



# Effects of Some French Games on the Academic Achievement of Students in French Language in Junior Secondary Schools in Edo State – Nigeria

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## Abstract

The lackadaisical attitude of students to French language over the years is a major concern to this researcher. Thus, the study is geared towards investigating the effects of some games on the academic achievement of students in French language at the junior secondary class two level. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. To give a light to this study, the pre-test, post-test, non-equivalent control group design was adopted by the researcher. The population for the study was the 4,986 public junior secondary school class two students in Edo metropolis. The purposive sampling techniques was used to select one hundred and sixty two (162) students. From the two selected schools, intact classes were drawn- experimental group and control group. The experimental group was taught with the French games (i.e. the instrument) while the control group was taught with the traditional grammar-translation method. Data was collected using French Achievement Test (FAT). Research questions were answered using means and standard deviations (SD) while research hypotheses were tested using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The analysis of the data yielded the following findings: i. There is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with the French games and those taught without French games using the traditional grammar-translation method. ii. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with the French games and those taught without French games in the traditional grammar translation method due to sex and location.

**Keywords:** French; Games; Academic achievement; French language.

## 1. Introduction

French language is one of the most recognized international languages in the world. Its importance cannot be over emphasized as it serves not only as a means of ordinary communication, it is the official language of so many countries in the world. It is the language of commerce for these several countries. Nigeria as a country is bounded by the East, West, north and south by French speaking nations hence it was at a point in time declared Nigeria's second official language. It is regarded as a compulsory subject in the curriculum of primary and junior secondary schools across the country. French is also being taught at the tertiary level in the country (Omongho, 2016). However, many students who are beginners and encountering the subject for the first time (as this is often the case) at the secondary schools level do not know much about the usefulness of the language and thus, the enthusiasm to study the language is not there. It is pertinent to mention that French language as a subject in Nigerian schools, is not new. It was introduced into the Nigerian schools as far back as 1961 during the Yaonde conference. The conference recommended the introduction of teaching and learning of French as a discipline/subject in Anglophone Africa, including Nigeria. Sadly, the subject is not taken seriously by the Nigerian students, parents and society at large.

French language is considered as one of the most widely used languages. The language has gained higher height among different international languages because of its pertinence in all spheres of life. According to Emordi (1998), French will help Nigeria acquire more knowledge on how to develop the nation as it is one of the languages used for scientific and technological research. In fact, French has been described as a useful instrument as it occupies an influential role in the formation of the national expectations and the integration of the nation and the neighbouring French speaking nations. No wonder scholars and critics of different extractions such as Owoye, (2010), Esoh and Endong (2014) as cited by Fanniran (2016) have examined the utilitarian French language in Nigeria. In their different theoretical and empirical positions they argued that French, as a language performs communicative, interactive, diplomatic and informative functions. From the foregoing, this researcher is of the opinion that most Nigerians are oblivious of the enormous benefits of the language hence the lackadaisical attitude towards it. It is in this regards that Faniran opined that French language which is Nigeria's second official language should not be handled with levity.

It is this background that this researcher decided to see if games can enhance students' academic achievements in French language. Generally, games help students to make and sustain the effort of learning. Language games provide language practice in the various skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing. They encourage students to interact and communicate. Thus, they create meaningful context for language use.

French games are described as those fun activities that challenge students to use and reuse their vocabulary while having fun. With games, students learn French vocabularies without even realizing they are learning. Traditionally, students can increase their vocabulary as a by-product of listening to the teacher speak, watching television and videos, listening to music and reading books, but these sources of language frequently involve highly complex and colloquial language that is extremely difficult for a language learner to decode and assimilate. According to [Linde \(2019\)](#) playing games can be very effective in the learning of French language. According to this scholar, games make students to come alive in the classroom. Playing of games in the classroom may look like waste of time to the non-professional teacher, but children's quest to play is actually biologically and educationally sound. The reason is that children are naturally pre-programmed to play as a way to learn. Their brains assimilates and accommodate information by doing. Examples of games that can help students increase their vocabulary in French include verbal Dominos, Le pendu (Hangman), La Bataille naval (Battleship), Jeopardy and Kim's game. For the purpose of this study, only verbal dominos and the Kim's game will be used.

1. Verbal Dominos: This game which challenges the intellect of the learners will force students to explore their entire vocabulary repeatedly as they play. It has the added advantage of requiring absolutely no preparation time. In using this game in the classroom, the teacher divides the class into teams of two to four students. Each team names a French word in turn. If the teacher wishes to increase the difficulty of the game, the teacher can stipulate a particular subjects. For instance, sports and leisure activities, the supermarket, the home etc.

At any point, a team may challenge another team to spell out the word they have given, any mistake will lead to deduction of point as points are allotted to each team as they score. The teacher is at liberty to make the game easier by allowing the students to use their books to check for words. Ideally, each team has a time limit as this increases the intensity of students' attention and alertness.

2. Kim's game: This game is used to test students' memory recall and vocabulary. In this game, the teacher divides the class into small teams. Ideally, dividing the students into pairs is better. Thereafter, the teacher places a number of objects or pictures of objects on a tray. For instance, the teacher could place objects/items found in the kitchen such as 'spoon' 'fork, plate, cups salt, pepper in a tray or on the table. Give the students ten seconds to memorize the items on the tray or table before covering it with a piece of cloth.

According to [FLUENTU.Com \(2019\)](#), giving a time limit creates a sense of urgency about the task that heightens awareness and increases the students' alertness. The increased alertness will aid memory recall. Students are expected to recall the items in the tray/table in full detail. For instance, "une cuillar, une fourchette, 'l' assiette, la tasse, du sel, le piment."

Students are expected to write down the words correctly- the first team with all the words correctly written wins. Students love play way method of learning Obodo 2004 in [Alio and Okafor \(2017\)](#). Therefore, a student learning from other students in this ways is a very effective teaching practice based on sound pedagogy [FLUENTU.Com \(2019\)](#).

According to [Selvi and Cosan \(2018\)](#), students can learn more effectively through active learning, a process whereby students directly participate in their own learning by interacting with other students to think critically and bolster the learning of new concepts. In other words, educational games require students' active participation in the learning process. Naturally, young students are fun loving people, thus, during the process of using educational games, they are able to explain and express themselves freely to each other and this is what language learning requires. For the effective learning of any language, there is need for communication and in the process of communicating students are able to enhance/increase their vocabulary.

Educational games can be described as the effective alternative to supporting traditional teaching approaches in terms of educators' responsibility, such as inspiring students to learn, teaching them to love learning and making fun [Selvi and Cosan \(2018\)](#). Experience has shown that these responsibilities are often neglected in conventional French language teaching and learning process as teachers often come to the class in most cases to read the text books, explain what is in the text with English language instead of the taught language which is French language. In fact, the traditional/ conventional method of teaching French language is teacher centred. On the other hand, educational games can be described as learner-centred as students do most of the talking as against the traditional/ conventional teacher centred method where the teachers do most of the talking. Games is very interactive as it is described as a situation in which two or more students – the players confront one another in pursuit of certain conflicting objectives. This fact was buttressed by [Selvi and Cosan \(2018\)](#) who stated that games have an important role in realizing active learning since they include both interactive and distinctive elements which boost active learning.

There are ample evidences/researches exposing the effect of games in learning. For instance, Hadfield (1990) confirmed that "games provide as much concentrated practice as a traditional drill and more importantly, they provide an opportunity for real communication, albeit within artificially defined limits, and thus constitute a bridge between classroom and real word." This assertion was reiterated by Bailey (1999) cited in [Mubaslat \(2012\)](#) who declared that the use of educational games in the classroom can increase enthusiasm and reinforce previously presented didactic information. Still on the positive effect of games on learning, [Odenweller et al. \(1998\)](#), opined that games increase students involvement, motivation, and interest in the material and allow the instructor to be creative and original when presenting topics. The study of [Mubaslat \(2012\)](#), also recommended the use of games in teaching as they are effective especially for the primary stages in teaching a second language. The research carried out by [Groff et al. \(2010\)](#) on the impact of console games in the classroom in Scotland primary and high schools, it was discovered among others that games based approaches present an excellent opportunity to engage students in activities which can enhance learning and produce a range of educational benefits. They also averred that games

based learning approaches build on many children's existing interest skills and knowledge which can narrow the gap between children's home and school cultures. In the study of Jung *et al.* (2012), it was declared that educational games have a positive effect on students' intelligence development. This was also reiterated by Jena (2013), who declared that students performed better when taught through language games as it helps students develop the abilities and knowledge, comprehension and application as the items of achievement tests were based on these measures. Reiterating the findings of Jena, Alio and Okafor in their studies found that the use of mathematical games in teaching primary school mathematics enhances pupils' achievement and interest. They further discovered in their study that neither sex nor location is a significant factor in mathematical games to teach primary school mathematics.

Despite all the positive effects on the effect of educational games in teaching and learning there are negative effects, for instance if games are not properly handled, the class might become noisy, it can even result to fight amongst the students. For instance the findings of Lee (1995) declared that there is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

1. What are the mean achievement and standard deviation of students taught with the French games (experimental group) and those taught without French games in traditional grammar translation method (control group)?
2. What are the mean achievement scores and standard deviation of students in experimental and control groups due to sex and location?

### **1.2. Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with French games and those taught without French games in the traditional grammar translation method.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with the French games and those taught without the French games in the traditional grammar translation method due to sex and location.

## **2. Methodology**

A quasi experimental research design of pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group was used for the study. The population for the study consisted of all the one hundred and forty two thousand, five hundred and eighty three (142,383) junior secondary school students. The sample for the study consisted of one hundred and sixty-two (162) junior secondary class two (students). The random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the study.

The research instrument used was French Achievement Test (FAT). FAT contained thirty (30) close test items. FAT was administered on the students as pre-test and post-test in achievement test.

The instrument was validated by two experts in the department of Modern languages, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma -Nigeria. Based on the corrections, some items were modified. For the reliability of the FAT, a group of 2 junior secondary class two students (JSS2) from the neighbouring Delta state was used. Using the split -half method, the scores of the 52 students were correlated. A reliability value of 0.78 was obtained. Thus, the instrument was therefore, adjudged to be adequate for use. Data obtained from research questions were answered using means and standard deviations while the research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

### **2.1. Research Procedure**

The researcher contacted and visited the selected schools and necessary permission was obtained from the authority of the school. In the school, where the instruction was carried out, two JSS2 classes were randomly assigned as experimental group and control group. The French teacher in the school was used as the research assistant. She was trained for two weeks by the researcher on the purpose of the study and how to use the French games- verbal Dominoes and Kim. The lesson (i.e. teaching of the students by the French teacher/research assistant lasted for six weeks as two lesson hours per week. In the experimental group, French games (verbal Dominos and Kim) were used while the control group was taught with traditional grammar translation method without the French games. At the end of the six weeks of teaching, the post-test was carried out on both groups; on students who were taught with French games (experimental group) and those students who were taught without French games using conventional/traditional grammar translation method (control group).

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Research Question One**

What are the mean achievement scores and standard deviations of students taught with French games (experimental group) and those taught without the French games in the traditional grammar tradition method (control group)?

Table-1. Mean and standard deviations of experimental and control groups in the French Achievement Test

Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Experimental group	6.40	4.60	24.61	6.49
Control group	7.92	5.41	11.22	10.82

Table 1 shows that the pre-test achievement scores for experimental and control groups are 6.40 and 7.92 with standard deviation of 4.60 and 5.41 respectively. Post-test achievement mean scores for experimental and control groups are 24.61 and 11.22 respectively with standard deviation of 4.49 and 10.82, it indicates that experimental mean score (24.61) is higher than control mean score (11.22).

### 3.2. Research Question Two

What are the mean achievement scores and standard deviations of students in experimental and control groups due to sex and location?

Table-2. Mean and standard deviation of experimental and control groups in pre-test and post-test due to sex and locations

Groups		Pre-test						Post-test					
		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD
Experimental Control	Urban	7.00	4.66	6.98	4.42	6.99	4.54	24.92	7.28	23.51	6.98	24.22	7.13
	Rural	5.80	3.92	5.82	4.00	5.81	3.96	24.30	6.01	25.71	6.36	25.01	6.19
	Urban	8.80	4.84	6.11	7.28	7.46	6.06	12.18	12.90	10.96	11.7	11.59	12.34
	Rural	7.04	6.11	9.73	5.61	8.39	5.86	10.26	8.41	11.48	79.29	10.87	8.85

Table 2 shows that pre test scores for male and female students in both urban and rural areas are very low compared to post test scores of male and female in both rural and urban areas. The experimental post-test scores in each of urban and rural areas are each higher than the corresponding control post-test scores.

#### 3.2.1. Hypothesis one

There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with French games and those taught without French games in traditional grammar translation method.

Table-3. ANCOVA Results for Experimental and Control Group Respondents in Post Test

Source	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sign decision	Decision
Corrected Model	19.920	2	9.960	8.830	0.000	S
Intercept	3019.581	1	3019.581	2676.934	0.000	
Method	29.349	1	29.349	26.019	0.000	
Error	178.282	138	1.128			
Total	3888.00	161				
Corrected Total		160				

Table 3 shows that the F- calculated value for method (26.019) is significant at 0.000 significant level which is less than 0.05 significant level set for this study. So, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with French games and those taught without French games in the traditional grammar translation method is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with French games and those taught without French games using the traditional grammar translation method.

#### 3.2.2. Hypothesis Two

There is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with French games and those taught without French games using the traditional grammar translation method due to sex and location.

Table-4. ANCOVA Results for Experimental Groups in Post Test due to Sex and Location

Source	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F	Sign decision	Decision
Corrected Model	28.295	6	163.770	20.558	0.000	S
Intercept	1.030	1	1.030	2.279	0.101	
Method	29.349	1	29.349	64.931	0.000	
Location	1.585	1	1.586	3.508	0.060	
Method & Sex	0.999	1	0.999	2.210	0.113	
Method & Location	0.762	1	0.762	1.686	0.264	
Location & Sex	1.386	1	1.386	3.067	0.106	
Method, Location & Sex	0.796	1	0.796	1.761	0.133	



Error	71.416	158	0.452			
Total	243.751	161				
Corrected total	93.642	160				

Table 4 shows that F-computed value for method (64.931) is significant at 0.000 level which is less than 0.05 level set for this study. So the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with the French games and those taught without the French games in the traditional grammar translation method due to sex and location was rejected.

Consequently, method is a significant factor in this study. Furthermore, sex is not a significant factor. The following interaction effects-method by sex, method by location, location by sex and method by location by sex are not significant factors.

#### 4. Discussion of Results

The results for research hypothesis one shows that there is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with French games in the conventional traditional grammar translation method. Thus, students taught with French games achieved significantly higher than those taught without French games in the conventional/traditional grammar –translation method. This is a clear indication that the use of French games in schools is a success and will therefore enhance students learning of French language. This finding is in line that of Hadfield (1990), Odenweller *et al.* (1998), Bailey cited in Jung *et al.* (2012); Mubaslat (2012); Groff *et al.* (2010) ; Selvi and Cosan (2018); Jena (2013) and Linde (2019) who declared that games go a long way to enhance and improve students learning as students learn better when they are actively involved in the act of learning. For instance, Linde (2019) opined that playing games can be very effective in the learning of French language as the students come alive in classroom when they play games. Generally, children are very active and playful, thus, games will certainly enhance and encourage students to learn and speak French language. In contrary to the findings of this study however, Lee (1995) declared that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and that if one is having fun while learning effective learning cannot take place. For this researcher however, there is need to allow students to be active as this will enhance the students zeal to speak the language.

The findings for the second hypothesis for this study reveals that there is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught with French games and those taught without the French games in the traditional/conventional grammar translation method due to sex and location. This goes to show that the use of French game in junior secondary schools were equally effective for both male and female students and also for urban and rural students. Therefore, sex or location of students has no effect on students' achievement in French subject. This finding is in line with that of Alio and Okafor (2017) who found that neither sex nor location is a significant factor in using mathematical game to teach primary school mathematics. This means that educational games serves as an enhancer to learning irrespective of sex and location.

#### 5. Summary Conclusion and Recommendation

This study investigated the effect of French games on the academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Edo State. Two research questions and two hypotheses were posited and tested. The two hypotheses were rejected. The instrument developed for the study was administered on the students.

In conclusion, the study showed a significant relationship between French games and students' academic achievement in French language. In other words, French games impact greatly and positively in the academic achievement of students in French language.

The following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Different stakeholders in the education sector (government, school management, staff, parents and even students) in Edo State should contribute meaningfully into ensuring that adequate French games are made available in junior secondary schools irrespective of their location.
2. Both the school management and staff through the Parent-Teacher Association should make available finances for the purchase of French games.
3. Teacher should endeavour to improvise some of the games.
4. French curriculum planner should include the utilization of games in the teaching of vocabulary and other aspect of French as this will enhance students' skills.
5. Students on their own should be encouraged by their teachers to make available educational games.
6. French teachers should be sent for overseas training/retraining or seminars so as to embrace the latest trend of teaching the language.

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