

TEACHERS' CREATIVITY, A FUNCTIONAL PEDAGOGY APPROACH AS CORRELATE OF STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN FRENCH LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OWERRI NORTH L.G.A, IMO STATE, NIGERIA.

Khan, Richard Mofor, Ph.D

Departments of Arts Education and Language Education,

Faculty of Education,

Imo State University, Owerri

+2347030958751

richardkhan428@gmail.com

Abstract

The researcher investigated Teachers' Creativity a Functional Pedagogy Approach as Correlate of Students' Achievement in French Language in public Secondary Schools in Owerri North L.G.A Imo state, Nigeria. The teaching and learning of French language as the researcher has observed has been a very difficult task. This calls for an improved teachers skills strategy and approaches to enhance students' achievement in this subject. The study adopted a correlation design. The researcher formulated two research questions and two hypotheses to guide the study. The population of the study was 3059 students in seven public secondary schools in Owerri North Local Government Area Imo State. The sample of the study is 122. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The instrument used was titled "Teachers' Creativity a Functional Pedagogy Approach as Correlate of Students' Achievement in French Language in Public Secondary Schools (TCFPACSAFLPSS)" to elicit the necessary information. Three specialists validated the instrument, two in Measurement and Evaluation and one in French all from Imo State University. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient formula (r) was used to obtain the reliability index 0.78. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the research questions and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) F-ratio and t-cal and t-crit (sig t) were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that: there is no significant relationship between teachers' creative knowledge and pedagogy in the subject matter and students' achievement in French language. There is a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the teachers' communication skills as an aspect of teachers' creativity and students' achievement in French language. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that teachers should always use creativity pedagogy during teaching to effectively enhance students' achievement and this will make them to improve in French language teaching and learning process. Teachers' should possess a good communication skill to for effective teaching and learning process of French language.

Keywords: Teachers' Creativity, Functional Pedagogy, French Language, Communication Skills and Students' Achievement.

Introduction

Education is the backbone of every nation which prepares individuals for effective and efficient life. According to UNESCO (2022). Education is a human right and the foundation for sustainable development, aiming to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to live fulfilled lives and contribute to their communities. The task of education is reposed mostly in the hand of teachers. The art of teaching depends on the effectiveness and knowledge of the teacher in a particular subject. Okolocha and Onyeneke (2019), affirmed that the teacher is the ultimate factor in the education process because he is the one who plans, organizes, designs, directs, motivates and encourages others to learn by employing different methods of teaching to transfer knowledge. According to Oyekan (2019), teaching is a process of using human resources for the growth and development of individuals. Teaching is done in an organized method by trained and experienced teachers that have required knowledge and skills. French language, is a romance language spoken as a first language in France, and other parts of the World such as Belgium and Switzerland; and in various communities worldwide. It is also an official language in numerous international organizations and is one of the most widely taught and studied languages globally according to Encyclopædia Britannica (2024).

Creativity is the ability to generate original, novel, and valuable ideas or solutions by combining imagination, knowledge, and critical thinking. It involves going beyond conventional thinking to create something new and meaningful American Psychological Association (APA, 2023).

Teacher's Creativity refers to the capacity of teachers to design engaging lessons, use innovative teaching strategies, and adapt learning materials in ways that motivate students, stimulate critical thinking, and make knowledge more meaningful. It is not just about artistic talent—it's about using imagination and innovation to improve the teaching and learning process. UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE, 2024). Teachers' creativity involves functional pedagogy.

Similarly, Functional pedagogy (often called functional literacy pedagogy) is a teaching approach that focuses on the social purpose of language and literacy. Instead of teaching reading and writing only as technical skills, it emphasizes how texts function in real life, how they are used to achieve goals, express meanings, and serve practical purposes in society (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

Teacher's Creative Knowledge refers to teachers ability to develop innovative and engaging lesson plans, activities, and assessments. Creative knowledge involves teachers' understanding of creative pedagogical approaches, their ability to think outside the box, and experiment functional pedagogy with new teaching methods. Chen and Yuan (2021) highlight the importance to teachers – creative teaching and imagination in promoting student learning outcomes. Some key characteristics of creative teachers include

Open mindness and flexibility: creative teachers are adaptable and open to new ideas and approaches.

Divergent thinking skills: creative teachers can generate multiple solution to problems and encourage students to do the same.

Passion and motivation: creative teachers are passionate about teaching and learning and motivates students to explore new ideas.

Teachers' creative knowledge in the subject matter is a significant variable in fostering creativity in students. Shulam (2018) mentioned the following reasons of teacher creative knowledge in the subject matter as:

Subject matter expertise where teachers' in-depth knowledge of the subject matter enables him/her to identify connections, relationships, and patterns that can spark creative ideas.

Pedagogical creativity in which teachers with creative knowledge in the subject matter can design innovative lesson plans, activities, and assessments that encourage students to think creatively.

With inspiring curiosity teachers demonstrate a passion for the subject matter and share their own creative experiences, they can inspire students curiosity and motivation to learn.

Modeling creative thinking in teachers who exhibit creative thinking in their teaching practices model the behavior for their students, showing them that creativity is a valuable and desirable skill.

Facilitating critical thinking were teachers with creative knowledge in the subject matter can help students develop critical thinking skills by encouraging them to question assumptions, analyze information, and evaluate evidence.

Encouraging risk-taking, when teachers demonstrate a willingness to take risks and try new approaches, they create a safe and supportive environment that encourages students to do the same.

Enhancing students' creativity, Grossman (2019) stated that to foster creativity in students, teachers can focus on developing their own creative knowledge in the subject matter by: Staying updated with the latest developments in the field, engaging in professional development opportunities, collaborating with colleagues to share ideas and best practices and reflecting on their own teaching practices and seeking feedback from students and peers.

By cultivating their creative knowledge in the subject matter, teachers can create a learning environment that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and innovation in their students.

Creativity Pedagogy is an educational approach that intentionally incorporates teaching practices, classroom environments, and learning tasks designed to foster students' creative

thinking, innovation, originality, and problem-solving. It moves beyond rote learning to encourage learners not just to absorb content, but to generate new ideas, question assumptions, experiment, and apply knowledge in novel ways (Hetherington, 2022).

Effective language learning is a process in which learners gain proficiency in a new language through strategies and learning environments that are learner-centered, meaningful, interactive, and supported by real-world usage opportunities. It involves active participation, use of authentic materials, feedback, and scaffolding, so that learners develop communicative competence, accuracy, fluency, and confidence (Ma, 2023).

Effective teacher-student communication is crucial for successful learning outcomes. Teachers' communication skills involve verbal and nonverbal communication, active listening, questioning, and facilitation (Tsagaraeva, 2024). Communication skill is the ability for an individual to accurately convey a message to another person or group of people. This is an important skill set to have in life because the exchange of information is an act that is constantly occurring in everyday life.

There are different types of communication which include verbal communication for face to face conversations, lectures discussions and presentations,

non-verbal communication that entails body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and written communication (e.g. emails, texts). Then interpersonal communication is One-on-one interactions between teachers and students, colleagues, or administrators.

While Group communication is interactions among groups of students, teachers, or colleagues, such as team meetings, discussions, or brainstorming sessions.

Communication Influences Teacher Creativity in the sense that it: inspires new ideas, perspectives and approaches to teaching. It fosters collaboration, that is communication among teachers, students and colleagues can lead to collaborative projects, shared resources, and collective problem solving. It also provides feedback and support, in other words communicating with others can provide valuable feedback, support, and encouragement, helping teachers refine their ideas and approaches. Again it develops critical thinking, analysis and evaluation of ideas, helping teachers develop more innovative and effective teaching practices. Ekman (2013) mentioned the benefits of effective communication for teacher creativity as follows: effective communication that can lead to increased collaboration among teachers, students, and colleagues, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

Effective communication can provide valuable feedback, helping teachers refine their ideas and approaches, enhanced communication can stimulate critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation of ideas, helping teachers develop more innovative and effective teaching

practices. Furthermore, effective communication can lead to increased job satisfaction as teachers feel supported, valued, and empowered to innovate and improve their teaching practices.

Theoretically the study is anchored on the Input Hypothesis and Affective Filter by Stephen Krashen (1982) This theory posits that Language acquisition occurs best when Learners receive “comprehensible input” (messages they understand) and when their “affective filter” (anxiety, self-doubt, boredom) is low. Relating to Language Teaching this is where teacher creativity plays its most critical role. A creative teachers uses diverse props, media and humor to make complex French input comprehensible while simultaneously lowering stress levels in the classroom. When the affective filter is low, student achievement spikes.

Challenges of Communication for Teacher Creativity and Pedagogy include Time Constraints: Finding time to communicate effectively with others can be challenging, especially in busy educational settings.

Language Barriers: Communication can be hindered by language barriers, cultural differences, or varying levels of technical expertise.

Technological Limitations: technological limitations, such as outdated hardware or software, can impede effective communication.

Interpersonal Conflicts: Interpersonal conflicts of misunderstandings can arise, hindering effective communication and collaboration

There are different strategies for Effective Communication which include, active listening that involves practice active listening by paying attention to others and paraphrasing to ensure understanding. , asking clarifying questions, and paraphrasing to ensure understanding. Clear and Concise Language: Use clear and concise language to communicate ideas, avoiding jargon or technical terms that may confuse others.

Nonverbal communications: Be aware of nonverbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice, which can convey just as much information as verbal communication.

Technology-Enhanced Communication: Leverage technology to enhance communication such as video conferencing, online discussion forums, or collaborative document editing. By recognizing the importance of communication in fostering teacher creativity and pedagogy, educators and administrators can develop strategies to enhance communication, leading to increased collaboration, innovation, and effectiveness in teaching practices.

Teacher's Creative Knowledge refers to teachers' ability to develop innovative and engaging lesson plans, activities, and assessments. Creative knowledge involves teachers' understanding of creative pedagogical approaches, their ability to think outside the box, and their willingness to experiment with new teaching methods (Chen and Yuan, 2021).

Teacher's creative knowledge in the subject matter is a significant variable in fostering creativity in students. Shulman (2018) mentioned the following reasons of teacher creative knowledge in the subject matter such as Subject matter expertise: A teacher's in -depth knowledge of subject matter enables them to identify connections, relationships, and patterns that can spark creative ideas. Pedagogy creativity: Teachers with creative knowledge in the subject matter can design innovative lesson plans, activities, and assessments that encourage students to think creatively.

Inspiring curiosity: When teachers demonstrate passion for the subject matter and share their own creative experiences, they can inspire students' curiosity and motivation to learn.

Modeling creative thinking: Teachers with creative thinking in their teaching practices model behavior for their students, showing them that creativity is a valuable and desirable skill.

Facilitating critical thinking: Teachers with creative knowledge in French language can help students develop critical thinking skills by encouraging them to question assumptions, analyze information, and evaluate evidence. Encourage risk-taking: When teachers demonstrate a willingness to take and try new approaches, they create a safe and supportive environment that encourages students to do the same. According to Grossman (2019) to foster creativity in students, teachers can focus on developing their own creative knowledge in the language by:

- Staying updated with the latest developments in the field

- Engaging in professional development opportunities

- Collaborating with colleagues to share ideas and best practices.

- Reflecting on their own teaching practices and seeking feedback from students and peers.

By cultivating their creative knowledge in the subject matter, teachers can create a learning environment that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and innovation in their students. Inclusively teachers' creative knowledge and pedagogy can have a positive impact on student learning outcomes, including improved critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities

Student achievement refers to the measurable extent to which a learner attains set academic goals or learning outcomes over a period. This includes mastering subject matter (knowledge), skills (such as thinking, problem-solving), performance on assessments or examinations, and sometimes also encompasses growth in attitudes, engagement, and application of learning in real-world contexts. It is often operationalized by grades, test scores, GPA, or standardized assessments (Schwerter, Stang-Rabrig, Kleinkorres, 2024).

Statement of the problem

Despite the importance of French as Nigeria's second official language and a core subject in the secondary school curriculum, students' achievement in French Language in public

secondary schools has remained consistently low, as evidenced by poor performance in internal and external examinations such as WAEC and NECO. Several studies have attributed this underachievement to instructional factors, particularly the teaching methods employed by teachers. However, there is a paucity of empirical evidence on the extent to which teachers' creativity and the use of functional pedagogical strategies correlate with students' academic achievement in French Language in the Nigerian context.

Specifically, in Owerri North LGA of Imo State, many French Language teachers still rely on traditional, teacher-centred approaches such as lecture and grammar-translation methods, which often fail to make learning meaningful, interesting, or contextually relevant to students. The degree to which creative and functional pedagogies, such as the use of innovative materials, learner-centred activities, and context-based instruction, are adopted, and how they relate to students' achievement, has not been adequately investigated. Consequently, there is a knowledge gap regarding the relationship between teachers' creativity, functional pedagogy, and students' achievement in French Language in public secondary schools in Owerri North LGA. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine teachers' creativity and functional pedagogy as correlates of students' achievement in French Language in the study area.

Purpose of the study

This study investigated Teachers' Creativity a Functional Pedagogy Approach as Correlate of Students' Achievement in French Language in Public Secondary Schools in Owerri North L.G.A, Imo State. Specifically, the topic sort to:

1. Determine teachers' creative knowledge and pedagogy in French language and student achievement in Owerri North LGA Imo State.
2. Find out the relationship between teachers communication skills and student achievement in French language in Owerri North L.G.A Imo State.

Research questions

To guide the researcher to achieve the earlier stated research specific purposes the following research questions where posed

1. What is the relationship between teachers' creative knowledge and pedagogy in French language and student achievement in Owerri North LGA Imo State?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' communication skills and student' achievement in French language in public schools in Owerri North LGA Imo State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between the mean rating scores of teachers' creative knowledge I the subject matter and students' academic achievement in French language in public secondary schools in Owerri North LGA Imo State.

2. There is no significant relationship between the mean rating scores of the teachers' communication skills as an aspect of teachers' creativity and students' academic achievement in French language in public secondary schools in Owerri North LGA, Imo State.

Methods

The design adopted for this study was correlational research design. The study was carried out in public secondary schools Imo State Owerri North LGA, Imo State Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The population of the study was 3059 students in 7 public secondary schools in Owerri North LGA in Imo State. The sample of the study consisted of 122 Senior Secondary School Students (SS2) selected from Six (6) Public Secondary Schools using the Simple Random Sampling Technique. The instrument adopted was a 14 items structured questionnaire captured Teachers' Creativity a Functional Pedagogy Approach as Correlate of Students' Achievements in French Language in Public Secondary Schools (TCFPACSAFLPSS). The questionnaire employed the 4 points modified Likert scale. The face and content validity were done by three specialists, two from measurement and evaluation and one from French department in Imo State University who validated the instrument. For the reliability, the instrument was administered to students who were not part of the sample; Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula (r) was used to obtain reliability and the index obtained was 0.78. This index where considered reliable for the study. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer research questions and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) F-ratio, t-cal and t-crit (t) were used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

1. What is the relationship between teachers' creative knowledge and pedagogy in French language and student achievement in Owerri North LGA Imo State?

Table 1: Correlation coefficient of the teachers' creative knowledge and pedagogy in French language and student achievement in French language in public secondary schools in Owerri North Local Government Area, Imo State

Variables	N	r	r ²	Decision
Teachers' communication skill Academic Achievement relationship	122	0.943	0.801	Positive and very strong

The correlation coefficient (r) between teachers' creative knowledge and student academic achievement is 0.671, which shows a positive and strong relationship. The coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.310, which means that approximately 31% of the variance in student academic achievement can be determined by teacher creative knowledge for the subject. This means that as teacher creative knowledge increases as well as student academic achievement.

Ho₁

There is no significant relationship between the mean rating scores of the teachers' creative knowledge and pedagogy in French language and student academic achievement in French language in public secondary schools in Owerri North Local Government Area, Imo State.

Table 2: Summary t-test Statistics for Testing Hypothesis one

n	Df	t_{cal}	p	t_{crit}	α	Decision
122	99	11.230	< 0.001	1.341	0.05	Reject Ho ₁

From the table, T-test results in this table above show a calculated t-value (t-cal) of 11.230 with a p-value less than 0.001, which is significantly lower than the critical t-value (t-crit) of 1.341 at an alpha level of 0.05. In this case, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) is rejected, showing that the relationship is statistically significant.

1. What is the relationship between teachers communication skills and student' achievement in French language in public schools in Owerri North LGA Imo State?

Table 3: Correlation coefficient of the teacher communication skill as an aspect of teachers' creativity and students' academic achievement in French language in public secondary schools in Owerri North Local Government Area, Imo State.

Variables	n	r	r²	Decision
Teachers' communication skill Academic Achievement	122	0.943	0.801	Positive and very strong relationship

The data analysis in table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient (r) of teachers' communication skill and student academic achievement is 0.943 which shows a positive and very strong relationship. The coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.801, indicating that 80% of the variance in students' achievement is attributed to be teacher communication skill. This talks about the importance of effective teaching strategies in other to enhance student academic achievement.

Ho₂

There is no significant relationship between the mean rating scores of the teachers communication skills as an aspect of teacher creativity and students' academic achievement in French language in public secondary schools in Owerri North Local Government Area Imo State.

Table 4: Summary t-test Statistics for Testing Hypothesis Two

n	Dr	t_{cal}	p	t_{crit}	α	Decision
122	99	19.232	< 0.001	1.677	0.05	Reject Ho₂

From the table 4 T-test results in this table above show a calculated t-value (t-cal) of 19.232 with a p-value less than 0.001, far lower than the critical t-value (t-crit) of 1.677 at an alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho₂) is rejected, affirming the statistical significance of the relationship.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that there is a strong and statistically and significant positive relationship between the teachers creative knowledge and pedagogy in French language and student achievement in French language in public secondary schools. This signifies that when teachers are creative in their teaching, there is every possibility for students to improve in their studies. The current study's finding align with the result of Grossman (2019) who also said fostering creativity in students, teachers can focus on developing their own creative knowledge in the subject matter by: Staying updated with the latest developments in the field, Engaging in professional practices and reflecting on their own teaching practices and seeking feedback from students and peers.

Teacher's creative knowledge in the subject matter and use of creative pedagogy enhance students' academic achievement, support students to nurture their talents, support students in Problem-solving task, Exposing students to varied tasks help their creative thinking, Creativity is the key to today's learning, Creative thinking should be gradually developed in children and so on. These above are in support with Shulman (2018) who mentioned the following reasons of teacher creative knowledge in the subject matter. A teacher's in-depth knowledge of the subject matter enables them to identify connections, relationships, and patterns that can design innovative lesson plans, activities, and assessments that encourage students to think creatively. Also in the same vein.

Inclusively teachers' creative knowledge and pedagogy can have a positive impact on students learning outcome including improved critical thinking skills and problem solving abilities.

The finding of the study revealed that there is a very strong and statistically aspect of teachers' creativity and students' academic achievement in French language. In this case, teacher communication skill matters a lot, because it helps the students to understand fast. No wonder, this assertion corresponds with Koehler (2013) in the context of teacher creativity, communication involves the exchange of ideas, feedback, and inspiration between teachers, students, colleagues, and the broader educational community. Teacher's communication skill helps students to manage classroom. These above were in line with Koehler (2013) who also said context of teacher creativity. In the context of teacher creativity, communication involves the exchange of ideas, feedback and inspiration between teachers, students' colleagues and the broader educational community. In the same vein, Ekman (2013) mentioned the benefits of effective communication for teacher creativity as follows: increased collaboration, improved feedback, enhanced critical thinking, increased job satisfaction, which are very essential for teachers' communication skill.

Conclusion

In conclusion based on the data analysis and findings of the study, it was concluded that there is a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the teachers' creative knowledge in the subject matter and students' academic achievement in French language. Additionally a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship exist between teachers' communication skill and students' academic achievement in French language. Therefore teachers should use creative and functional pedagogy which are some of the 21st Century strategies for teaching. In other to enhance French Language and teaching learning of other academic subjects as a whole.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations where made:

1. Teachers should always use creative knowledge and pedagogy to influence students achievement and make them to improve in French language.
2. Teachers should possess a good communication skill to enhance students' achievement for the teaching and learning process of French language through their functional pedagogy.

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