

THE ROLE OF FRENCH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article examines the role of French language education in Nigeria and highlights its implementation, challenges, and national relevance through a review of existing studies and policy frameworks. Although French was declared Nigeria's second official language in 1996 and incorporated into the National Policy on Education, its actual implementation in public schools remains limited and uneven. Drawing on a qualitative synthesis of over twenty peer-reviewed studies, the article evaluates key dimensions of French education, including curriculum design, teacher development, pedagogical practices, and learner engagement across different regions. The findings reveal persistent structural challenges such as inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor infrastructure, and low learner motivation. Nevertheless, the study identifies institutional innovation and strategic partnerships as emerging pathways for improvement. It argues for renewed investment in teacher training, curriculum reform, and stronger policy enforcement. By synthesizing these insights, the article contributes to ongoing national debates on educational reform and language planning, positioning French as a critical tool for regional integration and national development.

Keywords: Curriculum Implementation, French Language Education, Learner Engagement, Nigeria Language Policy, Regional Integration, Teacher Training

1. Introduction

Nigeria is one of Africa's most linguistically diverse nations, with over 500 indigenous languages coexisting alongside English, the official language (Eka, 2019). Within this multilingual landscape, French occupies a position of strategic importance due to Nigeria's geopolitical proximity to several Francophone countries, including Bénin Republic, Cameroon, and Niger. In recognition of this, the Federal Government declared French as Nigeria's second official language in 1996, underscoring its relevance for diplomacy, regional cooperation, and international engagement (Offorma, 2012). Beyond its diplomatic significance, French plays a crucial role in facilitating regional integration, trade, and cross-border communication within West Africa (Sanni-Suleiman, 2022). Consequently, its inclusion in Nigeria's education system has received sustained policy attention. The National Policy on Education (NPE) designates French as a core subject at the junior secondary level, with the broader objective of equipping learners with

communicative competence and intercultural awareness. However, despite these policy intentions, the implementation of French language education across Nigerian schools remains inconsistent and uneven.

This inconsistency reflects a broader structural challenge within the Nigerian education system namely, the gap between policy formulation and practical implementation. In many schools, particularly in rural and underserved areas, French language instruction is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, limited pedagogical training, and low learner motivation (Awanbor, 2023). As a result, the presence of French in policy documents does not necessarily translate into meaningful classroom practice. While some studies have highlighted the potential of digital tools and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance language learning, access to such innovations remains limited, further reinforcing disparities in educational provision (Inyang, 2017). Although a growing body of research has examined French language education in Nigeria, much of the existing literature focuses on isolated aspects such as policy design, curriculum structure, or teacher development. There is limited integrative analysis of how these factors interact to shape overall learning outcomes within the Nigerian context. This fragmentation constrains a comprehensive understanding of the systemic challenges affecting French education.

This article addresses this gap by providing a critical and integrative review of French language education in Nigeria, focusing on the interconnections between policy frameworks, curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and learner engagement. By synthesizing these dimensions, the study contributes to ongoing debates on educational reform and language planning, while also identifying practical pathways for strengthening the role of French as a tool for national development and regional integration.

2. Literature Review

French language education in Nigeria has been widely examined across multiple domains, particularly in relation to language policy, curriculum design, teacher development, and learner engagement. While existing studies consistently affirm the strategic importance of French within Nigeria's multilingual and geopolitical context, they also reveal persistent structural and systemic constraints that limit its effective integration into the education system. A critical examination of the literature shows that these challenges are interconnected, yet often treated in isolation. A central theme in the literature is the role of language policy in shaping educational practice. Scholars such as Offorma (2012) and Adejimola (2010) argue that the inclusion of French in the National Policy on Education reflects Nigeria's commitment to regional integration and international

cooperation. The declaration of French as Nigeria's second official language in 1996 further reinforces its symbolic and strategic importance. However, several studies highlight a fundamental policy–practice disjuncture. While French is prominently featured in policy documents, its implementation remains inconsistent across schools. This has led researchers to characterize Nigerian language policy as largely symbolic, lacking the institutional mechanisms, enforcement strategies, and accountability structures necessary for effective implementation.

Closely related to policy concerns are issues of curriculum design and delivery. The French curriculum, developed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), is structured around communicative competence, incorporating listening, speaking, reading, writing, and cultural awareness (Yusuf & Ashiru, 2022). This aligns with contemporary approaches to second language acquisition, which emphasize functional language use and contextual learning. However, empirical studies suggest a significant disconnect between curriculum design and classroom practice. Araromi (2018) and Awanbor (2023) note that in many schools—particularly in underserved areas French instruction is reduced to grammar-focused teaching and rote memorization, with minimal emphasis on communicative interaction. This gap undermines the effectiveness of the curriculum and limits students' ability to use the language in real-life contexts.

Teacher-related factors constitute another major area of concern in the literature. A consistent finding across studies is the shortage of qualified French language teachers, particularly in public schools and rural regions (Onuko, 2011; Awanbor, 2023). Beyond this shortage, issues of teacher quality and preparedness are also significant. Akinpelu and Yegblemenawo (2023) argue that many teachers lack exposure to modern pedagogical approaches, especially communicative language teaching (CLT), which reduces their ability to engage learners effectively. Furthermore, the absence of structured and continuous professional development programs means that many teachers rely on outdated instructional methods, further limiting the quality of language instruction. In addition to teacher-related challenges, infrastructural and resource constraints are widely documented. Studies indicate that many Nigerian schools lack essential facilities such as language laboratories, audio-visual equipment, and up-to-date instructional materials (Awodeha & Chika, 2025). These deficiencies significantly restrict the implementation of interactive and learner-centered teaching approaches. Although some researchers, such as Inyang (2017), highlight the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance language learning particularly through mobile applications, audio tools, and interactive

platforms the adoption of such technologies remains limited due to infrastructural barriers and uneven access.

Learner-related factors also play a critical role in shaping educational outcomes. Research consistently shows that student motivation toward French is relatively low, particularly in contexts where the language has limited immediate practical relevance (Onuko, 2011). The dominance of English as the primary language of instruction, coupled with interference from indigenous languages, further complicates the learning process. In many cases, students have limited exposure to authentic French usage outside the classroom, which reduces opportunities for practice and reinforces the perception of French as an abstract or non-essential subject.

Despite the extensive body of research on French language education in Nigeria, a significant gap remains. Much of the existing literature examines individual components such as policy, curriculum, teacher development, or learner attitudes in isolation. There is limited integrative analysis of how these factors interact within the broader educational system to influence learning outcomes. This fragmentation constrains a holistic understanding of the systemic challenges facing French language education. This study addresses this gap by providing a critical and integrative review of French language education in Nigeria. It examines the interrelationships between policy frameworks, curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and learner engagement, offering a more comprehensive perspective on the structural dynamics shaping language education. By doing so, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within French language education and proposes pathways for more effective implementation.

3. Historical Evolution of French Language Education in Nigeria

The development of French language education in Nigeria is closely linked to the country's historical trajectory and its geopolitical positioning within West Africa. Although Nigeria was colonized by Britain and adopted English as its official language, its proximity to several Francophone countries including Bénin Republic, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon has consistently underscored the strategic importance of French. This geographical reality has influenced both Nigeria's diplomatic orientation and its language policy decisions, particularly in relation to education.

3.1 Early Exposure and Colonial Indifference

French language exposure in Nigeria predates its formal inclusion in the education system. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, interactions with French missionaries and traders especially in border communities introduced elements of the language through informal means (Orekan, 2010). However, during the colonial period, British educational policy largely excluded French from formal instruction, prioritizing English as the primary medium of administration and control (Offorma, 2012). This colonial neglect had lasting implications for language development in Nigeria. The absence of early institutional support for French delayed the establishment of structured language education, thereby creating a foundational gap that later policy efforts struggled to address. As a result, French entered the Nigerian education system without a strong historical base for widespread adoption.

3.2 French in the National Policy on Education

The post-independence period marked a significant shift in Nigeria's language policy. With increasing emphasis on Pan-African cooperation and regional integration, French began to gain recognition as a language of diplomacy and cross-border communication. This shift was formally institutionalized in the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1977, which acknowledged the importance of foreign language education within the national curriculum (Adejimola, 2010).

Subsequent revisions of the policy in 1981, 1998, and 2004 reinforced this position, designating French as an official foreign language within the education system. The declaration of French as Nigeria's second official language in 1996 represented a critical milestone in national language planning. However, despite its symbolic significance, this policy decision was not accompanied by sufficient institutional support. The absence of coordinated implementation strategies, funding mechanisms, and teacher development frameworks limited its practical impact, thereby reinforcing the gap between policy intention and educational reality (Offorma, 2012; Orekan, 2010).

3.3 Curriculum Development and Structural Implementation

The development of the French language curriculum in Nigeria has been guided by national agencies such as the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). The curriculum is structured around communicative competence, emphasizing language skills development alongside cultural awareness (Yusuf & Ashiru, 2022). In principle, this aligns with

contemporary approaches to second language acquisition. However, the implementation of this curriculum has been constrained by systemic limitations. Many schools lack the necessary instructional materials, including audio-visual resources and language laboratories, which are essential for effective communicative language teaching. In addition, teachers often operate without adequate professional support or opportunities for continuous training. These constraints have weakened the translation of curriculum objectives into meaningful classroom practice, particularly in public schools and underserved areas (Awanbor, 2023; Araromi, 2018).

3.4 Role of International Partnerships and Language Institutes

In response to these challenges, international collaborations have played a supplementary role in supporting French language education in Nigeria. Institutions such as the French Embassy, the Institut Français, and other Francophone partners have contributed through teacher training programs, scholarships, instructional materials, and immersion opportunities (Iteogu, 2016). Similarly, language centers such as the Centre for French Teaching and Documentation (CFTD), established in cities including Abuja, Ibadan, and Enugu, have served as important hubs for teacher development and language proficiency enhancement. While these initiatives have provided valuable support, their impact remains limited in scale and uneven in distribution. Consequently, they have not sufficiently addressed the broader structural deficiencies within the national education system.

3.5 Regional Variations and Uneven Growth

The evolution of French language education in Nigeria has been marked by significant regional disparities. Southern states, which generally benefit from better infrastructure and greater access to educational partnerships, have made relatively more progress in implementing French language programs. In contrast, northern and rural regions continue to face systemic challenges, including teacher shortages, insecurity, and limited institutional support (Onuko, 2011). Studies indicate that, despite its presence in policy documents, French often occupies a marginal position in actual educational planning at the state level (Yusuf & Ashiru, 2022; Sanni-Suleiman, 2022). In some cases, the subject is absent from school timetables altogether due to a lack of personnel or resources. This uneven development not only undermines national language policy objectives but also reinforces broader patterns of educational inequality across regions.

4. National Policy on Education and French Curriculum Structure

The National Policy on Education (NPE) serves as the central framework guiding educational planning and delivery in Nigeria. Since its introduction in 1977, the policy has undergone several revisions aimed at aligning education with national development priorities, including linguistic diversity, regional integration, and global competitiveness. Within this framework, French is recognized as a strategically important foreign language intended to facilitate communication with neighboring Francophone countries and enhance Nigeria's international engagement (Adejimola, 2010). Despite this formal recognition, a persistent gap exists between policy articulation and implementation. While French is prominently featured in national policy documents, its practical delivery within schools remains inconsistent across regions and institutions. This disconnect reflects a broader structural weakness in educational policy design, where inclusion at the policy level is not matched by corresponding institutional support, funding, or accountability mechanisms.

4.1 Policy Provisions for French Language Education

The 1977 edition of the NPE established the foundation for foreign language education in Nigeria, with French identified as a key component of the curriculum. Subsequent revisions in 1981, 1998, 2004, and 2013 reaffirmed this position, designating French as a compulsory subject at the junior secondary level and an elective subject at the senior secondary and tertiary levels (Adejimola, 2010). The declaration of French as Nigeria's second official language in 1996 further underscored its importance within national language planning. However, this policy shift has largely remained symbolic. In many states, French is included in official timetables but is not effectively taught due to the absence of qualified teachers, insufficient instructional materials, and weak administrative enforcement (Yusuf & Ashiru, 2022). This situation illustrates a critical limitation of policy design in Nigeria, where formal provisions are not supported by clear implementation strategies, monitoring frameworks, or resource allocation plans.

4.2 Curriculum Design and Content Structure

The French language curriculum in Nigeria is developed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and is structured to promote communicative competence. It integrates key language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing alongside cultural awareness, reflecting contemporary approaches to second language acquisition (Yusuf & Ashiru, 2022). While the curriculum is theoretically robust, its practical relevance is constrained

by the realities of classroom implementation. In many schools, particularly in underserved areas, instruction is limited to vocabulary memorization and grammar-focused teaching, with little emphasis on communicative interaction. This disconnect between curriculum design and classroom practice undermines the intended learning outcomes and reduces the functional value of French for learners (Awanbor, 2023).

Furthermore, the curriculum remains insufficiently responsive to contemporary linguistic needs. It does not adequately incorporate practical domains such as business communication, digital interaction, or regionally relevant conversational usage. As a result, students often perceive French as abstract and disconnected from real-world application, which negatively affects motivation and engagement.

4.3 Curriculum Implementation Challenges

The implementation of the French curriculum in Nigeria is shaped by a range of structural constraints. One of the most significant challenges is the shortage of qualified French language teachers, which limits both access to and quality of instruction (Onuko, 2011). In many schools, French is either taught by under-qualified personnel or not taught at all. In addition, there is a widespread lack of instructional resources. Essential materials such as textbooks, audio-visual aids, language laboratories, and digital learning tools are either insufficient or entirely absent in many public schools. This resource deficit restricts the adoption of communicative and interactive teaching approaches, reducing language learning to a largely theoretical exercise (Akinpelu & Yegblemenawo, 2023). Regional disparities further complicate curriculum implementation. States in Southern Nigeria, such as Lagos and Ogun, tend to have better access to trained teachers and educational partnerships, while States in Northern Nigeria—including Zamfara, Borno, and Gombe—face severe shortages of both human and material resources (Onuko, 2011; Sanni-Suleiman, 2022). This uneven distribution of educational opportunities undermines national policy objectives and reinforces broader patterns of educational inequality. Taken together, these challenges suggest that the limitations of French language education in Nigeria are not solely due to curriculum design, but rather to the absence of an enabling environment for effective implementation. Without addressing these systemic constraints, policy reforms are unlikely to produce meaningful improvements in learning outcomes.

5. Teacher Training, Pedagogy, and Professional Development

The effectiveness of French language education in Nigeria is closely tied to the quality of teacher preparation, pedagogical practices, and opportunities for

continuous professional development. While policy frameworks emphasize the importance of French as a strategic language, the capacity of teachers to deliver meaningful instruction remains a critical limiting factor. The challenges associated with teacher training are not only issues of quantity but also of quality, relevance, and systemic support.

5.1 The Shortage of Qualified French Teachers

One of the most persistent challenges identified in the literature is the shortage of qualified French language teachers across Nigeria (Onuko, 2011; Awanbor, 2023). This shortage is particularly acute in public schools and in rural and northern regions, where access to specialized language educators is severely limited. In many cases, French is taught by teachers who lack formal training in the language or in language pedagogy, resulting in compromised instructional quality. This shortage reflects broader systemic issues in teacher recruitment and training. The limited number of graduates specializing in French education, combined with weak incentives for language teaching careers, has created a structural imbalance between policy expectations and available human resources. Consequently, even where French is included in school timetables, effective delivery is often unattainable.

5.2 Pre-Service and In-Service Training Gaps

Teacher preparation programs in Colleges of Education and universities provide foundational knowledge in French language studies. However, these programs often emphasize literary and grammatical competence at the expense of practical teaching skills. As a result, many teachers enter the classroom with limited capacity to deliver engaging, learner-centered instruction (Offorma, 2012). In addition, in-service training and continuous professional development opportunities remain inconsistent and inadequate. Many French teachers operate for extended periods without exposure to updated pedagogical approaches, curriculum innovations, or technological tools. This lack of ongoing professional development contributes to the persistence of outdated instructional practices and limits the adaptability of teachers to changing educational demands (Onuko, 2011).

5.3 Pedagogical Practices and Student Engagement

Pedagogical approaches employed in French language classrooms in Nigeria are often characterized by traditional, teacher-centered methods. These include lecture-based instruction, rote memorization, and translation exercises, which place limited emphasis on communicative competence and active learner

participation (Awanbor, 2023). Such approaches have significant implications for student engagement and learning outcomes. Language acquisition, particularly in a second language context, requires interactive and communicative practices that allow learners to use the language meaningfully. Where these methods are absent, students are less likely to develop fluency, confidence, or sustained interest in the language. Although some studies suggest that interactive methods such as role-play, dialogue practice, songs, and visual aids can enhance engagement and retention (Awodeha & Chika, 2025), the adoption of such approaches remains limited. Factors such as large class sizes, lack of instructional materials, and insufficient teacher training constrain the implementation of communicative language teaching strategies.

5.4 The Role of Technology in Teacher Support

The integration of technology into language teaching has been identified as a potential avenue for improving both teacher effectiveness and learner outcomes. ICT-based tools, including mobile applications, audio platforms, and interactive learning systems, offer opportunities for enhanced pronunciation practice, individualized learning, and increased student engagement (Ohanma, 2023). However, the application of these technologies in Nigerian schools remains uneven. Many public schools lack the necessary infrastructure, including reliable electricity, internet access, and digital devices, to support technology-enhanced learning. In addition, teachers often lack the training required to effectively integrate digital tools into their instructional practices. As a result, the potential of technology to transform French language education remains largely underutilized.

5.5 International Support and Professional Networks

International collaborations have played a supportive role in enhancing teacher development in French language education. Organizations such as the French Embassy and the Institut Français have provided training workshops, immersion programs, and instructional resources aimed at improving teacher competence (Iteogu, 2016). Language centers such as the Centre for French Teaching and Documentation (CFTD) also contribute to professional development by offering certification programs and training opportunities. However, these initiatives are often limited in scope and accessibility. Their impact is typically concentrated in urban centers, leaving many teachers in rural and underserved areas without access to such support. This uneven distribution of professional development opportunities highlights the need for a more coordinated and scalable national framework for teacher training. Without such a framework, efforts to improve French language education will remain fragmented and insufficient.

6. Teaching and Learning Challenges

Despite its inclusion in national education policy, the teaching and learning of French in Nigeria continue to face a range of structural and pedagogical challenges that limit effective language acquisition. These challenges are not isolated but interconnected, reflecting broader systemic constraints within the education system. Their impact is most evident at the level of classroom practice, where both teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes are significantly affected.

6.1 Infrastructure and Resource Deficiencies

One of the most significant barriers to effective French language learning in Nigeria is the lack of adequate infrastructure and instructional resources. Many schools, particularly in under-served areas, operate without essential facilities such as language laboratories, audio-visual equipment, and sufficient teaching materials. In such contexts, language instruction is restricted to textbook-based learning, with limited opportunities for listening and speaking practice (Awanbor, 2023). This resource deficit has direct implications for language acquisition. Without exposure to authentic pronunciation models and interactive learning tools, students struggle to develop oral proficiency and listening comprehension skills. Consequently, French learning becomes largely theoretical, limiting learners' ability to use the language in practical contexts.

6.2 Learner Motivation and Sociolinguistic Constraints

Learner motivation represents another critical challenge in French language education. In many cases, students perceive French as a subject with limited practical relevance, particularly when compared to subjects such as English, mathematics, and science. This perception is influenced by the dominance of English in academic and professional domains, as well as the limited visibility of French in everyday communication.

Sociolinguistic factors further complicate the learning process. In multilingual environments, interference from indigenous languages and English can affect learners' ability to grasp French phonology and grammar. Additionally, limited exposure to authentic language use outside the classroom reduces opportunities for practice, reinforcing the perception of French as abstract and disconnected from real-life application (Onuko, 2011).

6.3 Phonetics and Pronunciation Challenges

Pronunciation remains a persistent difficulty for many learners of French in Nigeria. The phonological structure of French differs significantly from both English and most indigenous Nigerian languages, particularly in areas such as nasal vowels, liaison, and intonation patterns. As a result, learners often transfer phonetic patterns from familiar languages, leading to inaccurate pronunciation. The lack of targeted phonetic instruction and limited access to audio resources further exacerbate this challenge. Awodeha and Chika (2025) note that many students complete several years of French study without achieving basic pronunciation accuracy. This not only affects intelligibility but also undermines learner confidence and willingness to participate in oral communication.

6.4 Time Allocation and Curriculum Constraints

Limited instructional time also affects the effectiveness of French language teaching. In many schools, French is allocated minimal contact hours often one or two periods per week which is insufficient for meaningful language acquisition. In some cases, French is treated as a secondary or rotational subject, resulting in inconsistent exposure and discontinuity in learning (Yusuf & Ashiru, 2022). This limited time allocation reflects broader curriculum prioritization issues. Subjects perceived as more critical for examinations and career prospects tend to receive greater attention, while French is marginalized. This institutional positioning reinforces low learner engagement and reduces the perceived importance of the subject.

6.5 Regional Disparities in Learning Opportunities

The quality of French language learning in Nigeria varies significantly across regions. Students in urban centers, particularly in southern states, are more likely to benefit from better infrastructure, qualified teachers, and access to supplementary learning resources. In contrast, learners in northern and rural regions face compounded challenges, including teacher shortages, limited facilities, and reduced institutional support (Sanni-Suleiman, 2022). These disparities create unequal learning opportunities and contribute to a national imbalance in French language proficiency. As a result, access to French education—and its associated academic and professional benefits remains unevenly distributed across the country.

6.6 Assessment Limitations

Assessment practices in French language education also present challenges. While national examination bodies such as WAEC and NECO include French as an elective subject, there is limited standardization in classroom-based assessment. In many schools, evaluation methods focus primarily on written tests and memorization, with insufficient emphasis on communicative competence. This misalignment between assessment practices and curriculum objectives weakens the overall effectiveness of language instruction. Without clear and consistent benchmarks for proficiency, both teachers and learners lack a structured framework for measuring progress and improving performance (Onuko, 2011).

7. Relevance of French to National Development and Integration

The role of French language education in Nigeria extends beyond academic instruction; it is intrinsically linked to national development, regional integration, and global competitiveness. Nigeria's geopolitical position within West Africa, surrounded predominantly by Francophone countries, makes French not merely a foreign language but a strategic necessity. Despite longstanding challenges in its implementation, the relevance of French to Nigeria's socio-economic and political landscape remains significant.

7.1 Geopolitical and Diplomatic Importance

Nigeria shares borders with several French-speaking countries, including Bénin Republic, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. These borders represent not only geographical proximity but also zones of active diplomatic engagement, trade interaction, and cultural exchange. French serves as a key working language in regional and international organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) (Sanni-Suleiman, 2022).

In this context, proficiency in French is essential for effective participation in regional diplomacy and international relations. The declaration of French as Nigeria's second official language reflects this strategic reality. However, the limited proficiency of many Nigerian professionals in French continues to constrain the country's ability to fully engage in multilingual diplomatic spaces. This underscores the need to strengthen French language education as part of broader national development strategies.

7.2 Economic Integration and Cross-Border Commerce

Language plays a critical role in economic interaction, particularly within regional trade networks. French is spoken by millions of people across West and Central Africa, making it a valuable tool for Nigerian entrepreneurs, traders, and professionals seeking to engage with Francophone markets. Border regions, especially in states such as Ogun, Borno, and Sokoto, serve as key points of commercial exchange between Nigeria and neighboring countries. However, language barriers often limit the effectiveness of these interactions. Traders, customs officials, and business people frequently encounter communication challenges that affect negotiations, documentation, and transaction efficiency (Yusuf & Ashiru, 2022). Enhancing French language proficiency among these groups would facilitate smoother cross-border trade and strengthen regional economic integration.

7.3 French and Regional Security Collaboration

French language proficiency also has implications for national and regional security. Nigeria participates in multinational security operations aimed at addressing transnational threats such as terrorism, trafficking, and cross-border crime. These operations often involve collaboration with French-speaking countries in the Sahel region. Effective communication is critical in such contexts. Limited proficiency in French among Nigerian security personnel can hinder coordination, intelligence sharing, and joint operational planning. As Sanni-Suleiman (2022) notes, the development of bilingual professionals in security and defense sectors is essential for navigating complex multilingual environments. In this regard, French is not merely an academic subject but a strategic tool for national security.

7.4 Employment Opportunities and Global Competitiveness

Proficiency in French enhances individual employability in an increasingly globalized world. Graduates with competence in French have access to a wider range of career opportunities, including positions in foreign embassies, multinational organizations, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), translation services, and the tourism and hospitality sectors (Odudigbo & Musa, 2024).

In addition, French proficiency provides access to international educational opportunities, including scholarships, exchange programs, and professional training in Francophone countries such as France, Canada, and Belgium. Within Nigeria, bilingualism is gradually becoming an asset in both public and private

sector employment. As global economic integration intensifies, language competence particularly in widely spoken international languages such as French represents a significant competitive advantage.

7.5 National Unity and Cultural Integration

Beyond its economic and political relevance, French also contributes to cultural and social development. In a linguistically diverse country like Nigeria, language education can serve as a tool for promoting intercultural understanding and national cohesion. Learning French exposes students to different cultural perspectives, fostering openness, tolerance, and global awareness. Furthermore, French provides access to a rich body of Francophone literature, music, cinema, and intellectual traditions, including those rooted in African contexts. This cultural exposure strengthens Nigeria's engagement with the broader African and global community. As such, French language education contributes not only to functional communication but also to the development of culturally informed and globally competent citizens.

8. Policy Gaps, Future Directions, and Recommendations

Despite the formal recognition of French as Nigeria's second official language and its inclusion in successive revisions of the National Policy on Education, the implementation of French language education remains inconsistent and fragmented. The challenges identified across previous sections point to significant policy gaps that must be addressed to achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes. These gaps are not merely operational but structural, reflecting deeper issues in educational planning, resource allocation, and institutional coordination.

8.1 Disconnect Between Policy and Implementation

One of the most critical gaps in French language education in Nigeria is the disconnect between policy formulation and practical implementation. While French is clearly articulated in national policy documents, many schools lack the necessary conditions to deliver effective instruction. This reflects the absence of clear implementation frameworks, timelines, and accountability mechanisms.

Recommendation:

The Federal Ministry of Education should develop and implement a National French Language Development Plan with clearly defined goals, timelines, and monitoring systems. This plan should include measurable targets for teacher

recruitment, curriculum delivery, and student proficiency, as well as mechanisms for regular evaluation and reporting.

8.2 Inadequate Funding and Resource Allocation

The under-funding of French language education remains a major constraint. Limited budgetary allocation has resulted in inadequate teaching materials, poor infrastructure, and insufficient support for teacher development. This disproportionately affects public schools and underserved regions.

Recommendation:

Government funding for language education should be increased and strategically allocated to ensure equitable access to resources. Priority should be given to public schools in underserved areas, with targeted investment in instructional materials, language laboratories, and digital learning tools.

8.3 Weak Teacher Development Systems

The absence of a structured and coordinated framework for teacher development has contributed to the shortage of qualified French teachers and the persistence of outdated pedagogical practices. Current training systems lack consistency, scalability, and alignment with modern teaching approaches.

Recommendation:

A National French Teacher Development Framework should be established to standardize teacher training, certification, and continuous professional development. This framework should include regular in-service training programs, digital learning modules, and partnerships with international language institutions.

8.4 Curriculum Rigidity and Limited Relevance

Although the French curriculum is theoretically aligned with communicative language teaching principles, it remains insufficiently responsive to contemporary needs. Its limited focus on practical application reduces student engagement and perceived relevance.

Recommendation:

The curriculum should be revised to incorporate functional and context-based learning, including business communication, digital interaction, and regionally relevant language use. Greater flexibility should be introduced to allow schools to adapt content to local contexts and learner needs.

8.5 Limited Integration of Technology

The potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance language learning remains largely untapped due to infrastructural and capacity constraints. This limits opportunities for interactive and learner-centered instruction.

Recommendation:

Public-private partnerships should be encouraged to develop and deploy low-cost, scalable digital tools for French language learning. These tools should be designed to function in low-resource environments, including offline capabilities, and should be accompanied by teacher training in technology integration.

8.6 Fragmented Institutional Collaboration

Efforts to support French language education are often fragmented across different institutions, including government agencies, international partners, and private organizations. This lack of coordination reduces the overall effectiveness of interventions.

Recommendation:

A coordinated framework should be established to strengthen collaboration between key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, NERDC, TRCN, and international partners. This would ensure alignment of objectives, efficient resource utilization, and scalability of successful initiatives.

9. Conclusion

French language education in Nigeria occupies a strategically significant position at the intersection of education, diplomacy, economic development, and regional integration. Despite its formal recognition as Nigeria's second official language and its inclusion in the National Policy on Education, its implementation within the school system remains inconsistent and constrained by multiple structural

challenges. This review has highlighted the key factors limiting the effectiveness of French language education, including inadequate infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, weak curriculum implementation, limited learner engagement, and insufficient policy enforcement. These challenges are not isolated but reflect deeper systemic issues within the Nigerian education system, particularly the disconnect between policy formulation and practical execution. At the same time, the analysis underscores the continued relevance of French as a tool for national development. Its importance in regional diplomacy, cross-border trade, security collaboration, and global competitiveness reinforces the need to reposition French language education as a national priority rather than a peripheral subject. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated and sustained effort that goes beyond policy declarations. Strengthening teacher development systems, modernizing curriculum content, improving access to instructional resources, and integrating technology into language teaching are essential steps toward enhancing learning outcomes. Equally important is the establishment of clear implementation frameworks and accountability mechanisms to ensure that policy objectives are effectively translated into classroom practice. Ultimately, the future of French language education in Nigeria depends on a shift from symbolic policy recognition to practical and measurable implementation. By adopting a more integrated and strategic approach, Nigeria can harness the full potential of French as a language of opportunity, positioning its citizens to engage more effectively within the regional and global community.

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