

## Revitalisation of French Language Study in Nigeria for Regional Integration

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### Abstract

French is one of the most widely taught foreign/second language in the West African sub region, and perhaps in the whole of Africa. Thus, Nigeria being the key player in the socio-economic and political activities in the sub region, the teaching of French as a foreign language becomes prominent in the country. However, that discipline has witnessed a lot of obstacles that have hindered its development over times, despite the fact that it is captured in the National Language Policy of the nation. The challenges of the study of French range from lack of effective implementation of language policy on the part of the Government and the stakeholders, lack of models to interact with, parental attitudes to the language, among other things. These impediments and many more are factors that are affecting the general lack of interest in French language learning, therefore causing the endangerment of French study in Nigerian schools. This paper aims at evaluating and discussing ways of revitalising French language teaching and learning in Nigerian schools while highlighting the crucial role it plays in the sub region. Thus, the conceptual framework of language ideology and language attitudes which are subfields within sociolinguistics will be used for our discussions. Through a qualitative approach we shall examine how language ideology and attitudes have significant impacts on the way Nigerians think about French language as well as their linguistic behaviours which have negatives impacts on the learning of French language in Nigeria. The paper concludes by suggesting strategies for French language revitalisation in Nigeria and the opportunities it offers as a powerful vector for integration in the sub region.

**Key words:** French language – revitalisation – endangerment – linguistic ideology- language attitudes- regional integration

### 1.0. Introduction

French is the first foreign language taught in Secondary and in some private Primary Schools in Nigeria. It also features prominently as a discipline in most of our institutions of higher learning. It is the official language of most African countries in the Sub-Sahara region, and one of the major languages of international communication that is widely taught in almost every continent. Considering these facts, French will be seen as the most sought-after foreign language in our institutions of learning, especially if Nigeria wants to meet up with the major objectives of regional integration. However, over decades, the teaching of French has witnessed a lot of challenges, and also series of reviews to adapt to changing situations. The National Policy on Education (NPE) which is designed by the government to guide the development and implementation of the Nigeria educational system has ensured that the studies of French have evolved over the years. From a non-vocational subject, French was upgraded to a core subject to be studied in both primary and secondary schools. The upgrading became necessary in view of the fact that the Nigeria Government has to establish a good diplomatic relationship with its immediate neighbours who are all Francophone. Hence the need to “promote national and international understanding and interaction” for “total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world” (NPE 2013, p.1). All these statements not only confirm the Nigeria government’s efforts to give quality education to its citizens, they also attest to its readiness to interact with the immediate neighbours in the sub region and beyond. Nevertheless, for the laudable goals of the NPE to be achieved effectively, the teaching and learning of French Language in Nigeria need to be given a serious attention so as to “promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding “ (NPE 2013, p.1) adequately. No country has ever lived successfully in isolation, there’s always the need to establish economic, political and technological cooperation to foster advancement among states. Therefore, in order to work together for peace, security and development in the sub region, the people of the region need to communicate; this calls for common languages cutting across ethnic and national division.

However, as inspiring as the goals of the NPE are, it is worth noting that the educational system has not met any standard of tangible reform as stipulated in the NPE in Nigeria, especially as it concerns the study of French. The thrust of our paper is revitalisation with a view to sustaining and invigorating the teaching of French language that is gradually drifting out of our institutions of learning in Nigeria. To achieve this, the paper stands to analyse the language attitudes and the underlying ideologies of students and people in Nigeria. But before getting to the root of the matter, it behoves on us to make a brief evaluation of the concept of revitalisation with reference to the paper.

## 2.0. Understanding the concept of revitalisation

Revitalisation is a fairly recent subfield of linguistics that is concerned with halting and reversing the extinction of languages. Talking of revitalisation of language means that a language is endangered: it is dead, lost, or about to go into extinction.

**2.1. Language death:** language death is not a recent phenomenon in human history. Tsunoda (2006, p.1) stipulates that language death is a common occurrence that has taken place in both historic and pre-historic times. It has been estimated that living languages in the world are nearly between 5000 and 6000 languages (Cerny 2010, p.51). However, a remarkable number of languages have become extinct (Hoffmann 2009, p.12). So, a language is regarded as dead when there is no transmission to all the families of the community as a whole (Tsunoda 2006, p. 38). Language is also regarded as dead when there are no records of the language such as books, tapes or CDs or when it stops developing or changing (Denson 1977, pp. 12-13) cited in Tsunoda (2006, pp.38 & 41).

**2.2. Language loss:** the loss of language is another global issue that has attracted a great deal of attention in the last few decades. The loss of a language can be defined through two significant terms, namely language shift and language attrition. Language shift refers to the gradual replacement of one language by another as the main vehicle for communication in the whole community. Language attrition refers to the loss of competence and fluency in the native language of individual speakers (Myers-Scotton 2002 online).

**2.3. Endangered language:** an endangered language can be defined as a language that is at risk of falling out of use and becoming dead (Hoffmann 2009, p.12). Tsunoda (2006, p.9) reports that language endangerment is a matter of degree. A number of languages have been proposed based on four criteria, namely number of speakers, age of speakers, and transmission of the language to children and function of the language in the society. Krauss' (1992, p.4) classification of language is based on its transmission to children: safe language, endangered language and moribund language. "Safe language" refers to a language that is still spoken by children and is safe from extinction. "Endangered language" refers to a language that will cease to be learned by children within the century and "moribund language" alludes to a language that is no longer used as a native by children. Another proposed classification is given by Schmidt (1990, p.54) which is based on number of speakers, age of speakers and transmission to children and functions of language in the community: "healthy language" which refers to a language that is actively used by all generations, "weakening language" referring to a language that is mainly spoken by older people, "dying language" that refers to a language that only has a few speakers and "extinct language" which refers to a language that does not have any speakers.

With the foregoing issues, Linguists have become seriously concerned in language documentation, as they work hard to maintain endangered languages and revive extinct ones; that is language planning.

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, p.3) define language planning as a deliberate effort with the aims of changing a language or its functions in a community. One of the most noteworthy goals of language planning is revival. According to Grenoble (2006, p.1), "over the past fifty years, a number of innovative programs have been undertaken in many parts of the world with the aim of working to wake up sleeping beautiful languages". This brings us to the issue of revitalisation.

**2.4. Revitalisation** can be referred to as language revival or reversing language shift in an attempt to stop or reverse the decline of a language or to revive an extinct one. However, a distinction could be made between language revival (resurrection of a dead language with no existing native speakers) and language revitalisation (the rescue of a dying language).

Revitalisation can be viewed in different contexts where conditions vary considerably, e.g. context of nation-states, indigenous linguistic minorities in nation-states, indigenous groups in post-colonial countries and immigrant language groups. Thus, the goals of language revitalisation vary greatly from case to case involving an attempt to expand the number of speakers and use of a language, or trying to maintain the current level of use to protect the language from extinction or language death.

The type of revitalisation which concerns us here is that of a foreign language, that is, French which is drifting out of the school system. French language in Nigeria is neither an indigenous language nor an official language even though it was officially declared as the second official language of the country during the regime of General Sani Abacha, one of the former military Head of State in Nigeria in 1998. It is however the first foreign language taught at all levels of education in the country. As earlier stated, year in, year out the number of students applying for French studies reduces; hence the need for revitalisation to arrest this unfortunate trend. The National Policy

on Education which is meant to ensure proper delivery of education will guide us in analysing the language policy in Nigeria.

### **3.0. French language and the National Policy on Education**

The choice of a foreign language to be used in any country in the world depends on the socio-economic and political affiliations with countries that speak that language. The choice of French as the first foreign language to be taught in schools is therefore not far-fetched.

Just like the official language which is sustained and perpetuated by the educational system of a country, so it is for any foreign language the country decides to adopt. Therefore, the options of any language to be taught in schools are determined by some variables which according to Obanya (1998, p.1) include:

- i) the historical experience of colonialism;
- ii) the political evolution after attainment of the dependence;
- iii) the socio-linguistic contours of each country and
- iv) the strength of linguistic educational lobbies in various countries.

Some of these factors informed the adoption of French language in Nigerian schools. Hence, the future and prospects of French language in Nigeria lie in its sustainability by the education policy.

The dwindling status of French over decades, has subjected it to a series of reviews to adapt to changing situations. From an elective non-vocational course for example in 1981, the status of French moved to one of the core subjects in 2004. This is in line with the regulation of the National Policy on Education (1981, p.6) which stipulates that “since education is a dynamic instrument of change, this policy will need to be constantly reviewed to ensure its adequacy and continued relevance to national needs and objectives”. The constant review of the policy is an indication that the Nigerian Government is conscious of the fact that no country can develop without a strategic educational policy.

Language is the bedrock of education. No subject can be taught adequately without the use of language. That is why it occupies an important place in the National policy on Education which states thus:

Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion, and preserving cultures. Thus, every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools but non-vocational elective at senior secondary school (2004, p.10).

This statement attests to the fact that the Nigerian Government is aware of the huge role languages play in the social development of a nation. The policy advocates for smooth co-existence and understanding among Nigerian citizens, and with its neighboring countries. And it is only through communication that peace and unity can be achieved.

However, as laudable as the language policy on Education is, its implementation at various levels of education leaves much to be desired. There's need for a proper monitoring of the policy. According to the policy for example, the study of French is supposed to start from primary four in schools, but the policy is yet to be implemented. This lapse among many others only confirms that policies are often abandoned, neglected or abused according to the regime in power. In other words, lack of continuity due to the changing political terrain adversely affects Nigeria's educational policies.

### **4.0. The study of French language in Nigeria**

The teaching and learning of a language generally evolve around two major components: language and literature, each designated for different functions.

#### **4.1. The teaching of French in a foreign language class**

Foreign language study is first and foremost about learning to communicate and connect with other people beyond one's shores. As the world becomes more and more globalised, proficiency in more than one language is critical for business, trade and diplomacy, to promote regional, international, mutual understanding and respect. That

explains why the study of French should be given adequate attention if Nigeria wants to maintain her roles as the key player in the sub region.

In a language class, the study of French is structured to encompass and reinforce the four language skills of reading, writing, aural comprehension and oral proficiency, which are indispensable tools in human communication and interaction. In a nutshell, it is suggested that activities that are communication-based, that will help in making classroom situation more interactive are used in teaching. Thus, the communicative approach is preferred to other approaches as it focuses on the ability to communicate in the target language.

#### **4.1.1. Communicative competence**

Communicative competence is a term coined by Dell Hymes (1966) in reaction to Chomsky's (1965) notion of linguistic competence. Communicative competence is the intuitive functional knowledge and control of the principles of language usage. As Hymes (1972, p.277) affirms:

...a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.

In other words, learners need to use the language not only correctly (based on linguistic competence), but also appropriately (based on communicative competence). This approach does not reduce the importance of learning the grammatical rules of the language. It is rather one of the four components of communicative competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. It is in that line of thought that Canale and Swain (1980 online) identify four components of competences:

- i) **Linguistic competence** is the knowledge of the language code, of its written representation (script and orthography). The linguistic competence includes the knowledge of the sounds and their pronunciation (phonetics), the rules that govern sound interaction and patterns (phonology), the information of words by means of inflection and phrases to structure sentence (syntax), and the way that meaning is conveyed through language (semantics).
- ii) **Sociolinguistic competence** is the knowledge of socio-cultural rules of use that is knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately. The appropriateness depends on the setting of the communication, the topic, and the relationship and the people communicating.
- iii) **Discourse competence** is related to the learner's mastery of understanding and producing texts in the modes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This competence deals with organising words, phrases and sentences in order to create conversations, speeches, poetry, email messages, newspaper articles, etc.
- iv) **Strategic competence** refers to compensatory strategies in case of grammatical, sociolinguistic, or discourse difficulties. This strategy involves repetition, classification, slower speech or the use of gestures, taking turns in conversation, etc.

It is very important to use these four components in a successful language class. The communicative approach is thus the most widely used and most widely accepted to classroom-based foreign language teaching.

However, language learning cannot be disconnected from culture which is encapsulated by literature. So, to understand the culture of a given people in a language class, the study of literature must set in. It is often said that the learning of a language cannot be dissociated from the culture of the people whose language is being learnt.

#### **4.2. The importance of literature in a foreign language class**

Literature represents the culture and tradition of a language or a people. Various structures and functions of language are learnt through literary texts, thus broadening the understanding of human nature. A work of literature is usually linked with a collection of stories, poems, and plays that are mainly focused on a particular text. Literature is generally used in foreign language teaching (French) for the development of knowledge about the language and the native speakers of the language. It helps the learner to get familiar with the socio-political backgrounds of the target language society and also makes them understand how communication takes place in a particular community.

Different definitions have been used to interpret literature throughout history. It is categorised according to various forms. It can be classified as fiction and non-fiction or verse and prose. It can be further divided into major literary format such as poems, drama, novel, and short story. It can also be studied under various classifications such as, Classical Literature, French Literature, Colonial Literature, African Literature, Romantic Literature, Modern Literature, etc.

Various researchers (Kim 2004; Hirvela 2005; Saito 2015; Sage 1987; Naji et.al 2019) have highlighted the supporting role of literature in foreign language teaching. More and more, literature is beginning to be viewed as an appropriate vehicle for language learning and development since the focus is now on authentic language and authentic situations.

There is a close and undeniable relationship between language and literature. Literature is composed of language and it also provides space for applications of language. Brumfit and Carter (1986, p.15) consider literature “an ally of language”. Learners who study literature and read for pleasure have a higher range of vocabulary, better reading comprehension and better communication skills, such as writing ability. Parkinson and Thomas (2000, p.9-11) affirm that it provides a good model for good writing. It is memorable, important and challenging and it also helps to assimilate rhythms of a language, therefore facilitating intelligence and sensibility training. When reading literary texts, the learners practise and develop their reading skills and strategies, which contribute to the development of their fluency and proficiency. According to Povey (1972) cited by McKay (1982, p.529), “literature will increase all language skills because it will extend linguistic knowledge which enables learners to develop by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax”. The advantages of using literature to teach language are numerous. Teachers should make it interesting for learners by selecting simple and meaningful passages that will trigger the learner’s curiosity and sustain their motivation.

One can attest with this survey that the study of French language is programmed to build an enlightened citizen that is both culturally and linguistically prepared to function in the sub region and in today’s world.

On the other hand, as attractive and prosperous the NPE is, it is discouraging to note that the teaching and learning of French is yet to meet the standard expected of an impressive reform. However, according to Tsunoda (2006, p.11), “...any evaluation of the success or failure of a language revitalisation movement would depend on the goals and perspectives of the people involved”. This statement of Tsunoda takes us to examine the linguistic attitudes and ideologies of Nigerians towards the study of French.

### **5.0. Challenges facing the teaching of French language in Nigeria**

Linguistic attitudes and ideologies play an important role in the language use and language choice strategies of a country, and this is even more prominent in multilingual settings. Thus, ideology and language are two sides of the same coin since they both provide the framework within which a linguistic message is constructed and expressed. The influence of ideology is noted in language policy and language planning efforts as it enables actions taken by a social group or even a government to determine the status of a particular language. For the purpose of this study ideology is defined in terms of language attitudes and not on philosophical background. Thus, Woolard and Schieffelin (1994, p. 59) define linguistic or language ideology as “... the way we think about language; it is also a set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use”. According to Seargeant (2023, p.161), “language ideologies operate at various different levels: from the macro level of national language policies to the micro level of the stylistic decisions people make in everyday linguistic interactions”. The main purpose of ideology is to foster change in the society. As such, language ideologies facilitate connections between the beliefs speakers have about language and the larger social and cultural systems they are a part of, illustrating how these beliefs are informed by and rooted in such systems. By doing so, language ideologies link the implicit as well as explicit assumptions people have about a language or language in general to their social experience and political as well as economic interests.

Cavanaugh (2019) also supports that the influence of ideology is present in almost every sphere of social life. According to her, during the course of her research in Italy, she “encountered language ideologies everywhere - on menus, some of which featured poems in the local language; uttered as asides in everyday conversations when people critiqued or praised their own and others’ speaking; and write large billboards that asserted the political value of local culture and language”. She further asserts that language ideologies are “the beliefs and attitudes that shape speakers’ relationships to their own and others’ languages, mediating between the social practice of language and the socioeconomic and political structures within which it occurs”.

Within this framework, the attitudes of Nigerians towards the learning of French are not far-fetched. The teaching of French language in Nigeria has faced some ups and downs because of their perceptions about the French language. It is through this lens that we shall examine how Nigerians construe the study of French language in their social and cultural settings, and how their construal is socially positioned.

Most Nigerians are not sufficiently motivated to learn French because they have no strong reasons for doing so. Despite the fact that Nigeria’s immediate neighbours are Francophone, Nigerians still do not see the need to learn the French language. Unlike the average Western Europeans who speak two to four languages of surrounding



countries due to globalisation, and because their countries are linked by infrastructure, trade, culture and values, Africans have no similar binding ties. In fact, African leaders prefer to relate more with their former colonial masters than themselves.

French learners are also not committed to the study of the target language. Many of them find themselves in the French class due to lack of admission in their chosen courses, and they don't want to remain at home doing nothing; as a result, they accept French as a palliative measure. Most of the learners are not even mindful of their inability to speak the language so long as they read to pass their exams. In short, the French learners are not committed to the language they are learning and this lack of interest or commitment no doubt affects their oral fluency and general performance negatively.

Parents' attitudes in their children's choice of the course are also not encouraging. Since French is not the language of the immediate environment, parents don't see any prospect in it. The erroneous belief is that anybody who studies French can only end as a teacher in the classroom, nothing else.

The government agents, represented by school Principals are also not helping the situation. More often than not, many of them (Principals) impose on students and teachers, other subjects which are considered to be more important than French. Thus, teachers of French who are posted to their school to teach French are often sidelined, and consequently demotivated.

The classroom environment and the learners' behaviour in the past decades are not different. The digital age has made learners to be more ICT inclined. The continuous and rapid accessibility to technology innovation effect have changed the needs of learners in learning.

Low prospect of employability at the end of the programme is another reason attached to the low patronage of the course. It is the general belief that no profession other than teaching is attached to learning French whereas there are many job opportunities that await those who excel in foreign language learning. For example, French graduates can pursue careers in translation, interpretation, diplomacy, international business, to mention but a few.

All these factors and many more are contributing to the dwindling number of students in admission recruitment in French departments, hence putting the subject in an endangered list. Prominent among them are: poor academic performance of learners in French class that translate to poor quality of French graduates, inadequate infrastructure, compounded by inadequate attention policy framework within the sector. Inadequate funding, lack of conducive physical facilities, and above all, poor curricula that cannot meet the challenges for sustainable development of the Nation in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. All these mean that French language has to be revitalised to attract more students.

#### **6.0. Revitalisation of French programmes for regional integration**

Having earlier examined various definitions, it becomes imperative to shed more light on the revitalisation of the French language in the Nigerian context. It means, the teaching and learning of French language is endangered, and there is an urgent need to revive it by making every stakeholder and the Nigerian society at large to save its exit from the Nigerian educational system. French language is not only needed in Nigeria, its acquisition will go a long way in fostering a good relationship with our immediate neighbours for a functional integration.

#### **6.1. Nigeria and regional integration**

As earlier remarked, language is an important ingredient in the process of integration, peace and security, and an imperative factor in the achievement of unity in the African Sub-Region. After independence, many African countries, in search of national unity, adopted the language of their former colonial masters to be used in government and education. The quest for unity also explains why the Addis-Ababa Conference on Education and the Yaoundé Conference in 1961 recommended that Anglophone Africa introduces French as a core subject in its school system and francophone Africa, English, as a second European language, as means of communication and understanding between the people of these two linguistic axes. The co-existence of Nigeria and its neighbouring countries revolves around economy, political and cultural exchange. In order to work together for peace and development, the people of the region need to communicate. This calls for common languages, cutting across ethnic and national divisions, rivalries, and ensuring the need to care for all and sundry.

It is clear that a common language is important for unity of purpose in whatever we do and the purpose here is development. It is also clear that for development to take place, there has to be unity of purpose and sharing of the same vision. The essence of the above is that for development to be successful, the prerequisite is not merely

the presence of language, but also the presence of effective communication, which in turn facilitates unity in the sub-region. Garba (2023, p.359) characterises

regional integration as an association of independent states with shared social, cultural or historical values; which may or may not necessarily occupy the same physical geographical location; for the purpose of promoting cooperation among themselves to achieve their common economic, social, political or security objectives, for which the states relinquish some of their national sovereignty to the regional institution.

To achieve the above objectives, all nations should understand one another's language and culture, and Nigeria, being one of the key players in the African sub-region will do a lot more in its role as "the Giant of Africa" if French language is given adequate consideration in the country.

The uncaring attitude so far displayed by the Nigerian Government in its implementation of the language policy in the country vis-à-vis French, has not only relegated the teaching and learning of French to the background, it has also contributed in providing a big hole for its interment, thus rendering it an endangered subject in the school curriculum; hence the need for its revitalisation.

## **6.2. Strategies for revitalisation of French language**

Considering the state of French language study in Nigeria, the following issues should be addressed to revitalise the language and boost Nigerians' interest in learning it:

i) Ensure full implementation of the National Policy on Education as regards the teaching and learning of French for the successful delivery of French courses.

ii) Make the subject attractive to learners by enhancing their linguistic competence so that they can:

- communicate with confidence and fluency in French in academic, cultural and social contexts;
- increase and sustain learners' desire to continue their studies in French and choose to use that language in their future career.

iii) Ensure materials and human resources are in place to support French language learning:

- upgrade infrastructures adequately through provision of more fund;
- engage qualified and competent Teachers for quality instruction;
- revive the immersion programme by sending learners to francophone countries. It has long been established that learners of foreign languages get more motivated and learn better when put into contact with the native speakers;
- review the school curriculum to meet up with the new digital age.

iv) Validate learners' linguistic and educational experience by providing multiple opportunities for learners to develop and strengthen their French language skills through a variety of social, academic and cultural contexts. Develop learners' confidence in the use of the language by providing them with opportunities to assess their language skills, through excursions, drama group, debates and symposiums organised by the French club.

v) Organise trainings to enhance the teaching methodology of teachers through regular workshops, seminar and conferences. So, the professional development of teachers to ensure an understanding of the philosophy and methodology of foreign language learning in order to develop and strengthen students' learning is very crucial.

vi) Recruit and retain learners in the French programme

-intensify community awareness regarding the benefits of learning French to help encourage and maintain learners to continue their studies in French and highlight how bilingualism is a viable option for their life, personal growth, etc., especially in the global world of today;

-information session or open discussions for the general public and the communities, parents, etc.

-information sessions or discussion forums on the relevance of French in Nigeria;

-discussion with learners regarding career opportunities, through mentorship, networking and planning;

-appropriate support for learners with learning difficulties especially in the area of the French grammatical structures that has been seen as the most serious challenge that might render French language difficult to learners.

vii) Ensure adequate teachers' methodology

-living in a digital age requires new skills that educational system should develop. Therefore, teachers are expected to be always at alert and involved in the continuous development process to master the latest skills and competencies. Teachers need the ability to handle changes to ensure that their roles and functions remain relevant. Hence, the main area to focus is the approach to methodology. Different approaches are used in a foreign language class, the most advocated for being the communicating competence. However, going with this current dispensation the Task-based learning combined with the communicative approach will be more adequate. Task-based learning is based on the idea that you learn a language by using it, rather than by studying its different components in isolation.

It is an approach where the planning of learning materials and teaching sessions are based on doing a task. In education, a task refers to an activity where communication is necessary, that is, deciding something, solving a

problem, designing or organising something, or telling someone to do something. According to Lee (2000, p.2), it is “a language learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of working”. It implies that the learning of French where the language is taught as a mere subject without any skill input should be dispensed with.

As a matter of fact, the Nigerian Government should see French language as important for both cognitive development and economic opportunities:

- i) create opportunities that will make learners use the language effectively: make French language worth learning by engaging graduates of French in the right place (ministry of internal/external affairs). International organisations like ECOWAS, AU, the Nigeria Embassies in Francophone countries, etc. should give preference to French graduates in their recruitment of staff;
- ii) create economic benefits associated with bilingualism, e.g. tourism;
- iii) create bilingual centers: language classes that encompass various activities are not sufficient to create fluent speakers. Only a serious bilingual education programme can build fluent speakers;
- iv) if well addressed, French graduates can cross the borders to francophone countries to seek for employment;
- v) establish the Nigeria Translation Bureau: Nigeria as the “Giant of Africa” cannot boast for an International Bureau of Translation. Translators and interpreters have to be recruited from other parts of the country (e.g. Ghana), whenever the need arises;
- vi) Nigerian soldiers are often sent for peace-keeping purposes in French speaking countries. Thus, more soldiers can be made to study French.

In a nutshell, Government has a leading role to play in enhancing the likelihood of success of French revitalisation activities in Nigeria.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing, the French language should be seen as an important field of study, capable of contributing significantly to Nigeria’s development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The ability to speak French in Nigeria should be seen as an added advantage for getting employment with multinational companies using French as their working language in Nigeria and in the West African sub region. It should however be noted that the success of the revitalisation depends largely on the economic usefulness of the language. And Nigeria being the “big brother” of its counterparts in the sub region, will increase her wealth and income through better cooperation that will be facilitated by competent speakers of French language groomed in the country. Moreover, if the strategies proffered for the revitalisation of French in this study are adequately implemented, the learning of French language in Nigeria will be attractive to the citizens, therefore saving its collapse in the school system. When the advantages of studying French are widely recognised, students will be more motivated and committed to learning the language.

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