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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Parental Attitude as a Predictor of Student's Motivation and Interest in Learning French Language

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Abstract

The increase in economic globalization has created the need for the promotion of foreign languages in Nigeria. As an official second language in Nigeria, the French language has not received the desired attention in the country's educational system as most students show less motivation and interest in learning the French language. Perhaps, insinuations suggest a widespread negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of the French language in the school system. Thus, the primary objective of the present study was to explore parental attitudes as a factor that could predict the variation in student's motivation and interest in learning the French language. The study's participants included adults identified as parents, and they were randomly pooled from different locations in Kogi State, Nigeria. They completed a self-report measure to ascertain their overall attitude towards the French language. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and the simple regression analysis revealed that parental attitude significantly predicted students' motivation and interest in learning French. The study concluded that parent's attitude is an essential determinant of students' motivation and interest in learning the French language.

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Introduction:-

The contemporary society is increasingly interconnected through the processes of globalization, and proficiency in more than one language is an essential aspect of today's business, trade, diplomacy, and the promotion of international cooperation, mutual understanding, and respect (The Center for Applied Linguistics, 2021). Foreign language learning and teaching entails the teaching or learning a non-native language different from its original environment (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). Foreign languages have assumed a permanent stay in many African countries, including Nigeria (Asadu, 2018). The purpose of learning a foreign language is to acquire competence in communicating in other languages (Akanbi & Ndidi, 2020). The knowledge of a foreign language provides access to a perspective other than one's own, improves the capacity to understand connections across content areas, and promotes an interdisciplinary perspective while gaining intercultural orientations. It equips the learner with the opportunity to acquire linguistic and social knowledge of other nations, especially in increasing globalization. The advantages of learning foreign languages are growing as the world becomes globalized, and bilingualism is becoming an essential skill in contemporary society (Kendall, 2020). Thus, becoming proficient in other languages provides a substantial advantage for career advancement. Perhaps, the teaching and learning of foreign languages include incorporating such languages' linguistic and cultural aspects (Mkenda & Jebet, 2021). Thus, it is essential to become proficient in other languages. For individuals, research points to the substantial cognitive benefits of

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language learning while knowledge of more than one language provides a considerable advantage for career advancement.

In Nigeria, English language as a foreign language has been accorded priority in the educational system as a second language (Afolayan, 2015; Ajibola, 2010; Ezekwesili & Chinedu, 2019; Fasanmi, 2011; Idogho, 2018; Mustapha, 2012; Nnyigide & Anyaegbu, 2020; Omidire & Adeyemo, 2015; Owolewa & Jimoh, 2018; Teilanyo, 2009), and have assumed the preferred language for communication. However, insinuation suggests that not many people are fully aware that English is not the only foreign language considered a second foreign language in Nigeria. Thus, other foreign languages have received less attention in Nigeria due to poor policy implementation and unfavorable attitudes towards teaching and learning (Olakunle & Yinusa, 2017).

French language occupies the status of a foreign language in Nigeria and is an official second language (Adewuyi et al., 2015; Maxwell Olakunle Araromi, 2018; Babatunde, 2016; Lawal, 2020). This comes after the announcement by the government of Nigeria in 1996 (Igboanusi & Pütz, 2008). Consequently, French has been thought of as a subject in the educational system of Nigerians for many decades. Thus, the French language has been part of the academic curriculum in Nigeria and a compulsory subject at the lower educational level. This subject emerged as a result of the necessity to provide foreign language to learners. Perhaps, proficiency in the French language may serve as a pathway to human and economic empowerment.

Consequently, the French language in Nigeria's educational system aims to equip learners with multilingual ability critical in socio-economic development. Also, the place of the French language is implicated in international communication and diplomacy, including regional and global integration and cultural sustainability. Thus, exposure to the French language provides insight into the French way of life. The fundamental objective of teaching and learning the French language at the secondary level in Nigeria is to facilitate interaction with our French-speaking neighbors. The National Curriculum for Junior Secondary School (2001) identified French language proficiency, oral presentation, and written expression as the primary purpose of learning the subject. However, teaching and learning of French language in Nigeria have been fraught with numerous challenges, including instructional materials, learning environment, pedagogical proficiency, lack of motivation (Okoedion, 2019; Onah, 2019). Although research looking at students' eagerness to study the French language in Nigeria is scarce, most authors contend that students' attitude is essential in learning French. For example, Araromi (2013) found that attitude determined the variation in the knowledge about French and that area of specialization influenced the attitudes. Perhaps attitudes towards the French language in Nigeria's lower educational level are in the negative direction (Alufohai, 2019), and the situation is pervasive across gender, age and status. Balluwa and Ishaku (2017) noted that the attitudes of Nigerians towards the French language are significantly influenced by inadequate knowledge of the importance of French as an international language. Perhaps, they assume French as a waste of time, thereby affecting the interest of their children. The present study aims to examine the attitudes of parent's students towards French and its consequent outcome on students' motivation and interest.

Attitude is a positive or negative evaluation of objects or situations. Attitudes are learned just as every other thing is learned, and attitude, once known, can influence behavior even when the acquired attitude is inconsistent with our expected attitude. Attitude can be examined in three components, cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. The cognitive part is the belief, knowledge of an attitude object, and the affective component is the emotional or feelings toward an attitude object. The behavioral feature is the action or response toward an attitude object. Thus, parent's knowledge about the French language would affect their emotion and consequent supportive behavior towards their ward's learning of French in school. This could negatively affect student's motivation and interest in the French language classroom. Thus, the primary objective of the current study is to investigate parent's attitudes towards the French language as a determinant of student's motivation and interest in the French language.

Given the study's objective, it is hypothesized that parent's attitudes towards the French language would significantly influence student's motivation and interest in the French language.

Method:-

The current study is quantitative, and a cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The survey population includes parents whose children are in primary schools and junior classes in secondary schools in Kogi State. Parents in this study comprised biological parents, guardians, or adoptive parents. A total of one hundred and thirty-six parents were approached in different locations across Kogi State between July and September 2021. Those who passed the

inclusion criteria were asked to participate in the study. Perhaps, the study's objective was revealed, and they were equally informed that participation in the survey was solely voluntary. The study instrument was given to one hundred and twenty-eight persons who consented to partake in the study. In all, one hundred and thirteen (113) copies of the instrument were appropriately filled and retrieved and subjected to statistical analysis.

Measures:-

Parents' attitude towards the French language was measured with a scale developed by the researcher and designed to ascertain parents' positive or negative beliefs, emotions, and responses towards the French language as a subject in the Nigerian school curriculum. The ten items Likert form scale consists of 3 sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions are: "Conceptual Understanding of French language," "Feelings of likes or dislikes," and "behavioral contributions." The scale is graded in a four-point response format ranging from 'very little' to 'very high.' The maximum score is 40, and the minimum score is 10. A higher score determines a positive attitude. The internal consistency coefficient of this scale was .86 in this research.

Result:-

To test the formulated hypothesis. A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of parental attitude towards the French language on the motivation and interest of the students in the French language. The investigation revealed that parental attitude towards the French language statistically significantly predicted student's French learning motivation and interest at $F(1,111)$, 60.035, $P < .000$. With adjusted R^2 indicating that the predictor variable accounted for 43.4% of the observed variance in the student's learning motivation and attitude.

Table 1:- Table showing linear regression results for parental attitude towards French language and student's French learning motivation and interest.

	B	95% CI for B		SEB	β	R^2	t	Sig
		LL	UL					
Constant	2.47	2.84	2.61	.133			18.678	.000
PATFL	-.476	-.596	-.396	.061	-.567	.433	-8.730	.000

Note. PATFL= Parental Attitude Towards French Language; B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confident Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination. * $P < .000$.

Discussion:-

The present study aimed to determine student's French language learning motivation and interest based on their parent's attitudes towards the French language. The study's findings showed that parental attitude towards the French language statistically significantly predicted students' French learning motivation and interest at $F(1,111)$, 60.035, $P < .000$. With adjusted R^2 indicating that parent's attitudes towards the French language accounted for 43.3% of the observed variance in student's French learning motivation and interest. The result corroborates a previous study (Alimyar, 2020) that reported that parental influence influences students' motivation to learn a second language. In other words, the result suggests that parents who perceive the French language as an essential component of learning and critical knowledge in contemporary society are more likely to invest in their ward's participation in French language learning. Consistently, (Alqahtani 2017) found that parental encouragement contributed to the students' ought to learn a second language and their language learning attitudes. A similar study (Daniel et al., 2018) reported that parental encouragement plays an essential role in developing motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitude toward learning English.

On the other hand, the result entails that parents who harbor negative attitudes towards the French language as a subject taught in schools may devote less commitment towards supporting their wards French learning. Perhaps, research contends that parental attitude negatively affects student achievement and motivation (Engin, 2020). Consequently, students who receive support from their parents may show more eagerness and enthusiasm for French language learning than those who receive unfavorable responses from their parents.

The study's result could be explained in that students who have contact with individuals that possess a positive view of the French language are keener in embracing the opportunities embedded in learning French as a second language. Thus, the home environment may be an essential variable influencing student's motivation and interest to engage in the French classroom. The present research finding contributes to the literature by revealing parental attitudes as an indispensable tool in promoting the foreign language proficiency needs of the country.

Conclusion:-

The present study aimed to determine the student's variability in the motivation and interest to learn the French language based on their parents' attitudes towards the subject. The present research observed that parental attitudes significantly influenced students' motivation and interest in learning French as a second language. Thus, the study concludes that a positive attitude regarding the French language is an essential pathway to improving student's motivation and interest in the French language. This revelation provides valuable data to instructors and educational institutions promoting foreign language learning motivations and interests. More so, the study's finding implied that students' learning enthusiasm might be enhanced by increasing parent's awareness of the relevance of the French language. Thus, the study recommends that educational institutions and instructors adopt a more robust strategy to target enlighten parents regarding the French language.

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