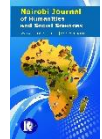




Perceptions and attitudes of secretaryship & management studies students towards teaching and learning of French in the Ho Technical University, Ghana



Review article



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Abstract

This study examines the perceptions and the attitudes of students towards the teaching and learning of French in the Ho Technical University. Online questionnaire was used to collect data from 94 students who were purposively selected from the Department of Secretaryship & Management Studies. The descriptive survey research design was employed to elicit information from respondents through an online platform. The data was analyzed quantitatively and was presented using frequency counts and percentages. The study revealed that most of the respondents (90%) perceived learning of French language to be difficult or very difficult and the majority 54(57.5% had difficulty in oral expressions. It was also revealed that more than half of the respondents, 24(25.5%) and 37(39.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they have strong desires to learn French and believed that the knowledge of the language is key to job avenues. The study recommends to French lecturers to use innovative methods to motivate their students and as well, institutions and curriculum planners are advised to create opportunities for constant practice of the language and provide learning materials to enhance students' learning.

Keywords: attitude, curriculum planners, French, learning, perception



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Introduction

It has become uncommon for most curriculum planners to integrate the teaching and learning of French their programmes. According to Emordi (2013), French is gradually taking an enviable position as one of the widely spoken language in the world. The French is either used as an official or administrative language in several organizations worldwide including European Parliament, United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and World Health Organization. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which Ghana is a member, has twelve of its states to be French speaking. It has therefore become incumbent on non-French speaking states that are members of ECOWAS to promote the teaching/learning of the French language to promote peace and sub-regional integration (Araromi, 2009). Ghana has recently taken steps further by joining *la Francophonie*, the world community of French speaking countries. Therefore, there is an ever-increasing need and interest in learning French as a foreign language in most educational institutions in Ghana from primary to the tertiary. However, not all is very gratifying with regard to issues of the teaching and learning of the language in Ghana. There are still issues of inadequate logistics such as teaching and learning materials, lack of well-trained lecturers as well inconsistent policies by government towards French language, especially, at the junior and senior high school levels (Kuupole, 2012). It is therefore, also important to study the factors that can affect the learning process with special attention to the learners of the language at the tertiary level.

Generally, language is a formidable asset for co-existence as it is an important tool for communication (Yu & Huat, 1995). It facilitates conversation among people and also serves as a mirror of a culture. According to Petrovska (2010), the study of language helps an individual to understand the socio-cultural configuration of people since language intrinsically reflects the culture of people. Language is therefore described as the road map of culture which tells where people come from and where they would probably go (Rita, 2004). Languages have long been a fundamental and accepted part of educational programs and more importantly, the knowledge of foreign language has become a basic skill. However, various difficulties are experienced in the teaching of language skills and many students fail to achieve the desired level of proficiency, especially, in speaking (Satar & Özdener, 2008; Kirkgöz, 2011). Among some of the most prominent factors that enhance language learning are the learners' attitudes and perceptions towards the language (Karakurluk, 2016). The term "perception" "percepción", literally referred to the collecting of rents by feudal landlords (Barnhart 1988). Greenberg and Baron (1999) further define perception as the process through which we select, organise and interpret information gathered by our senses in order to understand the world around us. It can be argued that negative perceptions are sources of fear, rejection, disillusion and discouragement. Therefore, for Freeman and Freeman (1994), learning is as a result of

environment acting on the learner; the environment, in this sense, refers to how the learner interprets his or her immediate world.

On the hand, language learning is not devoid of individual's attitude towards that language (Schumann, 1994). Schumman (idem) believes that psychological and social factors serve as a fulcrum that propels an individual's attitude towards the learning of a particular language. While negative attitudes inhibit the learning of a language, positive attitudes serve as a great motivator. Baker (1992:10) defines attitude as *"a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour"*. Similarly, İnal, et al. (2003:41) state that *"attitude refers to our feelings and shapes our behaviors towards learning"*. Thus, behavior is tied to attitude, as the latter highly affects and manifests itself in the former. Hence, attitude plays an important role in second language learning as it determines to a large extent the learners' behavior, that is, action taken to learn, or efforts exerted, during the learning process. Attitudes can be instrumental, utilitarian and pragmatic; or integrative, social and interpersonal; or both (Baker, 1992). Baker (idem) declares that the fact that *"attitude is an important concept lies in its continued and proven utility. That is, within education and psychology, it has stood the test of time, theory and taste"*. Likewise, several researchers stress the significance of attitude in language learning (İnal, et al., 2003; Abu-Melhim, 2009; Al-Tamimi et al., 2009; Buschenhofen, 1998).

İnal et al. (2003) asserts that identifying the attitude of the students is important for both the learner and the academic program. In the same way, Abu-Melhim (2009:686) concludes that although there is a lot that the teacher can do, *"at the end of the day, it is all up to the students whether or not to participate positively in the lesson. In other words, it all boils down to your attitude"*. Moreover, Al-Tamimi et al. (2009) state that attitudes towards a certain language affect a learner's motivation in learning that language. Buschenhofen (1998) also affirms that educators not only hold attitudes highly accountable for the degree of learners' responses, but they also believe that they predict achievement and contribute to it. Closely related to attitude is one's perception. Despagne (2010) elaborates on the relation between perceptions and attitudes, explaining that perceptions are centered on the inner unconscious feelings from which students' attitudes towards learning a language emanate. Thus, attitudes can be defined as the behavioral outcomes of perceptions.

In light of the consistent emphasis of former research on the importance of attitudes in language learning, and driven by the need to understand the students' attitudes and perceptions towards learning French, this study hopes to contribute to the body of previous research on these vital issues in language learning.

The study tests three hypotheses that:

1. most students like French and think it is important.
2. students find French difficult and;

3. students attempt to improve their French, but their efforts are affected by certain factors that militate against them.

This study therefore sets out to investigate the perception and attitude of secretaryship & management students towards teaching and learning of French as foreign language in Ho Technical University. To this end, the study takes a look at the entity of French course at the Department of Management Sciences. Students of the Department of Secretaryship & Management Studies compulsorily study French language from HND1 to HND2. Their attitudes towards the teaching and learning of the language depend to a large extent on their perceived importance and benefits of French language in this era of globalization. The rationale is to make French more immediately relevant to students' lives. Thus, students need to acquire communication skills in French in order to function properly this era of globalisation.

Attitudes and perceptions of these students towards the teaching and learning of French language have not been surveyed before. Thus, it is of relevance to investigate and explore their perception and attitudes towards the teaching and learning of the language. It can be hypothetically stated that the more positive or negative a student's attitude to learning, the greater or lower his or her academic achievement is likely to be. In this hypothetical phrase, it has been observed that attitude to learning is a cause, which correlates with academic achievement effect.

Literature review

A lot of studies has been conducted into the attitudes and perception of students towards language learning with various dimensions over the years across the world such as attitude towards different languages (Lefebvre, 2012); attitude towards mother tongue (Tuwakham, 2005); attitude towards a second or foreign language (Abdullah, Manun et al, 2012; Enongene, 2013; Alleyne et al, 2010) attitude towards national language ; attitude towards varieties of languages and attitudes towards language and language learning at secondary and tertiary levels. According to Hayashi (2005) as reported by Lefebvre (2012), children develop good attitudes toward bilingualism if they think bilingualism is an advantage for them. Her study also reveals that students' attitudes are important and they influence the acquisition process, their attitudes also have implications on eventual success in their endeavor. Similarly, Lefebvre (2012: 87) conducted a research on "*student attitudes toward multilingual education*" in a public French Immersion elementary school in the Pacific Northwest with the third-grade students at the school. From the study, it was deduced that children's experience and perceptions matter a lot whether or not they correlate with outcomes. According to Lefebvre (2012), "students' fear of failure and experience of shame when learning a new language can leave them feeling ambivalent toward French at best, and can cause them to attribute their

failure to French even when inappropriate at worst. Thus, students' attitudes could be best described as occurring at the intersection of learned value and lived experience.

Alleyne Lisa et al. (2010) investigated the perceptions of and attitudes toward French L2 learning opportunities on-and-off campus among students not specializing in French at AfeBabalola University. Through questionnaire and interviews, it was found out that students lack motivation in terms of French as a foreign language (FFL) and the lack of motivation also affects professors in teaching and in other hand constrains lecturers in the classroom as well. From their study, it was learnt that AfeBabalola University students do not have the time to put into their French courses due to the fact they focused their attention on the courses for their major subject at the neglect of the French courses. Consequently, the students did not make French a priority since they perceived that learning French would not require the same attention as is needed for their major courses. The researchers were prompted to analyze the students' attitudes towards the French language because they realized that the way one perceives and acts towards a language largely influences how successful a language learner would perform. However, they found out that the students came in with the perception that learning French at AfeBabalola University would be easy, and their negative attitudes began to form when classes were not easy and when they found out that they were not immersed in a bilingual campus. As a result, the students were not committed to learning FFL, which made the teaching difficult for the professors leading to increasingly unmotivated, uninterested and discouraged lecturers and students. The objective of study however was to create awareness that French as a foreign language (FFL) classroom is not the only space that should be used for students' language learning. That, there is the need to explore other avenues/opportunities outside classroom such as Salon Francophone, summer immersion classes, internets, radio, television, and others in order to motivate the students.

Soku, Simpeh and Osafo-Adu (2011) also surveyed Students' Attitudes towards the study of English and French in a Private University Setting in Ghana. The study intended to investigate differences in students' attitudes to the study of English and French by focusing on gender, age, level, and language background. A sample of 130 students in their first and second year participated in the study with the aid of a survey questionnaire. The results indicate that gender had a significant effect on students' attitudes to the study of English, thus, females showed a better attitude to the two languages than the male counterparts. This finding is similar Ellis (1994) which indicates that female students have better attitudes towards second language acquisition than the male students.

Abdullah, Manun et al. (2012) also did a study focused on the attitude of undergraduate students of Life Science School of Khulna University towards the learning of English language. Seventy-nine undergraduate students from seven departments were surveyed. It was revealed that the students have positive attitude to English language course which they study

compulsorily as part of the foreign language acquisition policy of Bangladesh. The students reported that they recognized the global status and importance of English language in this era of globalization and global communication network. Conclusion was made that the positive attitudes of the students towards English language could be attributed to the fact that they were instrumentally motivated towards the language. In a similar perspective, Enogene (2013) also conducted a study on the attitudes of English as foreign language (EFL) learners at Yaoundé University in Cameroon. The participants were 966 students and 27 lecturers who were examined and it was revealed that learners' negative attitudes towards English could be accounted for by lecturers' practices. That is, the type of activities introduced in the classroom can influence learners to develop negative or positive attitudes towards the language. His study further argues that lecturers' inability to adapt the physical and social realities to meet learners' expectations in the learning process is the result of three main factors; i) inadequate training, ii) confusion about what the course purports to offer, and iii) the purpose and nature of language learning. It was recommended that the way input is presented to learners should invite their attention. This study agreed with the view of Krashen (1984) that giving comprehensive input to students facilitates their learning processes. Thus, when the input or instruction is meaningful and slightly challenging the students are motivated and they developed positive attitudes to learn it.

Also, Fiadzawoo, Yegblemenawo and Quansah (2017) worked on *pronunciation in the Study of French: Attitudes of Teacher-Trainees in Colleges of Education in Ghana*. Their study aims at finding out the attitudes of teacher trainees in selected colleges of education in Ghana towards the learning of French language pronunciation. Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) was used to collect field data from 229 French teacher trainees purposively selected from the five colleges of education training French lecturers in Ghana. The results revealed that the trainees were contended with the introduction of the new course and believed that it would help them gain skills to teach pronunciation after their graduation as French lecturers.

It can, therefore, be indicated that the last research work is similar to this study in terms of participants' view about utility of the French language at work place; however, the institutions and the participants targeted by that research were different from the current research. It is also worth mentioning that with the various studies that were reviewed on attitudes and perceptions of students towards language courses, no study has been done on attitudes and perceptions of students of the Secretaryship & Management Studies towards teaching and learning of French in the Ho Technical University. Moreover, the aims and objectives of the teaching of French in this institution may differ in diverse dimensions from the other studies reviewed. Therefore, it might not be surprising that the participants in the current study have different perceptions and attitudes towards the study of the French language.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Descriptive surveys are versatile and practical, more especially because they identify present needs (Amedahe & Gyimah, 2014). As indicated by Neuman (2012:22) *"in survey research, we ask people questions in a written questionnaire (mailed or handed to people) [...]. We do not manipulate a situation or condition; we simply ask many people numerous questions in a short time period"*. The descriptive survey research, therefore, provides the framework upon which the research goals and objectives of this study were realized. The choice of the research method was informed by the theoretical concerns of the study, goals and objectives, as well as the very nature of the research problem. Therefore, to find out the object of the study, a questionnaire was developed with 20 items designed to collect and measure students' views. A five-point Likert scale with strongly agree; agree; disagree; strongly disagree; and undecided, was used for the main items. The survey method was preferred because it is suitable for empirical research and offer greater anonymity to the informants. Neuman (2012) points out that though surveys give only a picture of what many people think or report doing, it is suitable for many fields of study and in applied research.

Participants

The participants in the study were second year students pursuing Secretaryship & Management Studies at the Ho Technical University in Ho, the capital of the Volta Region of Ghana. The target population was 115 comprising 104 females and 11 males, however, 94 participants responded to the online questionnaire. Their ages were averagely in the twenties. The second-year students were chosen on the basis that, they had adequate orientation in the first year towards improving their reading skills which include; how to study, what to read and generally how to look for information and make use of it. Thus, the choice of the level 200 students was based on the fact that they have undertaken a complete three semesters of French courses in the school as at the time the research was conducted. In other words, the participants chosen had the necessary information they need about their courses of study to enable them to take an informed decision including developing either positive or negative perceptions and attitudes towards their studies. Permission was duly sought from the head of department, Secretaryship and Management Studies before enrolling students as participants. Thereafter, participants were made to understand benefits of the study and how it was purely for academic purposes. They were therefore assured of uttermost confidentiality of any information provided by them.

Instruments for Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection was an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of one hundred and fifteen respondents online, with the use of Googleform. However, only ninety-four respondents were able to respond and send their responses within the stipulated time given. The data collected were computed, analyzed with the use of SPSS 25.0. The results were then presented in tables for easy identification and interpretation. This implies that the quantitative data were analyzed, tabulated and percentages were calculated. The percentage values and frequencies were computed with the use of descriptive statistics.

Results of the findings

The results were based on students' attitudes and perceptions towards the learning of French as part of their programme. Particularly, issues bothering on students' motivation for studying French and the challenges they faced in the study of French were the key components of responses elicited from the students.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic information of the respondents was presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	7	7.6
Female	87	92.4
Total	94	100

Out of the ninety-four (94) online questionnaire filled by respondents, by gender 7(7.6%) respondents were males and the remaining 87(92.4%) were female as shown in Table 1. This distribution is obvious since the Secretaryship & Management Studies programme is dominated by females; only few males are interested in this programme.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
16-20	16	17
21-25	59	62.8
26-30	16	17.0
31+	3	3.2
Total	94	100

From Table 2, 59(62.8%) of the respondents are within the age range of 21 to 25 years, 16(17%) of the respondents were between the ages of 16 and 20 years whiles 16(17.0%) are within the age range 26 to 30 years. Three (3.2%) respondents were aged 31 years and above. The results show that the majority of the respondents were within their youthful age.

Table 3: Nationality of respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ghanaian	93	98.9
Togolese	1	1.1
Total	94	100

From Table 3, there was a respondent 1(1.1%) who is a Togolese, whiles 93(98.9%) of respondents are Ghanaians. This is an indication that foreigners from the neighbouring countries sometimes enrol in the Secretaryship & Management Studies programme.

General linguistic background

This section attempts to explore the linguistic background of the respondents. The responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: French background

Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary School	20	21.3
Junior High School	26	27.7
Senior High School	10	10.6
Tertiary	38	40.4
Total	94	100

The Table 4 shows that, 38(40.4%) of respondents started learning French from the tertiary, 26 (27.7%) from Junior High School while 20(21.3%) respondents stated that they started at the primary, while 10(10.6%) respondents said that, they started learning the French language from Senior High School. In Ghana, the teaching and learning of French starts right from primary school but this depends on the availability of the French lecturers. Mostly, schools in the rural areas are affected negatively due to the lack of French lecturers (Kuupole, 2012).

Table 5: Assessment of the learning of French

Assessment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Easy	14	14.9
Very easy	0	0
Difficult	55	58.5
Very difficult	25	26.6
Total		100

From Table 5, it can be deduced that the respondents perceive the learning of French to be difficult; more than half of the respondents 55(58.5%) indicated difficult, 25(26.6%) very difficult. Only 14(14.9%) of respondents perceived French to be easy. The views of the respondents seem to agree with the general view of Ghanaians who see French as difficult though the language is spoken in the neighbouring countries (Kuupole, 2012).

Table 6: Areas of difficulty

French components	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Oral expression	54	57.5
Written expression	21	22.3
Oral comprehension	11	11.7
Written comprehension	8	8.5
Total	94	100

As can be seen in Table 6, 54(57.5%) of the respondents indicated they had difficulty in expressing themselves in French orally, 21(22.3%) had difficulty in their written expression, whilst 11(11.7%) had problems in their oral comprehension, 8(8.5%) respondents also stated that they have difficulty in written comprehension. The result rejuvenates debates on how language in general can be taught to eradicate problems related to the acquisition of the

productive skills. Research indicates that there is a close relationship between the oral and written expressions; both belong to the productive skills. It stipulates that most often, the productive skills pose more challenges to students than the receptive skills namely; listening and reading (Ocran & Etsey, 2016).

Table 7: Major areas of difficulty in oral expression

Area of oral expression	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Grammar	25	26.5
Vocabulary	25	26.5
Organisation of sentences	44	47.0
Total	94	100

In terms of oral expression, 44(47%) of the respondents had issues with organizing their sentences. Whiles 25(26.5%) had issues with vocabulary and 25(26.5%) respondents also indicated that they have difficulty in grammar. The learning of a language becomes easier sometimes depending on the previous experiences of the learner. The next question is about whether the French was the respondents' first foreign language.

Table 8: French as the First Foreign Language

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	76	80.9
No	18	19.1
Total	94	100

From the Table 8, 76 (80.9%) of the respondents stated that French was their first foreign language, while 18 (19.1%) respondents intimated that French was their first foreign language. The implication is that majority of the respondents did not have much experience in terms of learning a foreign language.

Respondents' perception about the potentials with regard to knowing how to speak French

1. Indicate your extent of agreement to the following statement on a scale of 1 to 3 where
1= Yes 2= Don't Know 3= No

Table 9: The responses of Participants to statements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

Statement	Yes	Don't know	No
1.French is the second most widely learned foreign language in the world	71(75.5%)	4(4.3%)	19(20.2%)
2.Knowledge in French increases your understanding of francophone cultures	79(84%)	12(12.8%)	3(3.2%)
3.French is an important language to know in our current society.	76(80.9%)	14(14.9%)	4(4.3%)
4.Knowledge of French makes it easier to learn other foreign languages (such as Spanish) due to their interrelation.	60(63.8%)	32(34%)	2(2.1)
5.French brings about successful communication between members of different cultures across the globe	63(67.7%)	28(30.1%)	3(3.2%)

As shown in Table 9, the majority of the respondents had adequate knowledge on French. Seventy-one (75.5%) respondents have confirmed that French is the second most widely learned foreign language in the world. A slightly smaller proportion 4(4.3%) of respondents have indicated that they *do not know*, while 19(20.2%) respondents disagree with the assertion. Seventy-nine (84%) respondents indicated that knowledge in French increases their understanding of francophone cultures, 12(34%) intimated that they *don't know*, while 3(3.2%) respondents responded *no* to the statement. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents 76(80.9%) opined that French is an important language to know in our current society, while 14(14.9%) respondents have shown they do not know about the claim and also 4(4.3%) respondents refuted the statement. Also, from the Table 10, 60 respondents representing (63.8%) affirm to the claim that Knowledge of French makes it easier to learn other foreign languages (such as Spanish) due to their interrelation, while 32(34%) respondents said '*do not know*'. Two (2.1) respondents also disagree with the statement. Regarding the 'statement that French brings about successful communication between members of different cultures across the globe', 63(67.7%) said yes, 28(30.1%) respondents

indicated that they don't know, while 3(3.2%) respondents said no to the statement.

It can, therefore, be said that a good number of the respondents know the communication value of learning French especially when the language is spoken not only in countries surrounding Ghana but also in the entire sub-region of West Africa.

Table 10: The responses of Participants to statements 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 on attitude towards French

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided
6.I always feel anxious when it is time to learn French.	24(25.5%)	37(39.4%)	2(2.1%)	21(22.3%)	10(10.6%)
7.I would have abandoned the learning of French if it was not compulsory	27(28.7%)	32(34%)	7(7.4%)	19(20.2%)	9(9.6%)
8.I study additional materials to improve my knowledge of French.	7(7.4%)	39(41.5%)	1(1.1%)	24(25.5%)	23(24.5%)
9.My dislike for French started from secondary school	24(25.5%)	17(18.1%)	13(13.8%)	31(33%)	9(9.6%)
10.I make use of knowledge acquired in French daily.	7(7.4%)	37(39.4%)	4(4.3%)	27(28.7%)	19(20.2%)

NOTE: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, UN=Undecided.

Table 10 reveals the attitudes of the students towards French course in HTU. More than half of the respondents 24(25.5%) strongly agreed and 37(39.4%) agreed) admitted they always feel anxious when it is time to learn French, 2(2.1%) strongly disagreed and 21(22.3%) disagreed) to the claim that they always feel anxious when it is time to learn French, while 10(10.6%) respondents were undecided. The study further reveals that, a large proportion

59(62.7%) of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they would have abandoned the learning of French if it was not compulsory, the rest of the respondents 27(29.8%) represented both strongly disagreed and disagreed. Noticeably, the percentage of those who were undecided was 7(7.4%). While in the third statement, the respondents 46(48.9%) strongly agreed or agreed that they study additional materials to improve their knowledge of French, 25(26.6%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the claim. A smaller number 23(24.5%) respondents were undecided to the statement. Regarding the responses to the fourth statement, majority of the respondents 44(46.8%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the claim that their dislike for French started from secondary school, while over 41(43.6%) strongly agreed or agreed to the statement, 9(9.6%) respondents, however, were undecided with the claim. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents 44(46.8%) strongly agreed or agreed that they make use of knowledge acquired in French daily. On the other hand, 31(32.1%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the claim that, they make use of knowledge acquired in French daily. The percentage of those who were undecided was 19(20.2%).

The growing indication is that students feel anxious in French classes. As noted by Krashen (1984) in Affective Filter Hypothesis, the higher the anxiety or fear in the learning environment, the lower knowledge acquisition takes place. Language lecturers need to manage their classroom environments to be devoid of high anxiety by providing learners positive orientations towards the language.

Table 11: The responses of participants to statements 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 perceptions towards French

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided
11. Learning French amounts to a waste of time.	4(4.3%)	9(9.6%)	19(10.2%)	54(57.4%)	8(8.5%)
12. French is the least important course in the HND program.	4(4.3%)	16(17%)	16 (17%)	44(46.8%)	14(14.9%)
13. French is just a core course that may not be used in my entire career.	7(7.4%)	10(10.6%)	24(25.5%)	37(39.4%)	16(17%)

14. Knowledge in French is key to acquiring jobs across the globe.	40 (43%)	40(43%)	0	3(3.2%)	10(10.8%)
15. French is the most difficult course in my programme.	24(25.5%)	38(40.4%)	4 (4.3%)	21(22.3%)	7(7.4%)

As shown in table 11, the majority of the respondents 73(67.6%) strongly disagreed or disagreed, that learning French amounts to a waste of time, while a very small number of respondents 13(13.9%) strongly agreed or agreed, 8(8.5%) respondents were undecided with the claim. Also, majority of the respondents 60(61.8%) strongly disagreed or disagreed to the claim that, French is the least important course in the HND program. On the other hand, 20(21.3%) strongly agreed or agreed that French is the least important course in the HND program, while 14(14.9%) were undecided about the claim. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents 61(64.9%) strongly disagreed or disagreed to the assertion that, French is just a core course that may not be used in their entire career, 17(18%), however, strongly agreed or agreed while 16(17%) respondents were undecided about the statement. More so, 80(86%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed that, knowledge in French is key to acquiring jobs across the globe, 3(3.2%) disagreed and 10(10.8%) respondents were undecided to the statement. Finally, the result also indicates that 62(65.9%) respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that French is the most difficult course in their programme while, 25(26.6%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the claim. A small number 7(7.4%) respondents, however, were undecided. It is therefore obvious that though the respondents believed strongly that the knowledge of French is important to them, they have some perceptions that it is most difficult course in their programme.

Table 12: The responses of participants to statements 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 challenges faced by students in the study of French

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided
16.Lack of confidence since French is a foreign language.	26(27.7%)	37(39.4%)	2(2.1%)	14(14.9%)	15(16%)
17.I do not have any French background.	27(29%)	40(43%)	4(4.3%)	21(22.6%)	1(1.1%)
18. Teaching hours allocated for teaching French is not sufficient.	14(14.9%)	20(21.3%)	17(18.1)	35(37.2%)	8(8.5%)
19.Poor lecturing/teaching methods.	23(24.5%)	19(20.2%)	17(18.1%)	28(29.8%)	7(7.4%)
20.Inadequate teaching materials.	27(28.7%)	25(26.6%)	6(6.4%)	28(29.8%)	8(8.5%)
21.No motivation from lecturer/colleague students to study French.	28(29.8%)	24(25.5%)	9(9.6%)	28(29.8%)	5(5.3%)
22.I hardly understand what is being taught.	37(39.4%)	31(33%)	2(2.1%)	15(16%)	9(9.6%)

As shown in the Table 12, regarding the challenges faced by students in the study of French, the majority of the respondents 63(67.1%) strongly agreed or agreed that, they lack confidence since French is a foreign language, while few respondents 16(17%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the claim. But 15(16%) of the respondents was undecided. Furthermore, the result has shown that the majority of the respondents 67(72%) strongly agreed or agreed with point that they do not have any background in French, while 25(26.9%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. One respondent was, however, undecided about the claim. Regarding teaching hours allocated for French, more than half of the respondents 52(55.3%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the assertion that, teaching hours allocated for teaching French is not sufficient, while 34(36.2%) strongly agreed or agreed with

the claim. But 8(8.5%) respondents were undecided about the statement. More so, the majority of the respondents 42(44.7%) strongly agreed or agreed that, poor lecturing/teaching methods is challenge in the study of French. However, 35(47.9%) respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the assertion. But 7(7.4%) respondents were undecided.

Again, the results have shown that the majority of the respondents 52(55.3%) strongly agreed or agreed that inadequate teaching materials is a challenge in the study of French, while 34(36.2%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the assertion. It is also worthy to note that 8(8.5%) respondents were undecided about the assertion. Regarding class motivation, 52(55.3%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed that, there is no motivation from lecturer/colleague students to study French, 9(9.6%) strongly disagreed and 28(29.8%) disagreed with this assertion, however, 5(5.3%) respondents were undecided. Finally, 68(72.4%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they hardly understand what is taught by their lecturers. But 17(18.1%) respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed to the assertion. However, 9(9.6%) respondents were undecided about the claim. The last statement from Table 12 has shown clearly that majority of the respondents have difficulty in understanding what is taught by their French lecturers. The indication is that, averagely, the respondents agreed to the assertions that the factors listed are some of the challenges associated with the learning of French. Meanwhile, there are other factors; they are presented in Table 13.

Table 13: Other challenges faced by students in the study in French

Other Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Usage of French only hinder their understanding of the lesson taught	12	12.8
The credit hours for French is not sufficient	12	12.7
Lack of reading materials for the French course	50	53.2
Inadequate oral activities in French class	20	21.3
Total	94	100

The Table 13 reveals that 50(53.2%) respondents lack reading materials for the French course and this hinders their learning of the French, 20(21.3) respondents stated that inadequate oral activities in French class hamper their learning, 12(12.8%) respondents also opined that the use of only French in class hinders their understanding of the lesson taught, while 12(12.8%)

respondents indicated the credit hours not being sufficient for learning the French. The results agreed with Kuupole (2012), that lack of teaching and learning materials in the teaching of French constituted the major setback to the effective teaching of the language.

Discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations

This study aimed at assessing attitudes and perceptions of students towards the learning of French at the Department of Secretaryship & Management Studies at the Ho Technical University. The study was based on the hypothetical statement that, the more positive or negative a student's attitude to learning, the greater or lower his or her academic achievement is likely to be. It was revealed that, most of the respondents (90%) perceived learning of French to be difficult and the majority, 54 (57.5%) ranked oral expressions to be the most difficult aspect of the language. However, more than half of the respondents, 24(25.5%) and 37(39.4%) either agreed or strongly agreed to depict their positive attitudes towards the learning of the French language. They believed that the knowledge of the language is key to job avenues. The respondents disagreed with the fact that the learning of French constitutes a waste of their time. As indicated by the students' responses, the knowledge of French is a necessity to acquiring jobs across the globe. They also believed that French is easy to learn; it is fun and does not amount to a waste of time. The implication is that, students are more likely to attach great importance to the study of French and this constitutes a positive attitude. But students' difficulty as indicated by the findings is the lack of adequate teaching and learning materials to boost their motivation to learn the language. Other major challenges faced by students in the study of French as indicated in the results were lack of confidence, little or no French background, insufficient teaching hours, no extrinsic motivation, difficulty in understanding what is taught, difficulty in learning, lack of interest in learning. These findings reiterate the views of many researchers that students need to be motivated and learning environment is supposed to be enriched with learning materials to facilitate learning. Moreover, the findings also suggest that it would be helpful if HTU adopts a more flexible, less intensive curriculum and two to three-hour daily tuition in order to preserve students' positive attitude and render them effective in learning the language. These measures would also allow lecturers sufficient time for reflection, creativity and adjusting to the needs of their students. It must be reiterated that these recommendations are in agreement with those of Zainol Abidin (2012) that in order to rectify students' negative attitude, curriculum should be reviewed to accommodate the needs of the learners and lecturers should adopt communicative approaches which utilize more attractive teaching methods and supplementary materials.

It is, therefore, worthy to recommend that French lecturers at HTU adopt modern innovative methods as a catalyst to motivate their students to learn the language. Motivation is a potent force in language acquisition (Ellis, 1994). It empowers students to achieve high

levels of performance and overcome communication barriers in order to bring about change (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012). In addition to that, teaching and learning materials should always be made available to both lecturers and students to complement their efforts. Again, more emphasis should be laid on the teaching of vocabulary and language structures to enhance students' ability to express themselves in French. In addition, as most of the students at HTU are adults, learning environment need to be made risk-free (Krashen, 1984) to enable students express themselves freely without shyness or anxiety. More importantly, lecturers can employ pedagogical strategies that enforce recycling new words. It is believed that when students build a solid base of vocabulary alongside the use of appropriate language structures, it makes them more confident not only in expressing themselves better but it is improving their writing skills too.

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