

# FACTORS INHIBITING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FRENCH IN NIGERIA: THE CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

**ADEFARASIN** Victoria Adeola  
(Ph.D) College of Humanities,  
Department of French Studies, Tai  
Solarin University of Education,  
Ijagun.  
Ogunstate.adafarasinvictoria@gm  
ail.com | (+2347038848142

**SALAU**, Anthony Kayode (Ph.D)  
College of Humanities, Department of French Studies, Tai Solarin  
University of Education, Ijagun. Ogunstate,  
salaukayode@gmail.com | (+2348038478092)

## Abstract

French language has been in existence as far back as the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. It is ancient as the world itself. The language is foreign, widely accepted and spoken by native speakers and foreigners all over the globe. French is a beautiful language, well loved by all races. There is no continent in the world where its speakers cannot be found, therefore, the importance of French language as a medium of communication cannot be over emphasized. Based on this, globalization has turned the entire world into a global village through scientific and technological innovations which are capable of enhancing the teaching and learning of French. Besides, African culture is dynamic, ever-changing and ready to accommodate foreign cultures. Previous studies on challenges and opportunities of globalization and African culture have been carried out extensively but with little attention paid to their impacts on the teaching and learning of French as a second official language in Nigeria. This paper is therefore designed to examine their relevance on French language with a view to determining future prospects on Nigerian youths. The study adopts cultural hybridity as a theoretical framework that helps to understand the functional nature of globalization and African culture. It also adopts close reading techniques as a methodology which gives us the opportunity to examine critically the

essence of cross-cultural interactions in global world. This presentation examines the concept of globalization and African culture. It discusses the importance of French language. It analyses the positive and negative impact of globalization on African culture in teaching and learning of French as a second official language in Nigeria. Finally, it states the factors militating against the growth of French in Nigeria and the practical solution to its growth. The paper concludes that the importance of French cannot be over emphasised given the large number of speakers globally and also considering its growing impacts on education, culture & civilization & science & technology.

**Keywords:** Globalization, culture, learning, teaching, language and civilization.

## Introduction

Today, the word “Globalization” means different things to different people. It is simply another adjective to describe cross border relations among countries. It is a controversial issue that has various definitions among various theorists in the whole world. Globalization has been conceptualized as a means of operating in all around the world e.g. business, companies. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its 1996-97 reports entitled

*challenges in many fronts*, globalization means “more closely integrated goods, services and capital markets”. (IMF 1996-79:68). This view has received further reinforcement from (Thomas Friedman, 2003:72) in *Dueling Globalization Foreign Policy* (Website version) when he said

Globalization is the integration of markets, finance and technologies in a way that is shrinking the world from a size medium to a size small and enabling each of us to reach around the world farther, faster and cheaper than ever before... like all previous international systems, it is directly or indirectly shaping politics, economic policies and foreign relations of virtually every country.

There may be differences in opinion of the theorists as to what globalization entails but one thing stands as a common ground of agreement in the discourse of globalization; which has been the introduction of new economic and political features in the countries of both peripheries. Globalization appears to bring in new ideas about strategic objective in business, new mechanism for penetrating foreign markets for higher volumes of movements of goods and skills. Globalization as (Ohiorheunua et al 2005:17) describes it as

a positive or powerful force for the improved material well-being of human kind that would aid developing countries to create better economic environments to leapfrog into the information age, improve their access to technology speed, development and enhance global harmony.

On this note, some do describe globalization as the growing worldwide interdependence of people and countries. This process has accelerated dramatically in the past decades or so largely, because of huge advancement in technology such as Television, Internet services, Telephone, Microchip which are the easiest avenues to learn French Language. This time around, divisive blocs of the cold war have virtually disappeared, trade barriers have come down, the world major financial markets have been

integrating and travel has been cheaper and easier. The revolutions in information technology, the ascendancy and global hegemony of multi-national corporations and the role of multi-national institutions like the World Trade organization, (WTO), World Bank and the IMF are crucial to forging globalization in contemporary world for it is believed that these institutions will foster the idea of a global village. On the other hand, some scholars, economists, politicians, scientists and lawyers often opine that globalization is simply another name for imperialism, domination, exploitation, marginalization, inequality and poverty. This group believes that globalization is really about money. Furthermore, they hold the view that the constant pressure on them to open up their markets and adopt difficult reform policies without safety value and control is more to the benefit of the capitalist from industrialized nations than to the states and the people concerned. To this group, “the net results of such actions are increased poverty, unemployment, instability and corruption” (Onigbinde, 2003:75). It is also argued and revealed that globalization is the final conquest of capitalists over the rest of the world and it will continue to be so, but the greatest concern about globalization is the way it has widened the gulf between the haves and have nots. While global wealth has undoubtedly increased, it has become concentrated in fewer hands and fewer countries.

### **Cultural Hybridity**

This paper anchors on cultural hybridity of Homi Bhabha. It is one of the forms of postcolonial theory. Cultural hybridity is developed from cultural and literary theories in order to expatiate on the construction of culture and identity within the colonial opposition and condition of injustice. It also refers to the integration of cultural signs and practices from the coloniser to the colonised. It also employs the concept of hybridity to refer to cultural literary interactions among the cultures of the whole world. Bhabha’s opinion of adaptation and assimilation of cultural practices from the colonisers

and colonised cultures can be positive, enriching as well as oppressive. Homi Bhabha (1994) avers that all mode of imposition, especially the demand on the colonised to be like the coloniser usually result in mimicry. According to Bhabha, mimicry is the exaggerated copying of language, manners, culture and ideas, thus, exaggeration means that mimicry is a repetition with a difference. The concept of hybridity occupies an important place in postcolonial discourse. Hybridity is a privileged and celebrated type of culture seen as superior and intelligent owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, that is the existence of two cultures, the negative effects and the ability to negotiate the difference (Hoogevelt, 1997).

Ashcroft et al (1995) observe that any culture that claims to be pure is questionable and Bhabha (1994) realises the dangers and disapproval of identities within the binary colonial thoughts when he argues that all forms of cultures are in the continuous process of hybridity, none is pure. Bhabha (1996) explains the term “Third Space” to mean hybridity, that is, a form of in-between space where the “cutting edge of negotiation and translation occur” (Rutherford, 1990). He does not relent in his effort to assist Homi Bhabha when he says that the essence of hybridity is not the ability to trace two original moments where the third emerges but hybridity to him is the “third space” which enables other positions to emerge. Based on this, the third space is an ability to express one’s thoughts and feeling clearly in words. It is also a way of describing a productive space that brings about new possibilities and advantages. The expatiative space of new forms of cultural meaning and production which blurs the limitations of the existing boundaries and questions the established category of culture and identity are questionable. The term hybridity is essential and in vogue in literary parlance with postcolonial critics because it means that the cultural and political negotiation between the coloniser and the colonised must not be jeopardized. Homi Bhabha makes us to understand that cross-fertilisation of cultures and ideas, assimilation and adaptation of cultural

practices can be dynamic, progressive, positive and enriching to all cultures of the world.

### **Types of Globalization**

Khalil M. H. (2007:498) states different forms of globalization. To him cultural globalization refers to diffusion of ideas and values in the arena of sports, education, films and wider social interaction. Technical globalization entails the diffusion of technologies from fields such as telecommunications, computers, radio, television, internet, manufacturing, agriculture, transport and communication. Economic globalization refers to the diffusion of commercial ideas and techniques through the medium of advertisement of products, economic reforms and trade e.g. “Bonjour Lagos” a television programme of Lagos Television Channel 8, Ikeja, Lagos. The forces that shape economic globalization have invariably been the IMF, the World Bank, the Transnational Corporation and the World Trade Organizations. In addition, political globalization refers to the flow of political ideas such as democracy, Human Rights, Pluralism, diplomacy and the conduct of international relations e.g. the final handover of Bakassi Peninsula by Nigerian Government to the Camerounian government on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008 by the verdict given by International Court of Justice, Hague, United Nations on the controversial oil rich Peninsula.

### **African Culture**

As Duro Oni (2001:5) quoted from the Cultural Policy for Nigeria,

culture is the totality of the way of life, evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours.

He quoted Taylor's definition of culture which was generally accepted as

*that complex whole which include the knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of a society.*

Culture does not mean a return to the customs of the past: for culture embodies the attitude of a people to their traditional values which are essential factors of development and progress. Uchendu (1988:18) agrees with Clyde Kluck Vhohn that *to be human is to be cultured*, while Ruth Benedict observes that culture is what really binds men together the ideas and the standards they have in common. Therefore, people and culture are inseparable, "for culture is the aggregate of concepts and values which characterize a community and it then follows that a people without culture are in themselves not in full existence" (Obasanjo, 1997-6). On the whole, culture is a process of transformation from the natural state to a state of refinement (Sola Oke, 1988.164). To him, culture embraces whole ways of life involving not only the value aspects of a society's existence but also the institutional and material aspects as well, culture is a state of refinement. The African people like all other people have their culture which is the sum total of their socially standardized life. Their culture is based on the process of learning and it is not biologically inherited. African culture is a rediscovery of cultural and spiritual ties which bind together all Black and African people the world over – African culture is so strong that it is expressed even in the way they walk, talk, laugh or cry. Then, what are these original values that make up African culture? They are fundamentally the sense of communion between the visible and the invisible man, nature and God, the sense of analogical images which express this communion and finally the sense of rhythm.

The reality of the existence of African culture before the coming of Islam and the Europeans cannot be doubted by the Africans, the impact of foreign

culture on African culture led to assimilation and culturisation of French and English languages which has become part and parcel of Africans. Africans eventually resisted and reacted against this foreign culture and domination in form of emergence of nationalism which led to the achievement of independence in 1958 1960s. Moreover, Edward Blyden, an American Negro reacted against westernization and strongly projected African personality which later gave birth to Negritude against political and cultural domination by France. The leading exponent of Negritude is Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal who described Negritude as the cultural, social and political values of African civilization: Negritude points out clearly that Africa has history and culture and in one way or the other, Africa has contributed immensely to the world civilization. The demand for independence also enhanced African culture, African dress, institution, art; crafts and literature which the colonial period undermined were made popular by the nationalists. African nationalists wore African dresses not only in Africa but also at overseas conferences. The effect of the Second World War also enhanced the growth of African culture. West African soldiers who travelled to other parts of the world knew the weaknesses of the Europeans. This destroyed the myth of racial superiority of the Europeans and boosted the faith in the African personality and culture. Revivals of African culture were enhanced in the field of music, drama, craft and art. Artistes such as I. K. Dairo, Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey, Fela Anikulapo Kuti of Nigeria, Mariam Makeba of South Africa, Aicha Koné from Cote d'Ivoire contributed immensely to the revival of African music which has successfully displaced foreign music and dance. In the field of literature we have writers like Sembene Ousmane, Wole Soyinka, Late Chinua Achebe, Ayikwei Armah and Camara Laye who demonstrated African culture in total reality. In 1977, a cultural festival called festival of Arts was held in Lagos to preserve African culture. It provided an unusual forum which brought to light diverse contributors of Black and

African peoples to the universal currents of thought and arts, it provided an opportunity for recounting the achievement of African ancestors and contemporaries and their invaluable contributions to the enrichment of world thought and ideas. Obasanjo (1977:6) asserts that:

*in a world that gravitates every day to violence, culture remains one of the most important recourses to sanity and meaningful national development. Culture has proved itself a satisfying mode of promoting international friendship and understanding. Nigeria believes very strongly in the moderating and salvaging qualities of culture in easing world tensions through cultural exchanges.*

### **Historical Background of French Language in Nigeria**

The existence of French in Africa is not controversial. It is a historical fact that French has existed in Africa for at least a century. The beginning of the French colonial presence in Senegal dates back to the 17th century, but the history of French language in Nigeria dates back to 1859 when it was introduced at King's College and St Ann's school in Lagos followed suit in 1894 but it was only after independence in the 1960's and 1970's that French knew its moment of glory in Nigeria. Omolewa (1981) as quoted by Salau (2006) observe that:

French and German were among

the earliest subjects introduced into

Nigeria Secondary Schools as from

1859 when the first Secondary School,

the church Missionary Society Grammar

School was founded in Lagos.

On the other hand David (1979) made us to understand as well that French was later introduced

in Ghana (1875), Sierra Leone and Kenya (1945) therefore and from the information gathered above, Nigeria was the first country among the Anglophone counterparts to introduce the teaching of French in its curriculum. Emordi (1985) as noted by Salau (2006) reiterates that:

Nigeria is the first Anglophone Country

to teach French in Africa. 16years

before all the Anglophones and 100

years before her independence

Therefore, the need to develop the teaching and learning of French became inevitable following the attainment of independence in 1960 and with Nigeria joining many international organizations where French is one of the official languages

According to Obanya (1996) he states that the major achievement made then was an attempt to teach the French language in Nigerian tertiary institutions with the famous methodology called "Voix et Image de la France". Ayeleru (2019:6) corroborates his ideas that the teaching and learning of French language got promoted with the position taken in 1961 and 1967 at the conference of Modern Language experts held in Yaounde and Cotonou respectively where it was recommended that French language should be launched and introduced to Anglophone countries while English language should be introduced to francophone countries vice versa. To buttress this point, (UNESCO 1981:39) recommends that:

A Second European Language

should be considered not only as

a means of communication between

English and French speaking countries

in Africa but also as an international language with a wide purpose which, jointly with the first European language, would enable Africa to communicate with other countries through out the world.

Since then, Araromi (2015) in a bid to underscore the importance of French language avers that France has not relented in its support for the promotion of learning and teaching French but France has established many bodies in Nigeria fronting for it such as centres for French Teaching and Documentation at Ibadan (CFTD), French Language Village at Ajara Badagry, Alliance Francaise, Vitoria Island, Lagos. These bodies and their roles in promoting the learning and teaching of French language in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. In spite of the long standing history of French language teaching in Nigeria, French status has continued to be relegated to the background. It is therefore, a right step in the right direction when the national language policy of 1998 adopted French as second official language of the nation and declared it as a compulsory core subject in all secondary schools in Nigeria from 1998/99 academic session. Despite the fact that French is being taught at all levels of education in Nigeria, there is little to show for it. The federal government established a French language Village at Badagry in order to promote and facilitate the learning and teaching of French, yet the fundamental problem of acceptability and learnability still exist – which way out of this fundamental problem in Nigeria?

### **Importance of French Language in Nigeria**

French is one of the leading languages of the world. It was from France that French entered other parts of the world through colonization in Africa particularly in 19<sup>th</sup> century. French has a wide usage

and acceptance as well as English and the two are serious languages associated with civilization. According to Segun Awonusi (2004:86),

early legitimate trade enhanced its spread, illegitimate trade like slave trade aided its diffusion and colonization gradually entrenched its hegemony while the development of science and technology the communication needs of international bodies like UN, the media, modern commerce established the growth on a sustainable basis. French had grown across national and regional frontiers such that like modern business practices have been transformed from the multinational or international to the transactional.

French is a multimillionaire language, second to English speaker in population as a world language, its growth has made it dominant language of today's information technology. It is a natural choice for progress; it has already grown to be independent of any form of social control. French no longer belongs to the France and Paris in Europe. The use of French as a world language in the sense of its enhanced status and functions readily promote hegemony. French is the language of globalization. It is one of the three (3) languages (English and Arabic) that are used by the AU for its official transactions and publications. It is actively and competently spoken by more than 140 million peoples in the world and gladly learnt and used by another 300 million in non-francophone countries who have been somehow exposed to the learning of French and who can manage to express themselves in it. It must equally be recognized that French is a key language that is used in many international organizations including the UNO, AU, ECOWAS, IMF and its agencies in which the knowledge of French is a *sine qua non* for employment and in which French plays the role of a most indispensable medium of communication for official transactions. It is one of the working

languages of NATO and UNESCO. It is the official language of the Olympic Games.

In his own opinion, Ade Ojo (2001) stresses further that:

French is the official language of all our neighbours (Benin Republic, Niger, Chad and Cameroun). For proper understanding, cordial relationships, reciprocal and rewarding enduring political entente, understanding exemplary socio-economic rapport, multilateral relations and transnational mobility completely devoid of jealousy, suspicions and conflicts and rooted in the vision of achieving complete regional integration between all the countries of the West African sub-region, French cannot but play a very vital role.

Nigerians, therefore, owe it a duty to themselves and to the whole of the West African sub region to appreciate and appropriate French by learning to speak, write and use it. Within the ECOWAS countries, French is the official language of 8 of the 15 member countries of ECOWAS. In a situation where Nigeria aspires to assert her towering position as the political giant of Africa in which out of every 6 Africans one is a Nigerian, the ability of Nigerian to speak French would greatly enhance the prospects of helping the country to be giant in word and in action, because of the ability of its citizens to communicate effectively in both English and French, a special linguistic asset that would enable them make strong political economic, academic and professional impacts in the sub-region. Apart from this outward-looking perspective, there is also an inward looking dimension to the learning of French by Nigerians. France is one of the 4 biggest trading partners of Nigeria. With about 150 French companies operating in Nigeria in almost every facet of the country's economy, the knowledge of French and the ability to effectively use it by Nigerians would open to them job opportunities in these companies. Proficiency in French is therefore a useful supplement to the professional qualifications and expertise that Nigerians would

need to be gainfully employed by the French companies operating in Nigeria.

### **Impacts of Globalization on Teaching and Learning of French as a Second Language in Nigeria**

Christine (2004:121) describes globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an emerging world (dis)order (Mohan, 1996) refers to it as *a process by which the world is becoming a single place*. He cites further (Scholte 1996 cited in Monge, 1998) that *it is a process characterized by increase in communicative speed, technological sophistication, economic integration and ideology universalism*. He cites Rapoport (2001) that globalization is a fact of life because all are affected in terms of its benefits or loss, positively or negatively. Globalization influences and is influenced by many aspects of contemporary life of which communication is an integral part (Monge, Peter 1998). To buttress these facts, Gabriel (1991) in his contribution to the International Symposium on African Literatures said that English and French have become African languages. Without them our countries cannot remain corporate countries and what we need to do is to emulsify French with our own native African systems, i.e. a French that may not be quite French, that historians of that language might refer to as being derived from French.

The whole world has become a village where we speak the same language, share the same beliefs, ideas etc. Liberalization and Privatization policies of all countries through globalization would bring more investors from all over the world, the knowledge of an additional language such as French is an added advantage for job seekers. On the other hand, cultural interaction helps to create non-governmental avenues for citizens of the participating countries. This could take the form of exchange of ideas among performing artists, scholars, and students. In the process, friendship is created and such non-governmental ties help to reduce the risks of war as people from the

participating countries know more of each other. The most essential impact of globalization on teaching and learning of French as a second language in Nigeria is the rapid industrialization among nations.

As an International language, the knowledge of French fosters growth and development of trade and commerce. It promotes good relationship between Nigeria and the French speaking neighbouring countries such as Niger Republic, Benin Republic, Cameroun and Chad (It also promotes the growth and development of science and technology, education, sports and tourism. Nigeria's interaction with French countries in various fields include economic, cultural, educational and political. Economically, the richest countries in the world are not self-sufficient in all aspects, they have to import items which they cannot produce while exporting other items which they produce in abundance. Nigeria exchanges her crude oil, cocoa, rubber and raw materials for manufactured items which they cannot produce while exporting other items which produce in abundance. Nigeria exchanges her crude oil, cocoa, rubber and raw materials for manufactured items which her technology at present cannot produce. Economic interaction involves aids, loans and technological transfer which are possible to circulate among nations. Nations consult each other before pressing issues are discussed so as to be on the same page when decisions are being taken.

Learning and teaching of French language as a second language will surely help our leaders and representatives to contribute their quotas to the regional development and when there are specific conflicts or problems as they occurred in Mali and Niger Republic Coup d'Etats, important meetings are held in African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African State's (ECOWAS), World Health Organisation (WHO) and hosts of other international organizations to establish common fronts and send representatives of various countries to go up and down establishing contacts

and helping to reduce world tension. Globalization makes the teaching and learning of French as a second language in Nigeria as an asset through television, telephone, internet, e.g. *Teach yourself French* an electronic device available on the cassette. French language acquisition could enhance one's knowledge in reading French texts, listen to cassette and repeat after it for good pronunciation journals, magazines e.g. precaution in drug leaflet e.g. *Gardez hors de porter des enfants* means keep out of the reach of children. Globalization has enriched the world scientifically and culturally, and benefited many people economically. It offers enormous potential to eradicate poverty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many people operate phone call centres through mobile phone, some make phone calls in French or English or in their local languages. The average family in the world today has (3) times more income than did 50 years ago. Globalization could also be seen as information cum communication phenomenon. Through the advanced information technology, the radio, the television, cable network, the telephone and the internet services, the interconnectedness of the world has assumed an unprecedented dimension ever witnessed before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It now takes fractions of second for information to travel from one extreme point of the world to the other. No wonder then that marriage; friendship, economic and political bargaining is effected in unimaginable time fraction. To this effect, learners of French would be opportuned to listen to French news, learn French songs and music, search internet for information on any field, engage in telephone conversation in French, in short, examples abound if one can endure to learn it.

Another negative impact of globalization on the teaching and learning of French in Nigeria centres on financial status of the learner. The learner must be an average individual who can afford some electronic devices which will help in the teaching and learning of the language such as tape recorder, telephone, radio, internet services just to mention a few. It is worthy of note that it is compulsory for the

learner to visit one of the Francophone countries in West Africa to listen to the native speakers and get properly immersed in the target language.

### **African Culture and the Teaching and Learning of French as a Second Language in Nigeria**

Okpo Ajah (2001:99) cited from Cultural Policy for Nigeria (1988) that:

culture is not merely a return to the customs of the past. It embodies the attitude of a people to the future of their traditional values faced with the demands of modern technology which is an essential factor of development and progress. Culture encompasses all the activities or things which human beings create in the process of their encounter with their environment.

He stresses further that culture is dynamic and ever changing. In culture, nothing remains constant: reproduction. One can argue further that since African culture is also dynamic and ever changing, Nigerians have no choice but to learn French Language because of its prospects. The teaching of foreign languages like French other language in African schools and universities is often justified on the grounds that such languages do not only guarantee for the receiving society access into other cultures but that they also provide the surest path that we can take to modernity and technological advancement. African as well as Nigerian intellectuals would benefit immensely by looking more closely into this foreign culture because of the function it has played both in Africa and in other parts of the world. The integrative function of culture remains the most important aspect of its relevance to society. African culture integrates the individual into society and implies therefore a necessary and inevitable curb on individualism. African culture is a strategic instrument of communication in which the importance of learning of French language cannot be over emphasized. It refers to man-made aspects of our social environment including the ideas and symbols we

use. Culture is more than just a heritage. It is a historical product (Uchendu, 2001:18). It is more than the expression of man's mode of living, it is something that individuals in each society must undergo as a kind of fate or *rites de passage*. In an age when Nigeria must re-design its political and cultural institutions, African culture must be seen as an instrumental agent, a mode of intervention in our social and economic life. In an age of regional integration, culture should serve as an interventionist rather than a passive agent. On the other hand, Nigerians and other West African peoples who had long bonds of cultural interaction with each other particularly on the borderlands still continued to live the way they had known life. E.g. Niger people and Nigerians share same border, both countries speak Hausa. Although now and then, there were strong reprisals from officials and state agents yet the people continued to see themselves as one and to see the territories on both sides of the administrative boundaries as belonging to them. The greatest implications for African cultural life are those that are connected with language, education, political and economic development. It possesses positive elements that could create a greater basis for unity among African people. The emphasis on African unity was the product of the colonial experience.

The new languages, both French and English opened up a wider world to their users in the colonial societies and as their understanding spread, they opened up communication links with more and more groups within the colonies and outside as forces that globalize modes of expression among colonial West Africans, they possessed positive implications for greater unity and cooperation. With French, College students will have access to the most widely spoken foreign language in the world after English and they will become familiar with a culture that significantly influences their own. The French economy is one of the strongest in the world and is increasingly a leader in technological innovation. In summary, French is the language of the future. French language is used in politically

independent French speaking African countries as a medium of administration, education and literature, it means that the language has become a national heritage for individual countries: the national and international relevance of the language is further emphasized by the adoption of the language by non-French speaking African countries (Kwofie, E. N. 1985). French is a development tool for a country like Nigeria to develop their own cultures. It is truly the expression of a culture and culture is a way of life. On the other hand, the introduction of foreign culture into black Africa has almost in all cases been part of a process of domination in which black Africans are “enslaved” by the owner of the new culture, the last resort was “confrontation” of foreign cultures with black African cultures. Oke (1988:166) says that “a deliberate and uncontrolled assimilation of foreign languages like French can only increase the differences between the classes and the individuals, thereby strengthening the disintegrative forces that exist in a society”. Tunde Babawale (2007) opines that “at present, representation of the people is more of a legal prescription than a social reality in most parts of Africa. First, the official languages in which the constitutions are written English, French, Portuguese and Spanish are not lingua franca for the vast majority of the population of the respective countries. Even for the majority of those who use these languages the level of competence in communicating in them could be very low. The languages in which governance is conducted effectively exclude the vast majority of the population. A manifestation of negative impact of African culture on teaching and learning of culture on teaching and learning of French as a second language in Nigeria is the replacement of traditional economy and informal training by Westernization. In African culture, informal training in fishing, farming, blacksmithing, carving has been replaced with a petrol-dollar economy.

Agricultural productivity such as fishing in the Niger Delta area has decreased drastically in the areas leading to the prevalence of poverty. Youth of

this 21<sup>st</sup> century after some formal training now run after Dollars, Pounds, and Euros just to mention few. They want to ride in exotic cars at their prime age and that is why one sees them in cyber cafes searching various websites where they could gather some information and in turn alter the information to suit them, what a fraudulent act!

### Problems and Prospects

After English, French is the preferred language of globalization. It is one of the exoglossic languages i.e. it is foreign and non-native to Nigeria. Constitutionally, French is not recognized as a second official language in Nigeria but it was only in governmental policy which was declared in 1988 by National Language Policy (Awonusi, 2004). The addition of French to the curriculum as an additional official language has also had little impact as government publications remained largely in English and most of the print and electronic media use English, while schools merely teach French as any other school subject i.e. it is not used language of instruction. Consequently, many of those who learnt French in schools today are passive bilingual, who hardly use it in any form of social intercourse outside the schools (Awonusi, 2004:98). He further cites the work of Imaseun (1985) that “students of French revert to the use of English or their mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment as soon as they leave the language laboratories or classrooms where French is taught”.

**Lack of Qualified Teachers:** There are few teachers who study and are willing to teach French after their course of studies. Qualified ones are not ready to teach, they prefer going in search of greener pastures in francophone countries. Those who are ready are not motivated and are sometimes ill-trained. Similarly, the implementation of the National Policy of Language on French is not encouraging. French teachers are compelled to teach other related subjects like English rather than French they are trained for.

**Lack of Well Equipped Language Laboratories:**

Most schools in Nigeria are ill-equipped with language equipment. This deficiency cuts across all levels, both primary and tertiary institutions. Those schools with laboratories are inadequately furnished with earpieces, tape recorder, projector, television, DVD player just to mention few. Without the above-named electronic gadgets, effective learning and teaching of French language cannot be possible because listening and communication skills are the best methods to learn and teach French. The optional status of French in secondary and tertiary institutions has led to a significant decline in interest towards teaching and learning of French. Most parents fail to know the benefits of French language and so they don't encourage their wards except they find themselves in tight corner, where they don't have option other than to study it and inadequate mastery of French by the few learners pose an everlasting problem to the learning and teaching of French as a second language in Nigeria.

**Prospects**

Globalization and the greatly accelerated innovation cycles demand that any country interested in a total and complete growth must develop a foreign policy that will encourage each citizen to speak at least one of these leading foreign languages e.g. French, German and Portuguese. The purpose of foreign language policy is no doubt to produce some Nigerians who will be the mouthpiece of the nation in various foreign language needs. The teaching and learning of French should be encouraged in the Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and in the Nigerian Universities because of political, economic, academic, cultural and religious reasons. Our lack of foreign language competence diminishes our capacity to compete in diplomacy, foreign trade and comprehension of the world in which we live (Witte, 1997:25). Quoting Harbinson, Witte affirms that;

the basic problems of most of the underdeveloped countries are not a

poverty of natural resources but the underdevelopment of their human resources. Hence their first task must be to build up their human capital.

Furthermore, Nigerian government should be able to produce sufficient qualified manpower such as sophisticated professionals, like interpreters, translators, diplomatic personnel, bilingual secretaries and by so doing, enjoy a closer economic cooperation with France. The knowledge of a foreign language like French is indeed an investment with immeasurable advantages for our nation, Nigeria. Establishment of cultural centres like alliance Française in all cities in Nigeria to promote teaching and learning of French as a second language in Nigeria as well as our cultures and values. Great awareness should be created among Nigerians through organization of seminars, conferences and workshops within and outside Nigeria. Sonaya (2001:199) argues that;

French is a romance language which could gain so much ground and even rise to the level of becoming second official language in Nigeria despite the fact that its existence dates back to 1960. One should be confident that there is going to be a brighter future for French.

The direct and audio visual methods which have been very much in vogue throughout the world are also being used in Africa. (Kwofie, 1985:36). In addition, the learner must have a firm control of the grammar of French, and "adequate" knowledge of the lexicon and a pronunciation that makes for easy communication. Such knowledge can be acquired only through long hours of study and engagement in pseudo-language activities which in the estimation of psychologists and language dictators ensure the ability to use language. France is the only country from the Western hemisphere which at present enjoys a formal cultural and educational agreement

with Nigeria; therefore, promotion of French cultural activities, encouragement of French and francophone artist and assistance to creativity should be rendered. The creation of viable institutions to serve as research centres for the actualization of literary and artistic goals should be created. Learners of French are advised to use various expressions such as idioms, proverbs and grammatical terms to enhance their spoken ability. Learners should get familiar with simplified story books in French like *Petit villageois*, *Les Konés* to meet up with standard day-to-day expressions in French. Writing series of French compositions, essays, recitation of poems and singing songs in French would serve as a kind of controlled reservoir of knowledge and much vocabulary would be acquired through this medium.

### **Conclusion**

French is a language that is still widely studied despite the competition from English and the Asian languages. To boost the spread of French, young teachers of 21<sup>st</sup> century rely on government to restructure French syllabus with more references to the rest of the French speaking world. Establishment of French media houses with programmes broadcast on national TV channel should be encouraged. Undoubtedly, French is beneficial to the elites. Better knowledge of French and its huge contribution to humanity would enrich Nigeria in many fields. In order to achieve this, it is important to develop the teaching of French studies and to translate works which would make the French speaking world accessible.

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