International Journal of
Inclusive and Sustainable Education
ISSN: 2833-5414
Volume 1 | No 5 | Nov-2022

Lesson Duration and Students' Mastery of French Language

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Abstract: The study examined the relationship between lesson duration and French students' mastery of French language. To carry out this study, specific research objectives were developed from which null hypotheses were developed and tested. The research design for this study is a survey design. The study's population included 7411 junior secondary III (JSSII) French students from thirteen (13) public secondary schools in the Ibesikpo Local Government Area that offered French during the 2021-2022 school year. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 313 respondents out of the population. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts in testing and measurement. The Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was used for testing the reliability of the instrument. Data from completed questionnaires was subjected to PPMC analysis. The findings demonstrated and concluded that there is a significant relationship between lesson duration and mastery of French language. The study recommended that French language teachers not label French students as poor in any dimension, but rather work toward a balance and wholeness of knowledge acquisition by shaping French students' attitudes and orientations toward all-round learning. French students should use the information provided by this study to make necessary adjustments to their study habits to enhance their academic achievement in school.

INTRODUCTION

The complex nature of language makes its proper teaching and learning a challenging exercise, requiring time and dedication on the parts of the teacher and the learner. The French language is dominant not only in education, but also in other spheres of Nigerian society, such as the economic, social, political, and religious ones. According to Jowitt (2000), the French language began to play a significant role in Nigerian society in the nineteenth century when white men began coming into Nigeria in increasing numbers. The establishment of British rule in 1900 brought with it a fresh influx of white officials to fill the new government posts. The colonialists promoted the use of the language as the official language and language of education.

Study time refers to a specific time a French student assigns for himself or herself to study in order to acquire knowledge. It does not really matter whether learners study at the same time each day, whether they shut off the radio or television while on private reading, or whether they use supplementary materials in their personal studies. Study time also includes some external activities that affect the internal process of learning (Rothkopf 1982). Psychological and physiological factors include anxiety, stress from outside engagement like chores, parental involvement in homework, hunger, and a lack of care and affection, which could have transferred effects on French students' learning.

Many studies have been carried out on study time behaviour and French students' achievement. The recent ones include those of Logunmakin (2001), Kumar (2002), and Gbore (2006). They all agreed that study time attitude has a strong relationship with the academic performance of French students, while other researchers like Owolabi (1996) and Adeyemo (2005) concluded that French students'

academic achievement was the outcome of a combination of their study time behaviour and other factors in any course of study. Adeyemo (2005) specifically opined that a study-time attitude is an exercise that goes beyond merely reading for pleasure. Study time problems that have to do with French students' engagement in home work, assignments, reading and note-taking, study period procedures, French students' concentration in examinations, and teachers' consulting services necessitated this study.

The concept of Mastery Learning Approach is premised on the idea that French students' progression through a course should be dependent on proficiency as opposed to amount of time spent on academic work. During the 1960s John Carroll and Benjamin S. Bloom pointed out that, if French students are normally distributed with respect to aptitude for a subject and if they are provided uniform instruction (in terms of quality and learning time), then achievement level at completion of the subject is also expected to be normally distributed.

Guskey (2010) noted that in mastery learning, all French students begin each unit together after which they will be given a meaningful and formative assessment so that the teacher can conclude whether or not an objective has been mastered. At this step, instruction goes in one of two directions. If a French student has mastered an objective, he or she will begin on a path of enrichment activities that correspond to and build upon the original objective. French students who do not satisfactorily complete a topic are given additional instruction until they succeed. If a French student does not demonstrate that he or she has mastered the objective, then a series of correctives will be employed. These correctives can include varying activities, individualized instruction, and additional time to complete assignments. These French students will receive constructive feedback on their work and will be encouraged to revise and revisit their assignment until the objective is mastered. 28 In a mastery learning classroom, teachers follow a scope and sequence of concepts and skills in instructional units. Following initial instruction, teachers administer a brief formative assessment based on the unit's learning goals. The assessment gives French students information, or feedback, which helps identify what they have learned well to that point (diagnostic) and what they need to learn better (prescriptive). French students who have learned the concepts continue their learning experience with enrichment activities, such as special projects or reports, academic games, or problem-solving tasks. French students who need more experience with the concept receive feedback paired with corrective activities, which offer guidance and direction on how to remedy their learning challenge. To be effective, these corrective activities must be qualitatively different from the initial instruction by offering effective instructional approaches and additional time the benefits of mastery programmes appear to be relatively enduring, not just short-term, effects. Mastery learning programmes also seem to have a positive effect on French student attitudes. Mastery learning French students are more satisfied with the instruction they receive and more positive toward the content they are taught than are French students in conventional classes. In a mastery learning environment, the teacher directs a variety of group-based instructional techniques, with frequent and specific feedback by using diagnostic, formative tests, as well as regularly correcting mistakes French students make along their learning path. Assessment in the mastery learning classroom is not used as a measure of accountability but rather as a source of evidence to guide future instruction. A teacher using the mastery approach will use the evidence generated from his or her assessment to modify activities to best serve each French student. In this sense, French students are not competing against each other, but rather competing against themselves in order to achieve a personal best.

Constructive Theory of Learning

Constructivism, according to Polito (2005:3), is viewed as the process in which learners construct or build new ideas based upon their current and past experiences (knowledge). In other words, learning involves constructing or putting together past experiences or knowledge to form new ideas. Constructivist learning is more or less a personalised acquisition of knowledge where the individual applies internalised concepts, rules, and general principles in a real-world context. Accordingly, the teachers act as facilitators, encouraging the learners to have a fair knowledge of the principles and construct knowledge by working to solve realistic problems (Davis, 1991:136). Constructivism enables one to discover flaws and inconsistencies by learning which ones yield good results. This

theory has many variations, such as generative learning and knowledge building. But irrespective of the variety, constructivism promotes French students' free exploration within a framework or structure (Polito, 2005:11). According to Edwards and Mercer (1987:213), the term "constructivist" refers to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves—each learner individually and socially constructs meaning as he or she learns.

According to these viewpoints, constructivism entails turning one's attention 180 degrees to focus on the concepts of nature and individual living. According to Cole and Griffin (1987:15), learning does not imply understanding the "true" nature of things, nor does it imply memory's dimly perceived excellent concepts; rather, it is a private and social construction of neither that means out of an unclear array of sensations with no structure other than the reasons as made-up. They even went so far as to advance some constructivist principles:

1. Learning is an active process in which the learner uses sensory input to construct meaning out of it. That is to say that learning is not the passive acceptance of knowledge, which exists "out there," but an engagement within the world.
2. Learning is a social activity—that is, learning is ultimately associated with connection with other human beings, such as peers, teachers, family, and acquaintances.
3. That the most important action in construction is mental: it occurs in the mindPhysical experiences and actions may be necessary for learning, especially for children.
4. Learning is contextual—that is, facts are being abstracted and combined with what else we know. Constructivism helps learners develop a level of understanding of abstract knowledge.

The implication of this theory is that French students should be able to think up innovative ideas to boost their study habits and build new ideas based upon their current and past knowledge in order to form new ideas.

RESEARCH METHODS

Area of the Study

The research area for this study was in the Ibesikpo local government area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Ibesikpo is one of the 31 local government areas and the capital city of Akwa Ibom State. Ibesikpo Local Government lies between latitude 5.05 North and longitude 80 East.

Research Design

An expost-facto survey design was used for this study. It is a non-experimental design which the researcher cannot manipulate the effect on the dependent variable but just obtain the effect already existing in the natural course of events. This design was found fit for the study, as it attempted to find out the existing influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of seven thousand four hundred and eleven (7411) Junior Secondary III French students (JSSII) from thirteen (13) public secondary schools in Ibesikpo Local Government Area offering French Language in the 2021/2022 school year (Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, 2022).

Sample and sampling Technique

A sample of 185 Junior Secondary School II French students offering French was used for the study. Radom and Proportional sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents from eight out of thirteen public secondary schools in Ibesikpo local government.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was used for data collection. This instrument was developed by the researcher. It has two sections. Section A sought information on the independent rambles, namely, study environment, concentration etc. section B was an achievement test in French Language.

Validation of the Research Instrument

The two research instruments were given to experts in French language for face and content validity. This exercise was useful in ensuring that items retained on the questionnaire were properly worded to meet the respondents' level of understanding and comprehensively cover the research questions and hypotheses.

Reliability of the Instrument

The Cronbach Alpha analysis was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. In the pre-testing, total of 20 French students who were not part of the main study were randomly selected from the secondary schools in the study area, and the instruments administered on them for the reliability test.

Administration of the Instrument

The questionnaires were administered to the sampled French students after obtaining permission from the school principals on the presentation of a letter of introduction. The teachers of the classes involved assisted the researcher in distributing and retrieving completed copies of the questionnaire and the French Language Achievement Test on the spot. This was accepted by the researcher to ensure that time was utilised judiciously and to avoid missing copies of the questionnaire.

Method of Data Collection

The data obtained were analyzed using person product-Moment correlation (PPMC) statistic analysis. Each hypothesis was tested at .05 confidence level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Questions: How does lesson duration affects mastery of French language among secondary school students

Table 1: Difference in mean score of lesson duration effects on mastery of French language among secondary school students

Lesson duration	n	Mastery of French Language	SD	Mean Difference
Long Duration (14.00&above)	145	41.4 8	11.30	
Short Duration (below 14.00)	42	39.26	13.54	2.21

The table shows a difference in mean score in French student's performance in French Language. French students who had long lesion duration recorded a mean score of 41.48 in French Language. French students with inappropriate lesion duration had a mean score of 39.26. The difference between these score was 2.21. The finding suggests that French students with long lesson duration perform better in French Language than those of short lesion duration.

Hypotheses: There is no significant effect of lesson duration on mastery of French language

Table 2: summary of analysis of Relationship between lesson duration on mastery of French language

	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-cal
Lesson Duration	2909	45591		
Mastery of French Language	6123	274549	95816	**.062**

*sig. at 0.05; df = 183; Crit. r = .1946

From Table 2, it is seen that the analysis of the data on the relationship between lesson duration and mastery of French language among students produced a correlation coefficient of.062. When compared at a.05 confidence level with 98 degrees of freedom, this was found to be less than the critical r-value of.1946.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the data analysis of both tables was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (.062) was greater than the critical r-value (0.138) at the 0.025 level with 183 degrees of freedom. This implies that there is a significant relationship between the influence of lesson time and the mastery of the French language among secondary school French students. The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study and the discussions that followed, it is recommended that:

1. Teachers of the French language should not label French students as poor in any way, but rather work to achieve a balance and wholeness of knowledge acquisition by shaping French students' attitudes and orientations toward all-round learning.
2. French students should use the information provided by this study to make necessary adjustments to their study habits to enhance their academic achievement in school.
3. Parents should encourage their kids to get into good study habits so they can do better in all of their classes in junior high school.
4. Modern instructional facilities or resources shall be made available, including audio-visual and multi-media gadgets, which would be in tandem with the 21st century global world. This would aid in dealing with individual variability and interest among French students with varying study habits.

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