



# **French and Current Realities in Nigerian Polytechnics: A Case Study of Six Selected Polytechnics in North- Eastern States**

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**Abstract:** Importance of learning a second foreign language would not be over emphasized and French language in Nigeria is as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It is expected that all human relations related courses offer French in Nigerian Polytechnics but it is not all Polytechnics that do so. This research aims at identifying the current realities of the French Language in six polytechnics and its objectives are to find out the reasons why French is not offered uniformly in all Nigerian Polytechnics, examine as well as analyse the causes and proffer solutions. Mixed research design was adopted while oral interview and questionnaire methods were used for data collection using random sampling with the total of 66 respondents. The research found out that some polytechnics do not offer French because some courses involved do not have French in their curriculum and some management of institutions have no interest in second foreign language. As the majority affirmed that French is so important to the career of the graduates of the courses involved, the research recommended that the curriculums should be updated and attention of the managements of the institutions should be called on the importance of additional foreign language at international level.

**Keywords:** French Language in Nigeria, Polytechnic, Human relations.

## **Le résumé**

L'importance d'apprentissage d'une deuxième langue étrangère est connu par tous et le français est au Nigeria depuis le 16eme siècle. Les cours qui concernent des relations humaines aux Polytechnique du Nigeria doivent offrir le français mais ce n'est pas tous les polytechniques qui font ceci. Cette recherche a le but d'identifier comment six Polytechniques s'opèrent concernant le français et les objectifs sont de trouver les raisons que pourquoi les Polytechniques s'opèrent différemment concernant le français, examiner ainsi qu'analyser les causes et enfin donner des solutions. On a mélangé les

méthodes d'entretien et des questionnaires pour collecter des données en utilisant des échantillonnages aléatoires avec 66 répondants. On a trouvé que des Polytechniques n'offrent pas le français soit à cause de manque de français dans le curriculum de NBTE ou manque de l'intérêt des chefs de l'école. Comme la majorité ont affirmé que le français est très important pour l'avenir des étudiants des cours qui concernent des relations humaines, on a recommandé qu'on doit mettre le français dans les curriculums de tous les cours et une orientation sur l'importance d'une deuxième langue étrangère comme le français aux Nigeria est nécessaires aux chefs des polytechniques qui n'ont pas l'intérêt.

**Les mots clés :** Le français au Nigeria, La Polytechnique, une relation humaine,

## 1. Introduction

French Language, being the one of the official languages at United Nation, African Union and Economic Community of West African States, is so important to everyone especially Africans. Though, Nigeria is an English speaking country but it is surrounded by French speaking ones and the majority of West African countries are Francophone.

(Faniran 2016) stated that the history of the French Language in Nigeria is as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and it was introduced as a secondary subject to be learnt and taught as a school discipline in Anglophone Africa (including Nigeria) in Yaoundé Conference by the year 1961. He continued by saying that in 1902 a French Trading Company was established in Nigeria. He also cited The Guardian Newspaper of 13<sup>th</sup> March 1994 which stated since the oil boom, there was a chamber of commerce between France and Nigeria created in 1993 in which cooperation and agreement were signed by the two countries. He also added that "French is a foreign language in Nigeria and has a stance of copious advantages as regards its pertinence in all spheres of life." He furthermore said that the language has gained ascendancy among different international languages especially in Nigeria and it is the second most widely learned foreign language in the world.

(Ajani 2017) said that the French Language in Nigeria is considered as Second Foreign Language (L3). And these show us that it is not a new thing to talk about the French Language in Nigeria.

Polytechnic or Polytechnic Institute simply refers to an institution of tertiary education that focuses in producing skilful graduates of in engineering, technology, applied and natural sciences and award National Diploma certificates.

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) is a body which is in charge of accrediting, supervising and controlling all Polytechnics and Technical related schools in Nigeria which was established using the act of January 1977 in August 1985 and empowered in January 1993 respectively sees learning French as so important to the students of the courses involved human relations are Hospitality Management Technology, Office Technology and Management, Mass Communication (Journalism), Leisure and Tourism Management and Hotel and Catering Management. National Board for Technical Education made that French Language is a General Studies course offered by students studying the above mentioned courses. They all offer it in their first and second semesters at the ND level and also the same first and second semester at the HND level to make them have basic knowledge of the language which would allow them to communicate with a foreigner from French-speaking countries (Francophone) at their places of works after graduation, as Nigeria is surrounded by French-speaking countries;

Cameroun from the East, Chad from the North-East, Niger from the North and Benin Republic from the South-West.

The main aim of this research is to identify the current realities of French Language in each of the Polytechnics, and this would be achieved through the following objectives:

- i. To find out the reasons why the French Language is not offered uniformly in all Nigerian Polytechnics.
- ii. To examine the causes that lead to the lack of uniformity in relation to offering the French Language in Nigerian Polytechnics.
- iii. To analyse the causes that lead to the lack of uniformity in relation to offering the French Language in all Nigerian Polytechnics.
- iv. To proffer solutions to the identified causes and the problems that lead to lack of uniformity in relation to offering the French Language in all Nigerian Polytechnics.

All these show us that this our research is so important as it will solve a problem, proffer solutions and recommendations which could be used not only in Nigeria but in any country in the world in relation to second foreign universal language like French.

## **2. Concept of General Studies**

(Ezeodili and Ezeafulukwe 2016) postulated that;

General Studies (GS) courses are not peculiar to Nigerian Higher Institutions, but are studied in all higher institutions world over. They are courses deemed necessary by education bodies for the good functioning and positive development of the individual in the society. As a part of school curriculum, the study encompasses all aspect of the sciences and technology etc. these courses are made to provide holistic and balanced education across disciplines. GS courses are compulsory for all students who are supposed to offer them. The courses are coordinated centrally and examined in the semester in which they are taught. All the courses are computed as part of the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of every student. (p.1)

Explanation of Scholastica and Olivia shows us that it is not only in Nigeria a General Studies course like French Language is offered by some departments but in the entire world. And her statement also shows us that as per as a course is designed by the relevant body like National Board for Technical Education to be offered by some departments, it is compulsory to be offered as the course would be captured while computing Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of every student in those departments. All these show us that this our research titled " French and Current Realities in Nigerian Polytechnics: A case study of six selected Polytechnics in the North-eastern States is so important as if realized would solve some problems.

## **3. Teaching and Learning Second Foreign Language**

(Anthony 2014) expressed that teaching and learning of French as a foreign language in any Anglophone country is an extremely difficult task to undertake both on the part of the teacher and the student and it is evidenced in both public and private schools over the years. This Anthony's explanation shows that it might be possible that the difficulties encountered during teaching and learning French in English speaking countries is among the factors that in some Polytechnics where French is expected to be taught, it is not taught.

(Iosif 2012) added that that nowadays, the role of the school in the formation of students-future citizens with high educational level and specialized knowledge is undeniable and introduction of French (second foreign language) constitutes an effective preparation of the students for the society. This shows that knowledge of a second foreign language (French) could assist students in preparation of a better future in Nigeria that is why human relations related courses in all Nigerian Polytechnics is recommended by National Board for Technical Education.

(Michel 2022) recommended that because of the economic, political and socio-cultural benefits of French Language in Nigeria, the Federal Government has to ensure that teaching and learning of French at both primary and secondary school levels is actualized in the country for the benefit of the youths in the country.

This shows us that not only at Polytechnic level, our students need to start learning French Language since from their primary and secondary schools.

(Kunle and Samson 2017) concluded that;

French Language remains the backbone for French technological development in Nigeria. Doing away with French Language is like refusing to develop Nigeria and this will make the country to be technically handicapped for life. Whatever is the disposition of Nigerians or the government, we also, strongly believe that French Language is relevant to Nigeria so as to make Nigeria the "Giant of Africa". (pp.18-19)

Their statement proves the relevancy of French to Nigerians, in this case the students of the human relations related courses in Nigerian Polytechnics.

In relation to human development (Ezeodili 2017) narrated that;

In the early 1980s emerged theorists like Amartya Sen, Paul Streeten and Mahbub Alhaq. These economists believed that increased incomes should be a means to improve human welfare, not as an end in itself. According to them development with people, their well-being, their needs, choices and aspirations. This new thinking of development with people as the focus of concern has come to be known as human development approach. (p.1)

In this research, our concern is always on the career development of the students of those human relation courses.

All these works from different researchers show that our research titled "French and Current Realities in Nigerian Polytechnics: A Case Study of six selected Polytechnics in north-eastern States" is of great importance as it will fill a great gap in the field of knowledge.

#### **4. Methodology**

This research adopted mixed method of research methodology as tables, frequency and percentage and also textual data were used in the research. That allowed us to do the presentation and interpretation of the data collected easily and at last got valid and reliable results. And for data collection, we used both the questionnaire method (for students) and the interview (for lecturers). The research was limited to Federal Polytechnic Bauchi in Bauchi State, Federal Polytechnic Damaturu in Yobe State, Federal Polytechnic Bali in Taraba State, Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri in Borno State, Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo in Gombe State and Federal Polytechnic Mubi in Adamawa State.

The Federal Polytechnic Bauchi in Bauchi State was established in the year 1979 (July) by the Federal government of Nigeria. According to [www.courseseye.com](http://www.courseseye.com), Federal Polytechnic Bauchi offer forty two courses including Hospitality Management Technology, Mass Communication (Journalism), Office Technology and Management and Leisure and Tourism Management. This Polytechnic has been selected to be one of our case study because of the presence of these aforementioned courses.

The Federal Polytechnic Damaturu in Yobe State was established in the year 1993 (May) also by the Nigerian government. Samaphina.com.ng stated that the Polytechnic offers sixteen courses including Office Technology and Management. And we choose this Polytechnic to be part of our case study because of the presence of Office Technology and Management.

The Federal Polytechnic Mubi in Adamawa State was established in the year 1979 by the Federal government of Nigeria. As stated by Joeme in [www.eafinder.com](http://www.eafinder.com), as for 2022/2023 session, Federal Polytechnic Mubi offers thirty two courses including Hospitality Management Technology, Mass Communication, Office Technology and Management and Leisure and Tourism Management. Also, the Polytechnic has been selected to be one of our case study because of the presence of these aforementioned four courses.

The Federal Polytechnic Bali in Taraba State was established 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014 by the Federal government of Nigeria. As stated by MC\_Owoblow in 03schools.com, the Polytechnic offers seven courses including Office Technology and Management. It is one of our case study because of the presence of Office Technology and Management.

The Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo in Gombe State was established in 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 by Nigerian government. According to [www.surescholarguide.com](http://www.surescholarguide.com), the Polytechnic offers eight courses including Leisure and Tourism Management. The Polytechnic has been selected to be one of our case study because of the presence of Leisure and Tourism Management.

Lastly, Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri was established by the then North-East State having its headquarter at Maiduguri in the year 1973 (January). According to Schoolinfo.com.ng, as for 2022/2023 session, the Polytechnic offers twenty courses including Hospitality Management Technology and Office Technology and Management. This Polytechnic has been selected to be one of our case study because of the presence of these aforementioned courses.

Using random sampling, in each Polytechnic, a lecturer was interviewed and also ten students served as respondents to a structured questionnaire. That is, at last, a total of six lecturers were interviewed and sixty students filled out our questionnaires. These responses lead us to valid and reliable results at the end of the research. As for data analysis, the research used different tables and simple percentages in analysing the data collected for the research work and also textual analysis. The simple percentage formula is:

$$\frac{\text{Number of response(s)}}{\text{Total number of respondents}} \times 100$$

## **5. Discussion**

Here, the data collected from the field which is the six selected Polytechnics will be presented and analysed for valid and reliable results, conclusion and recommendations.

## 5.1 Oral Interview

**Table 1; Biodata**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Cadre</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Language(s) speak</b>
Federal Polytechnic Bauchi	Academic	Male	30+	Nigerian	English, Nigerian Language and a Foreign Language (French)
Federal Polytechnic Bali	Academic	Male	30+	Nigerian	English and Nigerian Language
Federal Polytechnic Mubi	Academic	Male	30+	Nigerian	English, Nigerian Language and a Foreign Language (French)
Federal Polytechnic Damaturu	Academic	Male	30+	Nigerian	English, Nigerian Language and a Foreign Language (French)
Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo	Academic	Female	30+	Nigerian	English, Nigerian Language and a Foreign Language (French)
Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri	Academic	Male	30+	Nigerian	English, Nigerian Language and a Foreign Language (French)
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>100% Academic</b>	<b>82.3% Males and 16.7% Females</b>	<b>100% 30+</b>	<b>100% Nigerians</b>	<b>82.3% English, Nigerian Language and French and 16.7% English and Nigerian Language</b>

Table 1 above shows us that 100% of our respondents are academic staff. It also shows us that 83.3% are males, whereas 16.7% female. It further shows us that all our respondents are above thirty years of age and they are all Nigerians. Lastly, it also shows us that 82.3% of the respondents speak English, Nigerian Language and French and only one respondent speaks only English and Nigerian Language.

This signifies that our respondents are genuine and can serve as respondents to any research as they are responsible personalities with calibres.



**Table 2; Research questions**

Institution	Do your students offer French	Why (for either YES or NO)	Is French Language having any advantage to your students' career?	If YES, can you tell us the advantage(s)	Are you following NBTE curriculum?	Why (for either YES or NO)
Federal Polytechnic Bauchi	Yes	It will assist them in their career	Yes	They could be easily communicating with foreigners (French Speakers) in their places of work. For OTM, they could become bilingual secretaries.	Yes	To have a guide designed by experts that would allow the students get minimum standard in their areas of study.
Federal Polytechnic Bali	No	We made a submission to the management for it to be offered but no response up to now.	Yes	With Knowledge of French, an OTM graduate could work as bilingual secretary.	Yes	It is a guide for everyone to follow in Nigerian Polytechnics to give standard. But we have to understand that it is just minimum standard as it is allowed to add any related course for the betterment of the students, that is why those studying OTM in other Polytechnics are offering French.
Federal Polytechnic Mubi	Yes (Except OTM)	For the betterment in their future. As for OTM, French is not written in their NBTE curriculum.	Yes	They would work at International Organisations. Especially here in West Africa and Africa at large where French Speaking Countries are the majority.	Yes	It is a guideline to run our courses in standard way.
Federal Polytechnic Damaturu	Yes	After graduation, we could have some bilingual secretaries among our graduates.	Yes	They can communicate at least in two International languages which would allow them to work at International organisations.	Yes	It is a guide to give the best to our students. Though, it just a guide but it is just a minimum standard as courses like French is not in OTM curriculum but it is agreed by

						both NBTE and stake holders to be added because of its importance to the career of OTM graduate.
Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo	Yes	French is part of Tourism program and it enables our graduates to better serve a diverse range of tourists in global tourism industries.	Yes	It enhances both career prospects and personal development by providing access to global language, diverse job opportunities and deeper understanding of French culture.	Yes	It is essential for maintaining educational standard, ensuring Accountability and providing students with structured and comprehensive knowledge.
Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri	Yes	It is good for their career development and would allow them to work at different places at International levels.	Yes	To serve both Nigerians and French speakers better as understanding one's language and culture so important in serving him/her.	Yes	To provide standard knowledge that is structured and guided, and also which is designed by experts.

Table 2 above shows us that students of five out of six Polytechnics offer French. Though, in one of the five Polytechnics there is a course (OTM) which is not offering French as it is done in the other sister institutions and their reason is French is not captured in NBTE curriculum for OTM. The remaining one Polytechnic that is not offering French to its students gave reason of lack of management interest in doing so as submission was made by the department involved to the management but no reply. The table also shows that French have advantages to the career of those offering it at international level. Lastly, the table shows that all the Polytechnics are following NBTE curriculum but it was explained that curriculum is just a minimum standard and there is room for addition of courses that are of benefits to students.

This is a proof that our research has a problem to solve if realized as the same OTM students in three of the Polytechnics in question offer French and in the other two do not.



## 5.2 Questionnaire

**Table 3; Biodata**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Department(s) of the respondents</b>	<b>Level(s) of the responders</b>	<b>Age of the responders</b>	<b>Languages speak by the responders</b>	<b>Nationality of the respondents</b>
Federal Polytechnic Bali	10	Office Technology and Management	ND I	19-22	English and Nigerian Language	Nigerians
Federal Polytechnic Bauchi	10	Hospitality Management Technology, Office Technology and Management, Leisure and Tourism Management and Mass Communication.	ND I	19-22	English, Nigerian Language and Foreign Language	Nigerians
Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo	10	Leisure and Tourism Management	ND I	19-22	English, Nigerian Language and Foreign Language	Nigerians
Federal Polytechnic Damaturu	10	Office Technology and Management	ND I	19-22	English, Nigerian Language and Foreign Language	Nigerians
Federal Polytechnic Mubi	10	Hospitality Management Technology, Leisure and Tourism Management and Office Technology and Management	ND I	19-22	English, Nigerian Language and Foreign Language	Nigerians
Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri	10	Hospitality Management Technology and Office Technology and Management	ND I	19-22	English, Nigerian Language and Foreign Language	Nigerians

Table 3 shows us that all the Polytechnics chosen as our case study in this research are having either one or more department that supposed to do French. Also, all our respondents are young Nigerians at ND I level in the various Polytechnics and majority of them speak English, Nigerian Language and a foreign language which is French in this case.

This shows us that any result we would get at the end of this research would be useful not only in all Nigerian Polytechnics but in any country that have a foreign language as their medium of instruction and additional foreign language that would assist its citizens to relate with others in their continent and globally.

**Table 4; Research Questions**

Institution	Do you offer French?	Do you like French?	Why (for either YES or NO?	Is there any advantage in speaking additional Foreign Language?	Do you want to work in an International Organisation?
Federal Polytechnic Bali	No	Yes	It would assist us to serve as bilingual secretaries in the future.	Yes	Yes
Federal Polytechnic Bauchi	Yes	Yes	It would allow us to work at any international organisation.	Yes	Yes
Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo	Yes	Yes	We would serve International Tourists.	Yes	Yes
Federal Polytechnic Damaturu	Yes	Yes	We would be bilingual secretaries after graduation.	Yes	Yes
Federal Polytechnic Mubi	Yes (except OTM)	Yes	We would easily communicate with our neighbours from Cameroun.	Yes	Yes
Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri	Yes	Yes	We would relate to our Cameroonians and Chadians neighbours easily.	Yes	Yes

Table 4 above shows us that all the students that responded to our questionnaires like French and know some advantages of offering French for their career consumptions. They are also having ambitions of working with International Organisations and having good relationship with their neighbours from French speaking countries.

This signifies that importance of French Language to Nigerians is a well-known phenomenon as the country is surrounded by French speaking countries and majority of the countries in the sub region (West Africa) are French Speaking countries.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research started with the main aim of identifying the current realities of French Language in Nigerian Polytechnics taking six Polytechnics in the north-eastern states as case study. The aim was set to be achieved through the objectives finding out the reasons why the French Language is not offered uniformly in all Nigerian Polytechnics, examining

the causes that lead to the lack of uniformity in relation to offering the French Language in Nigerian Polytechnics, analysing the causes that lead to the lack of uniformity in relation to offering the French Language in all Nigerian Polytechnics and to proffer solutions to the identified causes and the problems that lead to lack of uniformity in relation to offering the French Language in all Nigerian Polytechnics. Furthermore, the research continued by reviewing different relevant works of researchers. In addition, the research used both oral interview for lecturers and questionnaire methods for students to gather its data with the help of random sampling whereby six lecturers and sixty students served as respondents. Furthermore, it used mix method of quantitative and qualitative methods research design and presented as well as analysed its data thoroughly. Finally, the research found out that students of one of the Polytechnics do not offer French as they are supposed to with the reason of lack of interest from the management of that institution as a submission was made by the department but no response from the management up to the time of the data collection of this research. And also, a course that supposed to be taking French in another Polytechnic is not doing so and their reason was French has not been captured in the curriculum of such course.

The research concludes that the issue of lack of uniformity in relation to offering French in Nigerian Polytechnic is true and valid.

## **7. Recommendations**

The research finally recommends the following:

1. Every Nigerian Polytechnic should do the same as its other sisters' institutions are doing in relation to offering French as that would bring uniformity in terms knowledge of graduates of similar course.
2. Every Nigerian Polytechnic have to understand that NBTE curriculum is just a guide as well as minimum standard. So, there is room for adding what is not in the curriculum for the benefit of the students' career after consultation with relevant specialists and authorities.
3. National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should be updating its curriculum regularly using the recommendations of specialists from various field of studies as knowledge is dynamic.
4. Managements of institutions, here Polytechnics, have to be guided on the importance of offering additional foreign language like French in Nigeria by their students for their career developments especially at international level.

## **8. Acknowledgements**

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