



Foreign Language Anxiety and Indigenous Language Competence as Predictors of Junior Secondary School Two Students' Achievement in French in Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo

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Abstract. This study explored Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and its consequential effects on the achievement of French learners. It also examined how Mother Tongue Proficiency (MTP) could affect achievement in a foreign language. Junior Secondary School 2 students from six (6) schools were selected as participants. The instruments used were Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire ($r = .72$), Yoruba Language Proficiency Test ($r = .75$) and French Language Achievement Test ($r = .80$). Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage scores, mean and standard deviation as well as the inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that foreign language anxiety had a negative relationship with students' achievement in French language while mother tongue proficiency had a positive relationship with it. The joint contribution of the two independent variables to students' achievement in French language was significant. Also, each of the variables had relative contributions to students' achievement in French language with Mother Tongue Proficiency being a variable with a stronger prediction power. It was therefore recommended that the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years of schooling. Also, French Language teachers should fabricate means of reducing foreign language anxiety among learners.

Keywords: Achievement in French language, Foreign Language anxiety, Indigenous language competence, Predictors

1. Introduction

The French language is an important world language. Onyemelukwe (1995) in the article published by Kolawole (2015) "observed that Nigeria needs the

knowledge of French so as to have a healthy relation with the francophone neighbors. "In the same vein, Igonor (2011) in the article published by Kolawole (2015) opined that "... for Nigeria to enter a relation of mutual benefits with these nations, it is imperative, at least to some extent, for her to communicate with these countries in their own official language - French". The geographical location of Nigeria justifies the adoption of French language, so as to foster the relationship between the bordered countries in achieving the development of the nation in all spheres of life.

Ojo (2012) further stresses the importance of French language to Anglophone Africans in this way: "it is no longer a secret that many highly placed Anglophone Africans in politics, business, academics as well as on diplomatic and professional assignments have been shamefully embarrassed, psychologically traumatized and depressingly humiliated in several locations and situations. These happen very often in international organizations, forums, meetings, immigration and custom posts, hotels, banks, restaurants, shops and other venues in countries in which communication and international relations are compulsorily conducted in French.

This traumatizing experience result from the inability of such Non-Francophone Africans to communicate in French, because of either the lack of opportunities to have learnt French earlier in life or the poor quality of the teaching of French that they had received from their French teachers or because they simply did not show the required interest in learning French when the opportunity was readily available to them. It must, however be admitted that the above excuses might not necessarily be laid at the door steps of individuals so negatively affected by their lack of ability to speak the French language. They are traceable for example, in Nigeria, just as in many Anglophone African Countries, to the poor policy of

the country's successive government on the teaching of French and other foreign languages.

Foreign language anxiety has been the focus of increased research in the last two decades, and of the four traditional language skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) involved in such studies, the research has traditionally concentrated on speaking anxiety as its main component (Horwitz, 2001, Lucas 1984, Phillips 1992, Price 1991, Woodrow 2006). Researchers have also begun to investigate more specific types of anxiety in relation to foreign language learning, and pertaining to different skill areas: foreign language writing anxiety (Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert 1999; Daly and Miller, 1975), foreign language reading anxiety (Saito, Garza, and Horwitz, 1999), and foreign language listening comprehension anxiety (Kim, 2000; Vogely, 1998).

Zheng (2008) sees language anxiety as the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language. Similarly, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope in Zheng (2008) conceptualized foreign language anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning, arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. It is that which impedes (one's) ability to perform successfully in a foreign language class Varro (2015).

Few people can appear equally intelligent, sensitive, witty, and so on when speaking a second language as when speaking their first; this disparity between how we see ourselves and how we think others see us has been my consistent explanation for language learners' anxiety. To deny the reality of foreign language anxiety is illogical as well as insensitive to the experiences and needs of many language learners and teachers. (Horwitz, 2000)

Language teachers have observed, on numerous occasions the apprehension and discomfort, experienced by many students who are attempting to acquire and produce a foreign language. This nervousness or anxiety frequently seems to become particularly aggravated when students are required to speak in class, and during exams and tests (Wilson 2006).

Many learners express their inability and sometimes even acknowledge their failure in learning a second language. These learners may be good at learning other skills and sciences, but when it comes to learning another language, they claim to have a 'blockhead' against it (Nadeem, Ali, Maqbool, and Zaidi, 2012).

A recent review of research reports on language and literacy concludes that becoming literate and fluent in one's first language is important for overall language and cognitive development, as well as academic achievement (Ball, 2010). Children gain a better self-concept and have a strong sense of their own identity. Such children usually achieve better in school and life than children who are forced to learn in an unknown, strange language (Ball, 2010). More so, it is very unfortunate that the practice of education in Nigeria is inarguably different from the approved standardized and laid out principles in the National Policy on Education.

The National Policy on Education emphasizes the use of the language of the immediate community/environment as instruction in teaching children in preschools.

Section 2(14) (c) on policy document stipulates that government shall ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, NPE, (2013) the government recognizes the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction, national cohesion and preservation of culture. The policy mandates that every child shall be taught in the mother tongue or language of the immediate community in the first three years of basic education. The child learns faster, develops healthy personality and has a sense of belonging when the communication of quality of instruction is carried out using the mother tongue (Nsafor, 1998).

Using another language rather than the mother tongue as a medium of instruction impairs the development of the child's personality and ability (Olanrewaju, 2006). However, it is so pitiable that reverse is the case in Nigeria, our mother languages are being despised and relegated and we lost our basic language competence to this disdain; hence we have foreign language anxiety and mother tongue incompetence as two pertinacious factors to combat with, in the journey of achieving excellence in learning French language in Nigerian schools.

2. Statement of Problem

Language teachers have observed, on numerous occasions the apprehension and discomfort experienced by many students who are attempting to acquire and produce foreign language. This nervousness or anxiety frequently seems to become particularly aggravated when students are required to speak in class, and during exams and tests. Many learners express their inability and sometimes even

acknowledge their failure in learning a second language. On the other hand, Mother tongues in Nigerian society today have been greatly despised and trampled upon and foreign languages especially English language has been over esteemed. Hence, children learn foreign language first and thereby loose inherent ability sourced in the mother tongue. The calamity that this has brought upon our education is that children cannot actually speak the foreign language as the native speakers and they do not have the mastery of their own mother tongue, therefore, positioning Nigerian language students unbalanced; not proficient in both mother tongue and foreign languages. This study therefore explored Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and its consequential effects on the achievement of French learners. It also examined how Mother Tongue Proficiency (MTP) could affect achievement in a foreign language.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

- What relationship exists between the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) and students' achievement in French language?
- What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language?

5. Results

Research Question One: What relationship exists between the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) and students' achievement in French language?

Table 1.1: Relationship exists between the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) and students' achievement in French language

Variables	Students' achievement in French language	Foreign language anxiety	Mother tongue proficiency
Students' achievement in French language	1		
Foreign language anxiety	-.023 (.748)	1	
Mother tongue proficiency	.251 (.000)	.056 (.432)	1
N	200	200	200
Mean	10.25	40.86	13.05
Standard Deviation	3.87	8.87	3.00

Table 1.1 shows the relationship that exists between the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) and students' achievement in French language. The result indicates that while foreign language anxiety ($r = -.023$) had a negative relationship with students' achievement in French language, mother tongue proficiency ($r = .251$) had a positive relationship with it.

This implies that mother tongue proficiency was directly related to achievement while foreign language anxiety was inversely related.

- What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language?
- Which of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) would better predict students' achievement in French language?

4. Research Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. This is suitable for the study since the researcher could not directly control the independent variables because their manifestations were already in existence. The sampling procedure that was used for this research work is the simple random sampling. The sample size consists of two hundred (200) French language students who have Yoruba language as their mother tongue from Junior Secondary School 2 of selected Private Secondary Schools in Atiba Local Government in Oyo town of Oyo State. In this study, the population comprised of French language students who have Yoruba language as their mother tongue and are of Junior Secondary School 2 in selected Private secondary schools in Atiba Local Government Area of Oyo Town in Oyo State. Three instruments were used in this study. These are: Foreign Language Anxiety, (FLA): Questionnaire, Mother Tongue Proficiency (MTP): Yoruba language proficiency Test (YLPT) and French Learner's Achievement (FLA): Achievement Test in French Language (ATFL)

In other words, the more students are proficient in their mother tongue, the more their achievement in French language increased and vice versa. Also, the more students are anxious about learning French as a foreign language, the less their achievement in French language and vice versa.

Research Question Two: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language?

Table 1.2: Summary of Regression Analysis of the joint contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language

Model 1 R = .251 R Square = .063 Adjusted R Square = .053 Std. Error of the Estimate = 3.767					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	187.731	2	93.866	6.614	.002 ^b
Residual	2795.769	197	14.192		
Total	2983.500	199			

Table 1.2 shows the joint contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language, using the multiple regression analysis.

The result indicates that the joint contribution of the independent variables to students' achievement in French language was significant ($F_{(2, 197)} = 6.614$; Adj. $R^2 = .053$; $p = .002 < .05$).

This implies that the two independent variables when pulled together contributed significantly to students' achievement in French language.

The result also indicates an Adj. $R^2 = .053$, which implies that 5.3% variance in students' achievement in French language was due to the joint contribution of the two independent variables and that the remaining 94.7% variance was due to other variables not included in this model.

Research Question Three: What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language?

Table 1.3: Summary of Regression Analysis of the relative contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Rank
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	5.882	1.667		3.528	.001	
1 ForeignLanguageAnxiety	.004	.030	.009	.128	.898	2 nd
MotherTongueProficiency	.323	.089	.250	3.622	.000	1 st

Table 1.3 shows the relative contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language, using the standardized coefficient beta weight. The result indicates that foreign language anxiety ($\beta = .009$) and mother tongue proficiency ($\beta = .250$) contributed relatively to achievement in French language. This implies that the variables individually contributed to achievement in French language.

Research Question Four: Which of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother

tongue proficiency) would better predict students' achievement in French language?

Table 1.3 shows the rank of the relative contribution of the two independent variables to students' achievement in French language, using the standardized coefficient beta weight. The result indicates that mother tongue proficiency ($\beta = .250$) had a higher beta weight than foreign language anxiety ($\beta = .009$). This implies that mother tongue proficiency has a stronger prediction power than foreign language anxiety, hence, mother tongue proficiency is the variable that would better predict students' achievement in French language.

6. Discussion of findings

The relationship that exists between the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) and students' achievement in French language.

The first research question investigated the relationship that exists between the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) and student's achievement in French language. The findings reveal that mother tongue proficiency was directly related to achievement while foreign language anxiety was inversely related. In other words, the more students are proficient in their mother tongue, the more their achievement in French language increased and vice versa. Also, the more students are anxious about learning French as a foreign language, the less their achievement in French language and vice versa.

This result is in line with Obinna-Akakuru, Maduagwu et al (2019) whose findings revealed that foreign language anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, anxiety of French classes and fear of tests as variables, which increases students' anxiety in French language learning. The result indicated that there was a significant relationship between anxiety and the academic achievement of secondary school students in French language.

Similarly, this finding agrees with Somia (2010) who found that test- anxiety decreases attention span, memory and concentration, then leads to low academic performance and Waseem & Jibeen (2013) who found out that high school students with high test-anxiety had a poor school performance. This is also true for Wilson (2006) and Souad (2001) who found that foreign language anxiety decreases attention span, memory and concentration, then leads to low academic achievement.

The joint contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language

The second research question investigated the joint contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language. The findings reveal that the two independent variables when pulled together contributed significantly to students' achievement in French language. The result also indicates an Adj. $R^2 = .053$, which means that

5.3% variance in students' achievement in French language was due to the joint contribution of the two independent variables and that the remaining 94.7% variance was due to other variables not included in this model.

The relative contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency) to students' achievement in French language

The third research question investigated the relative contribution of the independent variables (foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency). The findings reveal that foreign language anxiety ($\beta = .009$) and mother tongue proficiency ($\beta = .250$) contributed relatively to achievement in French language. This implies that the variables individually contributed to achievement in French language.

The most predictive to measure student's achievement between Foreign Language Anxiety and Mother Tongue Proficiency

The fourth research question investigated the most predictive to measure students' achievement between Foreign Language Anxiety and Mother Tongue Proficiency. This implies that mother tongue proficiency has a stronger prediction power than foreign language anxiety, hence, mother tongue proficiency is the variable that would better predict students' achievement in French language.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- The National Language Educational Policy (that states that students should be raised using their mother tongues) should be put to practice in Nigerian Secondary Schools.
- Teachers of French language should make reducing tensions/anxieties during the process of teaching and learning their basic role. Teachers should come up with strategies that bring French language closer to the students than it used to be and not just theories but practical, practice to enhance communicative competence.
- Instructional techniques such as role playing, simulations and games should be adopted in teaching French language in order to create an enabling learning environment free of tension and unnecessary stress so as to avoid anxiety among students.

- Assessment in French language should be well planned and the students put into consideration during such planning to avoid undue stress which triggers anxiety.

8. Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that foreign language anxiety and mother tongue proficiency are two inversely related independent variables that have joint contribution and when pulled together contributed significantly to students' achievement in French language.

Also, when these two independent variables (Foreign Language Anxiety and Mother Tongue Proficiency) are ranked mother tongue proficiency has a stronger prediction power than foreign language anxiety, hence, mother tongue proficiency is the variable that would better predict students' achievement in French language.

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