-value of (5.358) in Table 4 is significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is preferred above the null hypothesis as the most plausible explanation. The findings of this study provide credence to the idea that students' ability to learn French in coed settings might benefit greatly from a competency-based education.

Analysis of Results

Results showed that students' academic French improved dramatically after participating in competency-based learning. Studying alone allows students to set their own pace, utilise a variety of helpful materials, identify areas of weakness and create strategies to overcome them, and ultimately succeed more in their French studies. This research lends credence to Oyidirun's (2016) claim that CBL improves academic outcomes for students. Male secondary school pupils' performance in French improved dramatically after receiving competency-based instruction. Competency-based education is advantageous since it allows students to study at their own pace. It's a good way to get pupils to try out new approaches to learning. Students in a competency-based learning setting also have the opportunity to work together on group projects that reinforce their understanding of course material. According to these results, CBL does have a significant impact on students' biology scores in the Zaria Metropolis, as claimed by Ahmadu (2013).

The results of the study indicated that the implementation of competency-based learning significantly improved the French-language proficiency of female secondary school students. This result demonstrated how students can assess their own progress and learn more about their own learning strengths and weaknesses through a competency-based education. Competency-based education also empowers students to take charge of their own learning and development by requiring them to demonstrate mastery of skills and knowledge gained from a variety of sources. These findings lend credence to Ogunyemi's (2017) claim that competency-based education has a

profound impact on students' scholastic development. The results show that a competency-based approach to teaching improves students' French skills considerably. Therefore, the best in students is brought out through competency-based learning since they are given the opportunity to generate a variety of solutions to environmental concerns. Okachukwu (2017) reports that after implementing a competency-based curriculum in the Orlu West Local Government Area of Imo State, students' performance on standardised mathematical tests improved.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study convinced the author that educating boys and girls together in coed schools in Bayelsa State would benefit from adopting a competency-based curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended as follows:

1. To help pupils reach their full potential, secondary schools should emphasise competency-based education.
2. The benefits of competency-based education must be made known to high school students.
3. Mentoring enhances educational settings. In the context of competency-based learning, this will provide students with an invaluable opportunity to get professional experience.
4. It is essential to provide the resources for competency-based learning.
5. Conventional teaching methods should take a back seat to competency-based learning and other innovative initiatives that foster students' originality.

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