

Accentuation among Yoruba Learners of French Language in the Higher Institution.

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Abstract

This study examines accentuation of Yoruba learners of French language in the higher institution with particular reference to Ekiti State University Ado - Ekiti. It examined Yoruba Language students' attitudes in the study of French language. It investigates the forms, functions and uses of tone (accents) in the phonology and lexicon of French and Yoruba languages. The study demonstrates that tone operates at a wide range of levels of linguistic analysis in French and Yoruba languages. Some French accents have similarities with Yoruba accents and these need clarifications. The study encourages Yoruba learners of French language to use association, learning transfer or knowledge comparison acquired from accentuation in Yoruba or French language in mastering and pronouncing French words. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The sample consisted of randomly selected 20 French language lecturers in Ekiti State University and 100 students of Yoruba learners of French language. Questionnaire was designed on accentuation among Yoruba learners of French language on the teaching and learning of French language. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentage. From the findings, French teachers have not been using instructional materials to teach accents or tones with the students. Conclusively, there should be provision of corresponding instructional materials that will improve the method of teaching and learning experience of the students in order to enhance its development for the progressive output, as accentuation in French and Yoruba involve development and acquisition of skills. It is recommended that the teachers of French must use good teaching methods in teaching the Students.

Keywords: *French language, Yoruba language, Accentuation, Association, Learning transfer, Knowledge comparison.*

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I. Introduction

French Language has gained a lot of recognition and has consequently become a foreign language to non-native users and standard languages. Odiya and Omofonmwan (2007) affirm that this language has reason which makes it to be very important. One of which is that, it creates easy access to our neighbouring countries. It is accepted as a means of communication in the international community. The inclusion of French language in the university curriculum especially as a teaching subject in the Faculty of Education seems not to be a surprise, as it is considered a major European language with a long tradition of being a foreign language. However, Nigeria is surrounded by countries that were colonized by France. French is a foreign languages and the second official language of Nigeria. It is optionally taught especially at the secondary school level.

Yoruba Language is spoken in West Africa. According to Akinlabi and Mark (2000), it is a language spoken principally in Benin and Nigeria with other communities in other parts of Africa, America, and Europe. The number of speakers of Yoruba is approximately 30 million. Many Yoruba words are used in the Afro-Brazilian religion. It is also used in many other Afro-American regions in the Americas and the Caribbean. Yoruba is a tonal language spoken in Nigeria and her neighbouring countries of the republic of Benin and Togo. In Nigeria, Yoruba language speakers reside in the southwest region in the following states; Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo, part of Kwara and Kogi states (Adewale 2007). Yoruba is recognized as an indigenous language, it enjoys official recognition as a compulsory subject both in the primary and secondary school level. It is ranked among the most studied African languages in the University level and overseas especially United States of America. (Ilori 2010). French and Yoruba languages are taught as academic disciplines at various levels of our tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Yoruba and French are two regular language based subject in the Nigeria system of education. French and Yoruba are some of the languages that serve as language of trade. It is used along the south western borders of Nigeria by Nigerians and Beninois traders in transacting business. French and Yoruba are teaching subjects which attract learners from various linguistic backgrounds in Nigeria school system.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| ii). ou - or | où - where |
| iii). ses - his/ her (Plural) | dès - from |
| iv). la - the [article] | là - there |

While pronouncing alphabets or words in french, the accent does not affect the pronunciation of the letters, è will be /e/, à will be /a/ and ù will be /u/ respectively in french. These are the explanations on remaining french accents :

le tréma (¨) - the trema or dieresis

Tréma (¨) this is another accent in French, it is placed on a vowel to separate its pronunciation from that of the immediate preceding vowel. The trema (¨) marks a vowel as being in a separate syllable from any neighbouring vowel. For example, the letter combination ‘ai’ is normally pronounced ‘e’ . However, with trema over the ‘i’ it becomes [ai], ‘a’ and ‘i’ is pronounced separately; not as in j’ ai - [I have].

French	English	
maïs	maize	
haïr [ai:R]	to hate	
noël [nœ]	Christmas	
contiguë /k>igy/	intrigue /etring/	
moïse /m>s/	mose	
égoïste	selfish	
coïncidence	coincidence	Ondot (2000)

la cedille (¸) the cedilla

The accent is called cedilla (¸) it is placed under letter c that is ‘ç’ . This indicates that it is pronounced /s/ and not /k/. This is used to make the letter ‘c’ soft (like an ‘s’) before the following letters “a, o, u” .

Example: -

French	English
le garçon	lad
le français	French
ça	this/that
(là /ici) - pour désigner	there/ here
reçu	received

Note: ‘c’ is naturally soft before ‘i, e’ . e.g:- ici, ce.

v). I’ accent circumflexe [^]

The circumflex (ê, â, û, î, ô) This accent (^) is called circumflex. It looks like a falling tone placed on a vowel, atimes to indicate length. Example: -

This accent is used to show the length of the vowel owing to the dropping of ‘s’ which existed in the original Latin version of the word, but over the centuries as the language evolved and changed. It was eventually dropped. e.g. fenêtre - window [Latin - fenestre].

to show some other contraction e.g sûr - sure [Latin: securus].

to distinguish two words spelt alike e.g cru (believed) and crû (grown).

Examples of words written with circumflex are:

French	English
être	to be
âne	donkey
île	island
peut-être	perhaps
arrêter	to stop
âme	soul
âge	age
hôtel	hotel
hôpital	hospital
hôte /o:/	guest
pâte /pa:/	dough, pasta
île /i:l/	island

Ondot (2000)

Likewise letter e will indicate that it sounds /e / in: -

Bête /bet/ - stupid, animal or beast

Créte /kret/ - comb of a birth, crest
We have another letter in this group ai, ei, eu, oi and ou

Example: -

maître /metr/ - master, teacher, leader
goût /gutr/ - taste
croûte /krut/ - crust
croîs /krwa/ - believe

Similarly, this accent; circumflex also distinguishes letter u in spelling other similar spelt words e.g crû - overflow, increased floated (in poetic) and cru /kru/ believed, vineyard.

Mûr - ripe, mature

Mur /mur/ - wall

Yorùbá Intonation (accent) Marks

Yorùbá is a tonal language with three tones. The tone is the pillar of the Yorùbá language, high, mid and low. The high tone is indicated by an acute accent (/) example are (á, é, í, ó, and ú), the mid tone is not marked and the low tone is marked with a grave acute (\) examples are: (à, è, ì, ò, and ù). It is very important to insert accent marks on words written in the Yorùbá language and place a dot under the letters that require it. It is very difficult to read and understand the meaning of sentences if it is not done.

Three intonation marks are commonly: -

The acute accent mark (/)

The grave accent mark (\)

The middle tone accent mark (-)

The easy way to learn how to pronounce words with these accent marks is to compare them with three of the tones played on the organ or piano these are (do - re - mi). The combination of the “do-re-mi” concept and colour coding will facilitate learning for expert alike.

In Yorùbá

Ó wẹ - she bathed

Ó wẹ é - she bathed

awó - bird

àwò - glasses

Àwo - plate

Apá - hand

Àpá - mark

Àpà - destroyer

Accents is used to show the difference and give meaning between words while writing the words

Agbọ n - An insect

Àgbò n - jaw (A part of the body)

Àgbọ n - A fruit from palm tree

Others

Ọkọ - Husband

bẹ - Jump

Ọkọ - Hoe

bẹ - Take apology

ọ kọ - Motor

bẹ - Cut

ọ kọ - Sword

A là - We are rich

Àlà - Boundary

Àlá - Dream

Ìgbà - Time

Ìgbá - Garden egg

Igba - 200 (number)

igbà - Object used to climb palm tree

Ọ wọ - Hands

Ọwọ - Broom

Ọ wọ / ì wọ - Unbican cord

Ọ wọ - Name of a town

Ọ tá - Enemy

Ọ́ta - Pellet / Bullet

Ọ́tá - A town in Ogun State

Olatubosun (1996)

The tone in French and Yorùbá language appears to be another aspect that constitutes threat to the students learning the language in the higher institution especially Ekiti State University, Ado - Ekiti. The two languages are tonal languages, tones are part of the structure of words, words that are not tone marked always constitute ambiguity. Babatunde (2011) stresses that the use of combined method of teaching can easily aid students to learn French language. In the same vein, Olaseinde (2016) affirms that the use of videotape together with demonstration method holds students' attention in the teaching and learning of French language. The French teacher should use these instructional materials (Videotape, Radio together with demonstration method) while teaching accents and during lessons.

Adegbite (2010) notes that students are poor readers because they read only to pass examinations, observation reveals that French or Yoruba students find it difficult to put accent on any French or Yoruba words. They could not even read fluently. This made them not to have ability to cope with the literacy demand of the present day. The main objective of reading is to promote the student's language competence and their ability to comprehend the content of what they have read. The National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) stresses the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and social cohesion; and presenting cultures.

Olaseinde (2018) opines that students taught by more qualified teachers in terms of academic credentials perform significantly better than students of less qualified teachers. The ability of teachers to carry out perfect learning outcome depends largely on the qualification the teacher has on the job.

David (2006) advises that government should employ French graduates to teach the subject. This researcher is of the opinion that poor teaching could result in low achievement of students; no matter how well the policy is formulated, the successful implementation of the French programme depends on the teacher who would put the policy into practice.

Statement of the Problem:

It was observed that Yoruba learners of French language find accentuation difficult in the teaching and learning of French language. It seems most of the students that are offering Yoruba don't make use of Yoruba tone in their class work. Likewise find the use of French accents difficult while doing French assignment. Students seem to find accentuation of words and sentences difficult and by this, they are afraid of studying French language.

Purpose of the Study

The study is expected to train the Yoruba learners of French language to make use of the similarities in Yoruba and French accents to learn French language. It is to assist these learners to make use of transfer of learning, association and comparison in learning French language. This will assist these students in mastering the accents and tones in French language.

Research Questions

Can mastering of similar tones or accents in Yoruba aid the learning of French language by students?

Do the French teachers use any corresponding instructional materials while teaching?

Does the institution have enough and qualified French teacher in the school?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

There is no significant difference in the mastering of similar tones in Yoruba and French language

There is no significant difference in the use of any corresponding instructional materials while teaching between male and female French teachers

There is no significant difference in the qualification of French lecturers and the availability of qualified French teachers in the school

II. Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The sample for the study consisted of selected 20 French language lecturers in Ekiti State University and 100 students of Yoruba learners of French language. The questionnaire was designed on the accentuation among Yoruba learners of French language on the teaching and learning of French language. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentage.

III. Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: Can mastering of similar tones or accent in Yoruba aid the learning of French language?

Table 1: Students accepted mastering of similar tones or accents aid the learning of French language.

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Yes	%	No	%
1	Similar Yoruba accents or tones aid the learning of French language	80	80	20	20
2	Yoruba tones are very easy in learning related accents in French language	80	80	20	20
3	both French and Yoruba related tones are easy to understand	40	40	60	60

The table showed that 80(80%) students agree that similar Yoruba accents or tones aids the learning of French language while 20(20%) students disagree. 80(80%) agree that Yoruba related tones are very easy in learning French related accents in French language while 60(60%) disagree. 40(40%) agree that both French and Yoruba related tones are easy to understand while 60(60%) disagree

Research Question 2: Do the French teacher use any corresponding instructional materials while teaching

Table 2: French teachers use corresponding instructional materials while teaching

Items	Agrees		Disagree	
	Yes	%	No	%
French teachers used picture reading while teaching accents and tones	05	05	95	95
French teachers always demonstrate on the accented words while teaching	10	10	90	90
The teachers gives explanation on the accented words while teaching	20	20	80	80

The table showed that 05(05%) French teachers used picture reading while teaching accents or tones while 95(95%)do not. 10(10%) French teachers always demonstrate while teaching accents and tones, while 90(90%) do not. 20(20%) French teachers give explanation on the accented words while teaching while 80(80%) do not.

Research Question 3: Dose the school have enough and qualified French teachers

Table 3: The school have enough and qualified French teachers.

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		Yes	%	No	%
1	The institution has more than five French teacher	10	10	90	90
2	The institution has French graduate teachers	20	20	80	80
3	The institution has 2 nd degree holders	90	90	10	10

The table showed that 10 (10%) students agreed that the school has more than one French lecturers in the institution while 90(90%) disagree with the statement. 20(20%) agree that the school has French graduate while 80(80%) disagree. 90 (90%) said that the school has second degree holders that are teaching French language while 10(10%) disagree.

IV. Discussion

From the study, the following findings were made; teachers have not been using instructional materials like picture reading to teach accents or tones with the students. Teachers have not been using similar Yoruba accents or tones to aid the learning of French language. French teachers have not been demonstrating enough while teaching so that students could understand the lecture. The Government has not been employing French teachers. Teachers qualification ought to be put into consideration when employing teachers.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that accentuation in French language involves development and acquisition of skills. Also, provision of corresponding instructional materials will improve the method of teaching and learning experience of the students and enhance its development for a progressive output. The use of French language communication skills during the teaching and learning of French language will bring better performance of the students.

VI. Recommendations

From this study it is recommended that certain things must be put in place; teachers' qualification must be considered. The teachers of French must use good teaching methods in teaching the students. Instructional materials must be available in the classroom for the teaching of French language. Students should be encouraged to use learning transfer, association and comparison in acquiring knowledge.

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