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LOCUS OF CONTROL AS CORRELATE OF STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN FRENCH AMONG SOME SELECTED JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IBADAN

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Abstract

Low performance and high level of attrition in foreign language programmes with particular emphasis on French language in Nigeria have generated an outcry among stakeholders in foreign language education in Nigeria. Learners of French language tend to attribute their success or failure to their personal decisions, efforts, fate, luck or external circumstances. However, researchers have suggested looking into a personality construct such as locus of control as a determinant of learners' achievement in French language. Therefore this study sought to investigate the influence of locus of control on learners' achievement in French in some selected secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria. 150 subjects participated in the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two local government areas in Ibadan, Oyo State while purposive sampling technique was used to select four schools from the two local government areas. Two instruments were used for the study: Levenson IPC (intentionality, powerful others and chance) scale and French Language Achievement Test (FLAT). Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression Analysis. The result reveals that there are significant relationships between students' achievement in French with Intentionality ($r= 0.394$, $P<.05$), and chance ($r= 0.392$, $P<.05$), while students' achievement in French has no correlation with Powerful others ($r= 0.086$, $P>.05$). Locus of Control (Intentionality, Powerful Other, and Chance) jointly contributed 25.6% ($\text{Adj. } R^2 \times 100 = 0.256$) to variance in students' achievement in French. Moreover, Intentionality ($\beta=0.345$, $t=4.425$, $P<0.05$), and Chance ($\beta=0.338$, $t=4.367$, $P<0.05$) have relative significant contribution to the students' achievement in French language. Therefore, foreign language teachers are admonished to be aware of the fact that learners' success or failure in foreign language is determined by either chance or intentionality. They should be encouraged to take responsibility for their success or failure in foreign language learning process.

Key Words: Locus of control, Intentionality, Powerful other, Chance

Introduction

Locus of control is a variable underlying the learners' success in foreign learning. It is viewed as an important aspect of psychology developed by (Rotter, 1966). It is a generalized belief of individual about the underlying causes of events of his or her life. Individual has diverse views about who controls his or her destiny. In other words, an individual's destiny could be controlled by oneself, fate, God or powerful others.

Rotter (1966) gave a full name to the concept as 'locus of control of reinforcement'. He tried to bridge the gap between behavioral and cognitive psychology. He is of the view that behaviour is guided largely by reinforcements which could be in form of rewards and punishments. Individuals hold the belief about what causes their actions through contingencies such as rewards and punishments. These beliefs give the kind of attitude people adopt towards an event. In other words, the locus of control has a correlational link with attitude. In the context of foreign language learning, learners hold different beliefs about their success or failure in the foreign language program. A student who has a poor performance in a foreign language program may ascribe his failure to the difficulty of the language, the attitude of the foreign language instructor, inadequacy in the teaching methods adopted by the foreign language instructor. These beliefs would invariably determine the locus of control of the learner.

Rotter (1966) divided locus of control into two non-dimensional units i.e. internal locus of control and external locus of control. A learner who has an internal locus of control orientation believes that his or her behaviour is guided by his or her personal decisions and efforts while a learner with an external locus of control orientation believes that his or her behaviour is guided by fate, luck or external circumstances.

Mamlin, Harris and Case (2001) are of the opinion that a more internal locus of control is generally seen as desirable. They observed that having an internal locus of control could also be regarded as having 'self – agency, personal control and self-determination. They further opined in their research findings also that male tends to be more internal than females.

Mamlin, Harris & Case (2001) also believe that people become more internal as they get older. It is controversial in the field of psychology holding the belief that internal locus of control is desirable while external locus of control is undesirable and vice versa. It is assumed that the two orientations are desirable depending on the circumstances surrounding the action or event. In learning situation, internal orientation needs to be accompanied by competence, self – efficacy and opportunity. On the other hand it is believed that internal who lacks competence, self-efficacy and opportunity can become neurotic, anxious and depressed. In a foreign language learning situation, learners who have internal locus of control must be able to demonstrate high level of competence, intelligence and aptitude for the learning of the language in order to be able to achieve success in the language program.

Locus of control emanates from Rotter's social-learning theory of personality. It is the expectations about control of reinforcement. In others words, there could be internal as

opposed to external control of reinforcement. Williams H. James, one of the students of Rotter, categorized expectancy shifts into two types:

- Typical expectancy shifts, believing that success (or failure) would be followed by a similar outcome.
- A typical expectancy shifts, believing that success (or failure) would be followed by dissimilar outcome.

Typical expectancy shifts were those who attributed their outcomes to ability while atypical expectancy shifts were more likely to attribute their outcomes to chance or luck. Locus of control is related to personality trait or orientation. Rotter (1975) cautioned that typology should not come into place while discussing the concept of internality and externality. He affirmed that both internality and externality represent two ends of a continuum. People with internal locus of control hinge their success on their abilities which appear to be under their control. The internal locus of control believes in hard work as a policy that will lead them to success and they strongly believe that every action has its own consequence. External locus of control believes that any incident or outcome or any event that takes place is out of their control and goes beyond what they can control. They associate success or failure to external circumstances that are out of their control. People with external Locus of control tend to blame others as being responsible for their success or failure rather than blame themselves.

Rotter (1966) suggested that people with external locus of control have four types of beliefs which include: powerful others such as doctors, nurses, fate and luck. The dichotomy between internality and externality of control should not be restricted to abilities and luck only. Internal locus of control is linked with higher levels of need for achievement. People with external locus of control are often stressed up and susceptible to clinical depression due to their inability to exercise control over their fate, success or failure. Rotter (1966) affirmed that internals were believed to exhibit two essential characteristics: high achievement motivation and how-outer-directedness.

Locus of control appears to have gained a wide scholarship among the psychologists in the recent decades. It is a psychological construct which was said to have a considerable effect on the life goals of individual in social and psychological interaction. Behzad (2001) believed that the role of Locus of control in foreign language learning should not be easily overlooked since foreign language learning involves both social interactions and psychological processes. Behzad (2001) examined the relationship between EFL learners' Locus of control (LOC) and the L2 reading and writing achievement of undergraduate students studying English as their major in two universities. The result of the study indicated that locus of control had a positive correlation with their L2 reading and writing achievement. The learners of foreign language are enjoined to be committed and be endowed with sense of responsibility in order to improve their locus of control and thereby enhance their performance in L2 reading and writing.

Fakeye (2011) conducted a study on the relationship between the locus of control and learners' achievement in English. The findings of the study revealed that locus of control of

students positively correlates with their English language achievement. The result of the study further revealed that students with internal and external locus of control did not differ significantly in their English language achievement. Exploring the locus of control of learners with respect to their achievement in foreign language will help to further reveal the underlying psychological factors responsible for the low performance of learners in foreign language examination.

Mahbubez et al (2010) examined the relationship between locus of control (LOC) orientation and academic achievement of university –age EFL learners. The findings of the study revealed that Locus of control (LOC) is a good predictor of the learners' academic achievement. It was also reported that the internals perform at higher levels of achievement than the externals. The results further revealed that there is no main difference between male and female learners' Locus of control orientation. There is no significant difference in the relationship between locus of control and achievement due to gender.

Samane (2011) examined whether students with internal locus of control, internals, are more successful language learners in comparison to students who possess external locus of control, externals. The results obtained showed that there was significant positive correlation between internal locus of control and life effectiveness. Abass (2012) studied the relationships between locus of control (LOC) orientation and high school students' language achievement. The findings of this study show a significant relationship between Locus of control and achievement of high school students. Ghonsooly (2010) conducted a study to examine the differences in General English course achievement among university students of humanities, sciences and Engineering. It also explored the effect of Locus of control (LOC) in general English course achievement among these three groups of university students. The results of the study revealed that there is a significantly positive relationship between the university students' Locus of control and their general English achievement course. There are significant differences in general English course achievement among the three groups of students and there are significant differences in Locus of control among the three groups of university students. The results of the study postulated that encouraging students to seek ways to improve their self – efficacy can be really helpful for them to achieve higher scores in general English course.

Njus and Brockway (1999) affirmed that students with internal locus of control showed better adjustment to school system in terms of academic achievement and social adjustment. In a study carried out by Dille and Mezack (1991), it was affirmed that students who succeeded in distance learning program had high internal locus of control because it requires some level of autonomy or independence. Pugliese (1994), in a research conducted is of the view that locus of control had negative correlation with course withdrawal and failure although the amount was not significant. The researcher opined in other words that the more students have an external locus of control the likely they were to withdraw from the course. The researcher recommended that more research need to be conducted on the concept of locus of control as it affects academic achievement.

Students with an external locus of control need more encouragement and guidance from instructor. On the other hand, the instructor needs to encourage the students to develop an

individualized learning plan that contains their goals, measures to achieve those goals, the time limit and the possible outcomes of the plans. Students who have internal locus of control should be able to attribute success or failure to their personal efforts. According to Weiner (1980), attribution theory assumes that people try to determine why people do what they do i.e. attributes cause to behaviour. The attribution theory could be categorized into three broad stages. The observation or perception of the behaviour concerned, attempt to find out whether the behaviour is intentional and the third stage is whether the person is forced to perform that behaviour. The concept of locus of control is also deep rooted in the expectancy value theory. Expectancy value theory sees human behaviour as determined by the possibility of an event or action taking place based on a particular behaviour in question and the value attached to that particular event or action. Simply put, a person admires a particular outcome believing that taking that particular action will produce similar outcome and he or she is highly motivated to take that action.

The family background has a considerable influence on the development of locus of control. The culture and past experience, leading to rewards can also determine one's locus of control. Most internals are believed to have come from families that attach value to effort, education and responsibility. While the externals come most often from families where life control is lacking and the socio-economic status is very low. Lynch, Hurford and Cole (2002) reiterate that enabling parents tend to have children with an external locus of control and that having an external versus internal locus of control was a statistically valid predictor of academic success. Schultz and Schultz (2005) also pointed out that children who develop an internal locus of control tend to come from families where parents have been supportive and consistent in self-discipline. It is therefore essential for the foreign language teacher to determine whether each student has an internal or external locus of control as this will aid in planning the type and amount of reinforcement needed in the classroom.

Locus of control is the framework of Rotter (1954) social learning theory of personality that classifies generalized beliefs concerning who and what influences future outcomes along a bipolar dimension of internal and external control. Levenson (1973) proposed an alternative model. While Rotter views locus of control as unidimensional (internal and external) Levenson (1973) is of the view that there are independent dimensions: Internality, chance, and powerful others. The three dimensions can act independently of one another for example one can attribute the future outcome of event of one's life to the combining effect of one's effort and that of other powerful people.

Rotter (1966) believed that internals exhibit two essential characteristics: high achievement motivation and low outer-directedness while Levenson (1973) proposed that events in one's life are self-determined organized by powerful others and are chance – based. Students with strong internal locus of control may think their grades were achieved through their efforts or abilities while those who have strong external locus of control may believe that their grades are as a result of good or bad luck or as a result of a teacher that sets bad test or uses capricious marking standards. Moreover, students with strong external locus of control are always pessimistic and are less likely to work hard for high grades.

The issue of locus of control in relation to sex difference or gender of the learners had been studied. Researchers such as Schultz and Schultz (2005) note that there may be specific sex – based differences for specific categories of item to assess locus of control. They are of the view that men have a greater internal locus for questions relating to academic achievement. Other researcher such as Johnson (2004) cites evidence to justify the increase or decrease in locus of control in relation to the age of individual. The researcher assumes that as people age, they will become less internal and more external. The internality may increase up to middle age and thereafter decrease. But data to quantify this assertion are ambiguous. Schulz and Schultz (2005) also suggest that locus of control increases in internality up until middle age. The researchers believe that attempt to control the environment becomes more pronounced between the age of eight and fourteen.

At this juncture, a distinction should be drawn between locus of control and self-efficacy. Self- efficacy is a related concept to locus of control but there is clear – cut difference between the two concepts if observed closely. Self-efficacy has been measured by means of psychometric scale but it differs from locus of control in the sense that locus of control is generally a measure of cross – situational beliefs about control while self-efficacy refers to an impression of not having the required skills or ability to perform a function. For example, some people may have the belief that some future events are under their control but may not believe that they are capable of exhibiting the behaviour that would produce the required results. In a more comprehensive manner, attention should be focused on the distinction between Locus of control (a concept linked with expectancies about the future) and attribution style (a concept linked with explanation for past outcomes).

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between students' locus of control and their achievement in French language. Locus of control is considered under three sub themes i.e. intentionality, powerful others and chance. The investigator wanted to know whether locus of control of learners of French language at the junior secondary school level influences their achievement in French.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between the independent variables: locus of control (intentionality, powerful other and chance) and the dependent variable “achievement in French language”
2. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables: locus of control (Intentionality, powerful others and chance) on the prediction of the dependent variable (Students' achievement in French language).
3. what is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables: locus of control (intentionality, powerful others and chance) to the prediction of the dependent variable (students' achievement in French language)

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design of the ex-post facto type. The variables of the study were not manipulated. French students in JSS2 in public secondary schools constituted the population for the study. A sample size of 150 students was drawn from the population. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 2 local government areas in Ibadan, Oyo State while purposive sampling technique was used to select two schools from each local government areas. Purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of schools because of the peculiarity of French language. A good number of schools do not offer French. Intact class was used in each selected school. For the purpose of the present study, two instruments were used. They are: Levenson IPC (intentionality, powerful others and chance) scale and French Language Achievement Test (FLAT). Levenson (intentionality, powerful others and chance) scale contains twenty four items based on likert scale model of strongly disagree (SD), disagree (d), Agree (A), and strongly Agree (SA). The instrument measured the students' locus of control in relation with their learning of French language in the school. French language achievement test on the other hand was constructed based on the curriculum of junior secondary school 2 French. The questions have the characteristics of French multiple choice test items and the twenty five (25) multiple choice questions. To ensure that the instruments collected were valid for the data for answering the research questions earlier raised, validity and reliability were established for each of the instruments. Experts' judgment was used to ensure that items in French language achievement test (FLAT) measure what it was purportedly designed to measure. Experts in the field of French language teaching validated the French language achievement test to ensure that the items cover the specific areas of the curriculum.

The investigator visited the schools and sought the consent of the school principals, the language teachers and the pupils. The significance and the value derivable from the research work were explained to the teachers and the students alike and they are obliged to participate actively in the study. Levenson IPC (intentionality, powerful others and chance scale) was initially administered on the participants. French language achievement test was later administered on the students. The students are allowed fifteen minutes to respond to the questions. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, t-test and Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) analysis.

Results

Research Question I: What is the relationship between the independent variables 'Locus of control' (Intentionality, Powerful Other, and Chance) and dependent variable (Students' achievement in French)?

Table 1 Shows Mean, Standard Deviation and Inter correlation Matrix of the Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	N	\bar{X}	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	Sig
French Success	150	63.93	27.131	1.000				

Intentionality	150	19.12	2.986	.394**	1.000			P<0.05
Powerful others				.086	.353*	1.000		P>0.05
	150	19.12	3.052		*			
Chance				.392**	.299*	.330**	1.0	P<0.05
	150	18.62	3.133		*		00	

Significant at $p < 0.05$

The table 1 above shows the inter-correlation matrix of the independent variables "Locus of control" (Intentionality, Powerful Other, and Chance) and dependent variable (achievement in French). It reveals that there are significant relationships between students' achievement in French with Intentionality ($r = 0.394$, $P < .05$), and chance ($r = 0.392$, $P < .05$), while students' achievement in French has no correlation with Powerful others ($r = 0.086$, $P > .05$). The only two variables (Intentionality and Chance) under the independent variables correlate with students' achievement in French among secondary school students, it implies that an increase in Locus of Control (Intentionality and Chance) would definitely impact an increase in achievement in French language.

Research Question 2: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables 'Locus of Control' (Intentionality, Powerful Others and Chance) to the prediction of the dependent variable (Students' achievement in French)?

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis showing Joint Contribution of the Independent Variables to the Prediction of Students' Achievement in French Language

R = 0.506						
R Square = 0.256						
Adjusted R ² = 0.240						
Std Error of the Est. = 23.648						
Analysis of Variance						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	P	Remark
Regression	28034.545	3	9344.848	16.711	0.000	S*
Residual	81644.789	146	559.211			
Total	109679.3	149				

Significant at 0.05 level

The table above shows that the independent variables jointly have positive correlation with the students' achievement in French ($R = .356$). All the independent variables jointly accounted for about 26% of the variation in the dependent variable ($\text{Adj. } R^2 \times 100 = 25.6$). The Analysis of Variance shows that the joint contribution of the independent variables significantly influenced the students' achievement in French ($F_{(3,146)} = 16.711$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the joint contribution of the independent variables, that is, Locus of Control (Intentionality, Powerful Others and Chance) to the prediction of the dependent variable (Students' achievement in French) is significant.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables 'Locus of Control' (Intentionality, Powerful Others and Chance) on the prediction of the dependent variable (students' achievement in French language)?

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Linear Regressions Showing Relative Contributions of the Independent Variables to the Dependent Variable

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)		Standardized Coefficients	T	P	Remark
	(B)	Std. Error				
Intentionality	3.136	16.312	0.345	4.425	0.000	S*
Powerful Others	1.310	0.709	0.147	1.869	0.064	NS
Chance	2.927	0.701	0.338	4.367	0.000	S*
Constant (French Success)	153.281	16.312	-	9.397	0.000	S*

Table 3 reveals the relative contribution of the three independent variables to the dependent variable expressed as beta weights. In this order, intentionality ($\beta=0.345$; $t=4.425$; $P<0.05$) and chance ($\beta=0.338$; $t=4.367$; $P<0.05$) had significant relative contribution to the dependent variable while powerful others ($\beta=0.147$, $t=1.869$, $P>0.05$) does not.

Discussion

The result reveals that there are significant relationships between students' achievement in French language and locus of control (Intentionality and chance) while students' achievement in French has no correlation with Locus of control (Powerful others). This findings correlate with the findings of Fakeye (2011) which revealed that locus of control of students positively correlates with their English language achievement. This also corroborates the findings of Mahbubez et. al. (2010) which revealed that Locus of control (LOC) is a good predictor of the learners' academic achievement and Behzad (200) which indicated that locus of control had a positive correlation with learners' L2 reading and writing achievement.

However, aspect of these findings relating to the influence of the powerful others on the students is in contradiction with the findings of Fakeye (2011) which stated that students with internal and external locus of control did not differ significantly in their English language achievement. Mamlin, Harris and Case (2001) have totally different opinion as regards the correlation between students who are internally controlled and those that are externally controlled as they maintained that a more internal locus of control is generally seen as desirable. They observed that having an internal locus of control could also be regarded as having 'self – agency, personal control and self determination

The findings of the present study also indicated that Locus of Control (Intentionality, Powerful Other, and Chance) jointly contributed 25.6%, ($Adj. R^2 = 0.256$) to variance in students' achievement in French. Moreover, Intentionality and Chance have relatively

contributed significantly to the prediction of students' achievement in French language. This submission is in line with the findings of Samane (2011) who concluded that there was significant positive correlation between internal locus of control and life effectiveness. However, foreign language instructors are required to pay keen attention to the learners' locus of control as a variable that determine the achievement of learners in foreign language.

Conclusion

The concept of locus of control as a correlate of learners' achievement in foreign language with particular reference to French language as a foreign language in Nigeria has been our major focus in this study. It has been observed that learners of French language took to the study of the language as result of their personal decisions and luck. Their choice of the subject was not borne out of the influence of powerful external forces such as parental influence or influence from the foreign language teachers. However, the foreign language teachers are therefore admonished to encourage the learners to be personally involved in their learning process and take responsibility for their success and failure in the foreign language programme. This could be done through individualized instructional packages where learners are privileged to learn at their pace.

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