

# Enrolment for Foreign Languages in Selected Lagos State Junior Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

*The study is a survey of foreign languages in selected Junior secondary school of Lagos State. Using a sample random techniques, the study sample 10 Junior Secondary School, with the sample percentage for analysis, result showed that Arabic language, though recognized in the curriculum, did not record any students in the year 2015 – 2019 under review. The study recommended among others that the teaching of foreign languages especially Arabic should be encourage given the inherent advantages to the nation international relationship.*

**Keywords:** Foreign language, Arabic, French, curriculum, junior secondary schools.

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## Introduction

Language has been defined differently by scholars. Oladosu (2007) defines language as a unique human attribute normally acquired or learnt through adequate exposure. It is dynamic and arbitrary, one can never over emphasize the great and indispensable role language plays in the life of a nation and especially in diplomatic interaction with the larger international community. This is so because the world is fast becoming a global village and the knowledge of another world language is essential in facilitating smooth relationship with such world.

Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary (2018) defines foreign languages as any language that come “from a country that is not your own”. French and Arabic language are taught and learnt as foreign languages in schools, colleges, universities as well as many other institutions of learning in Nigeria. Thus, it is believed that Nigeria's capacity in the world will be enhanced by the knowledge of other international languages among which is Arabic and French. It is needless to state therefore state functionally, the knowledge of foreign languages in Morakinyo's (2008) opinion, would broaden the external market for Nigerian goods and encourage more foreign investors to come with new technologies.

## Foreign Languages in Nigerian Education

### French

French language was introduced into Nigerian School in the 19<sup>th</sup> century despite the British law enacted in 1882 forbidding the teaching of European languages in British colonies. Among reasons for its introduction in the educational system was the Nigerian government's interest in French as a tool to foster understanding the cooperation with their Francophone neighbouring countries and other French speaking countries (Inyang, 2009), thus,

French was introduced into the school curriculum.

In 1962, French also featured as a teaching subject in the University, like the University of Ibadan and University of Lagos. Up until 1996, French featured as an elective subject alongside Arabic in the National Policy on Education. However in 1996, the then Head of State, General Sani Abacha declared French language as Nigeria's second official language and by that declaration, Nigeria in Ojelade (2009)'s word, would belong to the global village in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Arabic

Arabic education started informally in Nigerian as early as the last decade of the Seventy century of the Christian era as a result of trade contact between the Arab traders and the West African merchants. With the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1804, there was a boost in Arabic education and this led to the promotion of Arabic language to a status of official language of government. With this trend of development, Arabic continued to enjoy a wider popularity in most part of the North and also had an acceptability in the Southern part especially in the Muslim – dominated areas (Suragat, 2008). But with introduction of Western education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Arabic language began experiencing a relative decline institute which as Balogun (2015) opined that the arrival of the British colonialists "broke the strength of Arabic education and improve the Western/European values on the people"

### The status of French and Arabic in the NPE

The national policy on education (NPE) is a government document which any subject derives its legitimacy and status according to the government perception of the subject (Mahmud, 2000). As at today, the NPE according to Olaniyan (2005), is the most authentic and comprehensive statement of government. The junior secondary school (JSS) is the most critical aspect of the education system as it is the

testing ground for the innovation or revolution to take place in the Nigeria education system. and as stated in the policy command the specific objective of the jss is to develop in the learners manipulative skills, inventive ability, respect for dignity of Labour and above all, healthy attitude towards technical works and at the same time they will be exposed to the usual basic academic courses.

As regards the foreign languages, the language provision of the NPE states that "for smooth interaction with our neighbours it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly French have a second official language in Nigeria". for Arabic, there is no clear cause statement as regards the function it is supposed to perform in the scheme of things, as it is conspicuously grouped among the non-provocative elective at the J.S.S. level of education.

### French

Shryock (2002), while highlighting the relevance of French, examined the recent listing of international Jobs as distributed by U.S.A. state departments in which 204 jobs required French language and 71 required other languages use by the United Nations and it's other agencies which includes international languages like Arabic. This is a pointer to the relevance and importance of the knowledge of French and Arabic for Nigerians seeking international Jobs and vocations. Little wonder as asserted by (Ajedale, 1999) in Inyang (2009), Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former president of Nigeria could not take up the post of Secretary General of the United Nations for his lack of the knowledge of French.

In the history of Africa, the relevance and importance of Arabic particularly, cannot be ignored for it is the medium in which a bulk is the African history before the coming of the European was recorded. It is also noteworthy that the Arabic language is a donor language to a number of Nigerian languages especially Hausa, Yoruba and African language like Swahili, particularly in the area of lexis

It is therefore the thrust of this study to survey the enrollment figure for both languages at selected junior secondary schools in Lagos State, in order to assess if the aforementioned relevance are perceived as such by students.

### Methodology

The study is a descriptive study, involving the simple survey of numbers of junior secondary schools and their enrollment for foreign languages vis-a-vis Arabic and French.

Ten (10) junior secondary schools were randomly sampled, all in the urban area of the district and analysis was carried out using simple percentage. The sample schools were:

1. Kuje junior secondary school
2. Unity junior secondary school
3. Agboju junior secondary school
4. AworiAjeromi junior grammar school
5. Tin-Can Island junior high school
6. Reservation junior secondary school
7. Newland junior secondary school
8. Navy Town junior secondary school
9. Dr. Lucas memorial junior secondary school
10. Amuwo junior grammar school

### Presentation of Results

Table 1 Belowshows a summary of enrollment for French and Arabic studies in 10 randomly selected Junior secondary schools in educational district 5 of Lagos State

Year	Total Number of Candidate	Number of Candidates who sat for French	%	Number of Candidates who sat for Arabic	%
2015	1175	829	70.5%	No candidate	-
2016	1597	510	28%	-	-
2017	1597	749	47%	-	-
2018	1501	633	25%	-	-
2019	1365	643	47%	-	-

### Discussion of findings

From the above table, year 2015 recorded a high percentage (70.5%) of enrolment in the selected schools for French while no enrolment was recorded for Arabic. In 2006, there was a sharp decline for French language enrolment, while Arabic language recorded none. Out of the total candidate of 1597 in 2017, only 749 representing 47% enrolled for French, while no candidate enrolled for Arabic. In 2019, the scenario was not much different from the previous years where 47% of registered students enrolled for French while no student enrolled for Arabic. Generally, there was a decline in enrolment for foreign languages after year 2015.

However, the situation of Arabic in schools is highly worrisome for it had no candidate in any of the sampled schools through the five years. Although, this could be attributed to the policy statement that makes Arabic a non-provocative elective at the junior secondary school, a situation that has made Arabic today faced with the problem of almost becoming extinct from the school curriculum even at the senior secondary school level. This also resulted in the dearth of students going into Arabic language at the tertiary level of education.

### Recommendation

In order to assist in the improvement of the enrollment for Arabic and the junior secondary school and subsequently had the senior secondary school the researcher is advocating that the Arabic curricular be simplified in such a way that communication competence would be the focus of learning Arabic. It should be a reduction in the level of grammatical and literature contents of the language does by the timeliners graduate from the junior secondary school level there any interest in speaking Arabic language without being injured and therefore seek to learn it as the senior secondary school level and subsequently at the tertiary level.

That most of Nigeria children are describing the study of foreign language is especially Arabic does not profess well for the country which has diplomatic relationship with both French and Arabic speaking countries.

More so as a member of OPEC, Asia and other international bodies there is a dire need to encourage its population to learn these languages for proper representation. There is also an urgent need for massive sensitization of parents on the potency of foreign languages to the nation.

Also worthy of note is the need to orientate

foreign language teachers in the modern methods and techniques of teaching the respective foreign languages in order to stimulate and sustain learner's interests at all levels. In addition to that, teachers should always accompany their teaching with instructional materials that will make their instruction more fun.

As suggested by Makinde (2000), in the case for the teaching of Nigerian languages and literature teachers, the government should encourage the teachers by giving special allowance to foreign language teachers and students by making funds available for research and projects in foreign languages.

And finally, the general populace should be orientated to divorce the learning of Arabic language from the Islamic religion. This could encourage non-Muslims to want to learn the language and would serve as a boost for its enrolment at different levels of education.

### Conclusion

The main focus of the study was to examine students enrolment pattern for both French and Arabic in selected Junior Secondary Schools of Lagos State. The paper has highlighted the relevance of both languages to Nigeria as a nation and also shed light on policy statement as it relates to both the current enrolment for foreign languages generally and for Arabic specifically.

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