RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MODE OF ADMISSION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS OF FRENCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Many studies have examined the performance of students of French as a Foreign Language in Nigeria and the influence of the linguistic environment on their performances; however, little or no attention has been paid to the impact of the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU)'s mode of admission on the academic performance of students of French in the Department of Foreign Languages. This mode of admission allows for candidates seeking admission to be taken into either what is known as Beginners or Non-beginners Class. This study, therefore, aims to appraise the academic performances of the two categories of students of French as a Foreign Language in the Department of Foreign Languages. For its data, the study relies on the academic performance of the two groups of students over a ten-year period (2010-2019) through their Part IV (Final Year) results and overall CGPA. The study reveals that the non-beginners have an edge generally. However, a comparison across the years shows that the difference in performance was not significant in most academic sessions. The paper concludes that even though secondary schools remain the best feed for admission into French studies in tertiary education, credibility should be accorded to the OAU model. Owing to the peculiarities associated with admission into the French degree programme in Nigeria, the paper recommends adopting the OAU model in other Nigerian universities, particularly now that NUC is pushing for a uniform curriculum in the Common Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CC-MAS).

Keywords: Mode of Admission, Beginners, Non-beginners, French, Foreign Language, CC-MAS, Academic Performance

Introduction

French in Nigeria enjoys the status of a foreign language. Faniran (2016) states that French was introduced as a secondary school subject in 1961 through a resolution at the Yaoundé Conference. He revealed that "This conference recommended the introduction of teaching and learning of French, and it were to be taught and examined as a school discipline in Anglophone Africa, including Nigeria" (Faniran, 2016, p. 65). What started as a subject of study in a handful of institutions in the 1960s has today extended to many schools – both primary and secondary – and tertiary institutions – Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities. The late military President, Sanni Abacha, attempted to make it a second official language after English through a surprise pronouncement on December 4, 1996. General Abacha's pronouncement led to the recognition of French as a second official language and made it compulsory in schools according to section 1, No. 10 of the National Policy on Education (NPE,1998) (Igboanusi & Putz, 2008; Ndukauba, 2020). Though the status of French as a second official language remains a matter of policy, as the NPE has not been amended to the contrary, one still wonders if the language is enjoying that status in all practicable ways. It is axiomatic to say that the language is yet to be accorded all the characteristics of an official language. It is not compulsory neither for administrative purposes nor for formal government proceedings. Unlike English and Pidgin, it is not a means of communication among the large populace. Consequently, French only plays the role of a ceremonial language. The good thing, however, is

that French, as stated earlier, is being taught at all levels of the Nigerian educational system, either as a subject in primary and secondary schools or as a course of study in tertiary institutions. Hence, even though it has yet to reach its full potential in terms of spread and acceptability at all levels of education, it is nonetheless making steady progress. It remains today the most taught and learnt foreign language in Nigeria.

Through the National Policy on Education (NPE) (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013), the government has made the teaching and learning of French compulsory from Primary 3 up to Junior Secondary School (JSS) 3 and optional in Senior Secondary School. At present, French is studied in about 21 Colleges of Education as Double Major while many others do combine it with other courses, and 49 Universities in Nigeria (Jamb Admissions and Matriculation Board, 2020) as well as in some Polytechnics as service courses in Departments of Mass Communication.

This study examines the relationship between the mode of admission into the B.A. French programme, with specific reference to the Department of Foreign Language, Obafemi Awolowo University, and the academic performance of students. This paper believes that appraisal or assessment of academic performance is an essential factor in quality assurance since it serves to get feedback from the students.

Appraisal or assessment is the process of collecting and structuring data into an interpretable form for decision-making purposes. According to Rwothumio, Okaka, Kambaza & Kyomukama (2021), performance appraisal is important in organisations because it is used as a basis for determining the level of staff and student performance. Armstrong (2014) states that the assessment of performance provides an opportunity for managers and leaders of organisations to take stock of volumes of performance of their employees. Akpan (2016) looks at performance appraisal as a quality assurance instrument for effectiveness in Nigerian public universities. The above descriptions of assessment involve gathering of data with a view to making value judgements about the quality of an individual, object, group or event.

Academic performance is inevitable within any learning context. It articulates the learning achievement of an individual or a group at the end of an academic programme (Joe, Kpolovie, Osonwa & Iderima, 2014). Academic performance is a concept that indicates knowledge acquisition, retention, and adaptation by an individual or a group after a period of learning activities. Citing Ali et al. (2000), Ogbebor (2012) noted that academic performance is the degree to which students accomplish their tasks and studies. Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution has attained their short or long-term educational goals. Students' performance is the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment. The term "scholastic standing" refers to the grades obtained in a course or a group of courses taken. Students' academic performance is also used to describe how an individual is able to demonstrate their intellectual abilities (Olanipekun, 2015). It is measured either by continuous assessment or cumulative grade point average (CGPA) (Tadese, Yeshaneh & Mulu, 2022). Though there have been many debates around the efficacy of the instrument of tests and examinations as a means to measure students' academic performance in a learning environment, these tools have remained the only time-tested instruments of test and measurement.

Various researchers have identified different factors that predetermine students' performance in schools. Tadese, Yeshaneh & Mulu (2022) identify various personal and family factors, including socioeconomic factors, class attendance, employment, high school grades, and academic self-efficacy, as some of the factors that influence academic performance. Besides, other factors such as teaching skills, study hours, family size, and parental involvement are also associated with academic performance. In addition to all these factors is, in the view of this paper, the issue of proficiency in the language of learning. Actually, language plays a major role in students' academic performance at all levels since language remains the only means of communication in classroom settings. Olaniyan & Khalid (2013) maintain that students' academic performance in language learning has been a subject of topical discussion in the field of language education in Nigeria for years. Language is the tool for the study of other subjects, be it sciences, medicine, technology and other social science subjects. All these can never be taught without using a language (Salman & Balogun, 2015). For instance, in Nigeria, it is mandatory that one should have a good background in English before being admitted to study a course in a tertiary institution. In addition to this, language is also vital in all facets of human activities, such as in education (as in the study of the above-mentioned subject areas), business, politics, and interactions, to mention a few. Languages in Nigeria can be categorized into two, namely the indigenous and the non-indigenous. Among the indigenous are Hausa, Igbo Yoruba, and the like, and the non-indigenous are foreign languages, which include English (which had attained the status of a second language as a result of colonial contact), French, Spanish, Arabic, and the like (Oladosu, 2008). French remains the most studied foreign language in Nigerian higher institutions of learning (Ezeodili, 2017), with about fifty (50) university departments where it is being taught as a major or combined BA program as well as at the postgraduate levels. Foreign language learning can be defined as learning any language that does not enjoy the status of a native or official language of a given country. Moeller & Catalano (2015) in Point, Chia-

Chun & Ting (2021, p. 1) define Foreign language learning as the "learning of non-native language outside of the environment where it is commonly spoken, and the language is learned in a classroom situation".

Scholars such as Ogbebor (2012), Tamimi et al. (2023), Joe et al. (2014), Alamoudi et al. (2021), Adeosun & Ebite (2023), Aboma (2023), Meyer, Zimmermann, Hissbach, Klusmann, & Hampe (2019), Mommert et al. (2020), Okpilike (2011), Apantaku (2003) and Adeyemi (2009) have argued that the mode of admission plays a significant role in students' academic performance. Adeyemi (2009) maintains that the pre-degree mode of entry being used in the University of Ado Ekiti and Adekunle Ajasin University has proven to be the better predictor of success in the final year bachelor of education degree in the universities than the commonly known Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) mode of entry. Adeyemi (2009) studied a population of 760 final-year students who were individually admitted through either of the two modes and scored a cumulative grade point average of 3.50 and above in the final bachelor of education degree in the 2007–2008 academic year in the two universities to arrive at this. Joe et al. (2014) also conducted research on the correlation between the mode of admission and the academic performance of university students. Their research findings show that the mode of admission determines, to a large extent, the academic performance of students of the University of Port Harcourt in particular. Moreover, based on his comparative study of the two modes of admission at Delta State University, Ogbebor (2012) contends that candidates admitted through the JAMB/UTME mode perform better than those admitted through the Continuous Education (CE) mode. Salahdeen & Murtala (2005), Mlambo (2011), Opoko, Alagbe, Aderonmu, Ezema & Oluwatayo (2014), Emaikwu (2012), Afemikhe (2002), Achor, Aligba & Omananyi (2010), Umar (2022), Hussaini, Bawa & Sani (2022), Rudhumbu, N. & Mudau, P. K. (2022) and Yusuf (2023), however, shared different views from Adeyemi (2009), Joe et al. (2014) and Ogbebor (2012) findings. Apoko et al., for example, reported that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of students admitted through direct entry, UTME and remedial programme at Covenant University in Nigeria. The same finding was reported by Emaikwu (2012), who revealed that there was no significant statistical difference in the academic performance of students from two Benue State Universities who were admitted through UTME, remedial programme and direct entry. From a review of studies conducted on the relationship between entry grades and exit academic performance, Aciro, Onen, Malinga, Ezati & Openjuru (2021) concluded that the results revealed positive, negative and mixed correlations between entry grades and the exit academic performance of students at university. It suggests that findings on this subject matter could not be generalized, each study offering its specific reality based on the context and the participants involved.

This present study noted little or no empirical study on the correlation between admission mode and academic performance that is subject-specific. Besides, there is no literature yet on the categorization of newly admitted students into the university and its impact on their academic performance, particularly regarding French studies in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In most countries, admission of new students into universities is based on the applicant's pre-university academic record (Aciro et al., 2021). For a candidate to be admitted into the University to undertake any first degree programme, they are expected to have passed the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and/or National Examination Council (NECO) with at least five relevant O-Level subjects with a minimum of credit pass in each subject. They must have the minimum required score in the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). They must have also been successful in the Post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (PUTME) independently conducted by each university and met other requirements that may have been set by the department into which the candidate is seeking admission. A candidate who wishes to study French as a Foreign Language in Nigeria is expected to possess these general requirements of both Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) and Jamb Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) as they apply to all fields of study in the universities.

Departments of French in tertiary institutions in Nigeria have strived over the years to keep their heads above water due to the low enrolment level of students for French degree programmes. Hence, in addition to the general requirements discussed above, various other means are deployed to attract students for the course, especially students with no prior knowledge of French or who did not pass or offer French at the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE). In places like University of Ilorin, University of Jos, Redeemer's University, Ekiti State University and Federal University Lafia, Remedial/Pre-degree/Preliminary Programs were put in place through which students with no prior knowledge of French were given a one-year intensive training to boost both their proficiency and efficiency before being accepted, if successful, for the degree program. In some other places (The Nigeria French Language Village, Delta State University), Diploma programs were instituted with the same objective. In this particular case, students register for a one or two-year diploma program in French. The Diploma

would then be used to secure admission into the university. It is, however, worthy of note to recon that some universities have a model that accommodates students into two categories of admission. These categories are tagged Syllabus A and Syllabus B (University of Calabar, University of Port Harcourt, University of Benin) or Non-Beginners and Beginners (Obafemi Awolowo University), where the latter of the two nomenclature is designed for those with no previous knowledge of French. The focus of this study is on the Obafemi Awolowo University's model (Beginners/Non-Beginners).

In the Department of Foreign Languages (which houses French, German and Portuese programs) of the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria, one of such innovative ways to attract students to study French was the introduction of two categories of student intake - Beginners and non-Beginners. Admission into its B.A. degree programme requires the following according to the 2016-2020 Handbook of the Department:

1. UTME
(a) Non-Beginners
Candidates for admission into Part 1 (Single and Combined Honours) must have at least a credit in French, English and any other three subjects in the SSCE or equivalent qualification.

(b) Beginners (French)
Candidates for admission into Part 1 need not have any previous knowledge of the language (French), although they must have at least a credit in English and any other four subjects at the SSCE or equivalent qualification.

Beginners' class is meant for those who do not have any previous knowledge of the French language at the time of admission. Candidates in this category are taken through rigorous teachings of basic elements of the language in their first two sessions in the university. In contrast, the Non-beginners' programme is designed to cater for those who have been exposed to the language at the secondary school level. Candidates in this category are expected to have passed French (with at least a credit) in the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) or its equivalent. Except for three courses (FRN 201 – French Comprehension and Expression, FRN 202 – Introduction to French Language Study and FRN 204 – Advanced French Comprehension and Expression), which are offered together in Part II, these two categories of students do spend their first two sessions (i.e. Parts I and II) in different classes, before they leave for a location outside the university, usually at the Nigerian French Language Village (NFLV), Badagry, for what is known as Linguistic Immersion Programme (LIP). Here, they spend a session for their Year 3 (Part III) courses. At this point, they are merged through a placement test with students from other universities who have also come for the immersion programme. After completing the compulsory one-year Linguistic Immersion Programme, the students resume in the same class for the final year (Part IV) studies at Obafemi Awolowo University.

No empirical study has attempted to examine the relationship between that mode of admission and the academic performance of the students; hence the gap this study hopes to fill.

Purpose of Study
This study examines the relationship between the OAU mode of admission into the B.A. French programme and the academic performance of students. The academic performance is examined from two different angles: performance in the courses offered in Part IV and overall performance in all the courses offered throughout the programme. The aim is to compare, on the one hand, the academic strength of each group when they came together in their final year (Part IV) and on the other hand, each group's academic performance throughout the programme. By extension, it seeks to assess the impact and the efficacy of this innovation, which seeks to boost the enrolment profile of the Department.

Research Hypotheses
The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the conduct of this study:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the Part IV academic performance of French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages admitted as beginners and non-beginners.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the overall academic performance of French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages admitted as beginners and non-beginners.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the Part IV academic performance of French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages admitted as beginners and non-beginners across the years.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the overall academic performance of French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages admitted as beginners and non-beginners across the years.

Research Methodology

The method used to examine the relationship between the mode of admission of graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, and their academic performance includes:

Participants

The population for this study consists of 209 French students who graduated over a period of ten years, from 2009/2010 to 2018/2019 academic sessions, from the Department of Foreign Languages of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The target population consisted of all the 209 French students who graduated within that period. At entry level, the students were placed into beginners and non-beginners classes based on their background in French. As mentioned earlier, beginners come into the program without prior knowledge of French, so they start learning the language from scratch. The non-beginners are those who studied French in secondary school and got a credit in it during their Ordinary Level examination. Table 1 shows the respondents' distribution by graduation year. Of the 209 respondents, 149 (71.3%) are beginners and 60 (28.7%) are non-beginners. It, therefore, shows that most of the students admitted to the Department of Foreign Languages of Obafemi Awolowo University for the French B.A. programme within the period considered are beginners.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents by Year of Graduation

		Students' Year of Graduation										
		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Student Status	Beginners	11	11	14	14	11	14	17	12	25	20	149
	Non-Beginners	5	2	4	7	6	4	7	8	6	11	60
Total		16	13	18	21	17	18	24	20	31	31	209

Research Instrument

The instruments for data collection for the study were the E-portal and the Result Processing Software (RPS) of the University. These were used to collect data related to the Continuous Assessment (CA) and Examination scores of the target population. The scores were expressed in terms of Cumulative Grade Point Averages (CGPAs). The maximum CGPA score is 5.0, and it represents "…the summary of a student's academic achievement from the first year of admission till the end of the final year, irrespective of the number of years required for completion of the programme" (Joe et al., 2014, p. 215). Two types of CGPAs were collected from the RPS: the CGPA of the eight courses offered in Part IV and the overall graduating CGPA.

The four null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significance level using an Independent Samples T-test for Ho1 and Ho2 and a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Ho3 and Ho4.

Findings

This section explains the statistical tests for the null hypotheses.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the Part IV academic performance of French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages admitted as beginners and non-beginners.

To test this hypothesis, students' scores in eight final year (Part IV) compulsory courses in terms of status (beginners and non-beginners) were calculated and the scores were converted into the CGPAs of individual students. These scores were then subjected to an Independent Sample t-test. The results are presented in Tables 4a & 4b. Table 4a shows that the mean of the Part IV CGPAs of the 149 French graduates who were admitted as beginners in the Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, between 2009/2010 and 2018/2019 academic sessions is 2.5278 with a standard deviation of 0.79369. The mean of the 60 admitted as non-beginners is 3.0928, with a standard deviation of 0.81292. There is a difference in the means of the two groups in favour of the non-beginners. Table 4b shows, for equal variance not assumed, a t-value of -4.577 with 207 df and a p-value of 0.001. Since the p (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.001 is less than the chosen alpha of 0.05, this result suggests that the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the Part IV CGPAs of beginners and non-beginners French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages within the period considered in this study is rejected. Hence, the independent t-test is statistically significant as $t(207) = -4.577$, $p<.05$, 2-tailed in favour of the non-beginners graduates.

Table 4a: Mean Difference of Beginner and Non-Beginner Students' Part IV CGPA

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CGPAPart IV	Beginners	149	2.5278	.79369	.06502
	Non-Beginners	60	3.0928	.81292	.10495

Table 4b: Mean Difference of Beginner and Non-Beginner Students' Part IV CGPA

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
CGPA Part IV	Equal variances assumed	.152	.697	-4.624	207	.000	-.56505	.12220	-.80596	-.32413
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.577	106.720	.000	-.56505	.12346	-.80980	-.32030

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the overall academic performance of French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages admitted as beginners and non-beginners.

To test this hypothesis, students' scores in all courses taken during the degree program in terms of status (beginners and non-beginners) were calculated and the scores were converted into the CGPAs of individual students. The scores were then subjected to an Independent Sample t-test using SPSS version 25. The results are presented in Table 5a & 5b. Table 5a shows that the mean of the overall CGPAs of the 149 French graduates who were admitted as beginners in the Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, between 2009/2010 and 2018/2019 academic sessions is 2.5321 with a standard deviation of 0.79254. The mean of the 60 admitted as non-beginners is 3.1088, with a standard deviation of 0.80414. There is a difference in the means of the two groups in favour of the non-beginners. Table 5b shows, for equal variance not assumed, a t-value of -4.710 with 207df and a p-value of 0.001. Since the p (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.001 is less than the chosen alpha of 0.05, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the overall CGPAs of beginners and non-beginners French graduates of the Department of Foreign Langauge within the period considered in this study is rejected. Hence, the independent t-test is statistically significant as t(207) = -4.740, p<.05, 2-tailed. The mean of non-beginners CGPAs is significantly higher than that of beginners.

Table 5a: Mean Difference of Beginner and Non-Beginner Students' overall CGPA

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CGPA	Beginners	149	2.5321	.79254	.06493
	Non-Beginners	60	3.1088	.80414	.10381

Table 5b: Mean Difference of Beginner and Non-Beginner Students' overall CGPA
Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	

								Lower	Upper
CGPA Equal variances assumed	.097	.756	-4.740	207	.000	-.57675	.12169	-.81666	-.33685
Equal variances not assumed			-4.710	107.618	.000	-.57675	.12245	-.81947	-.33404

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the Part IV academic performance of French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages admitted as beginners and non-beginners across the years.

To test this hypothesis, the data with respect to Part IV CGPA of the respondents as a measure of academic performance over the years was subjected to One-way Analysis of Variance to test if there exists a difference in their academic performance in Part IV. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Anova Summary Table of Part IV Academic Performance of the Beginners and Non-beginners' Graduates

CGPA Part IV

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15.088	9	1.676	2.551	0.009
Within Groups	130.791	199	0.657		
Total	145.878	208			

Table 6 shows the difference in the Part IV academic performance of the graduates in terms of years of graduation. The value of F is 2.551, with a p-value of 0.009. Since the p-value recorded is less than 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that the difference in the students' academic performance is statistically significant. Therefore, a multiple comparison Post Hoc Multiple Comparison Analysis is conducted to ascertain where the significant difference lies (see Table 7). The graphical description of the performance across years is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Mean Difference in Part IV CGPA across Years of Graduation
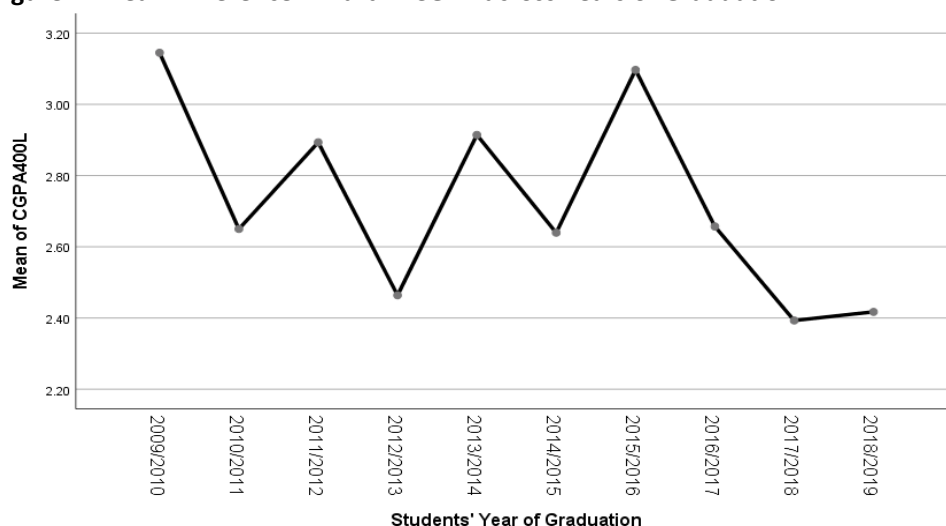
Table 7: Post Hoc Multiple Comparison Analysis
Dependent Variable: Part IV CGPA
Tukey HSD

(I) Year of Graduation		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
2015/2016	2009/2010	-0.04833	0.26165	1.000	-0.8856	0.7890
	2010/2011	0.44667	0.27918	0.847	-0.4467	1.3400
	2011/2012	0.20333	0.25278	0.998	-0.6056	1.0122
	2012/2013	0.63286	0.24224	0.219	-0.1423	1.4080
	2013/2014	0.18255	0.25699	0.999	-0.6398	1.0049
	2014/2015	0.45722	0.25278	0.729	-0.3517	1.2661
	2016/2017	0.43967	0.24545	0.740	-0.3458	1.2251
	2017/2018	0.70376	0.22042	*0.051	-0.0016	1.4091
	2018/2019	0.67957	0.22042	0.070	-0.0258	1.3849

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 7 shows a pairwise comparison of ten years (2009/2010 to 2018/2019). The analysis shows a borderline significance in the mean of academic performance difference between the 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 academic sessions. The mean difference in academic performance between the two academic sessions is 0.70376, the highest mean difference over the ten years considered in this study. The p-value of 0.051 is just slightly above the typical significance threshold of 0.05. While it is not quite statistically significant at the 0.05 level, it is very close, hence the term "borderline significance". This result suggests a notable difference in academic performance between these two specific years, but it falls short of being considered statistically significant at the chosen threshold of 0.05. It implies that the borderline significance observed between 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 has implications for the trend of academic performance in Part IV across the ten years considered in this study.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the overall academic performance of French graduates of the Department of Foreign Languages admitted as beginners and non-beginners across the years.

To test this hypothesis, the data concerning the overall CGPA of the students as a measure of academic performance over the years was subjected to One-way Analysis of Variance to test if a difference exists in their academic performance. The result is therefore presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Anova Summary Table of Overall Academic Performance of the Beginner and Non-beginner Students

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15.184	9	1.687	2.579	.008
Within Groups	130.158	199	.654		
Total	145.341	208			

Table 8 shows the difference in the students' academic performance in terms of graduation years. The value of F is 2.579 with a p-value of 0.008. Since the p-value recorded is less than 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that the difference in the academic performance of the students is statistically significant. Therefore, a Post Hoc Multiple Comparison Analysis is conducted to ascertain where the significant difference lies (see Table 9). The graphical description of the performance across years is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Mean Difference in Overall CGPA across Years of Graduation
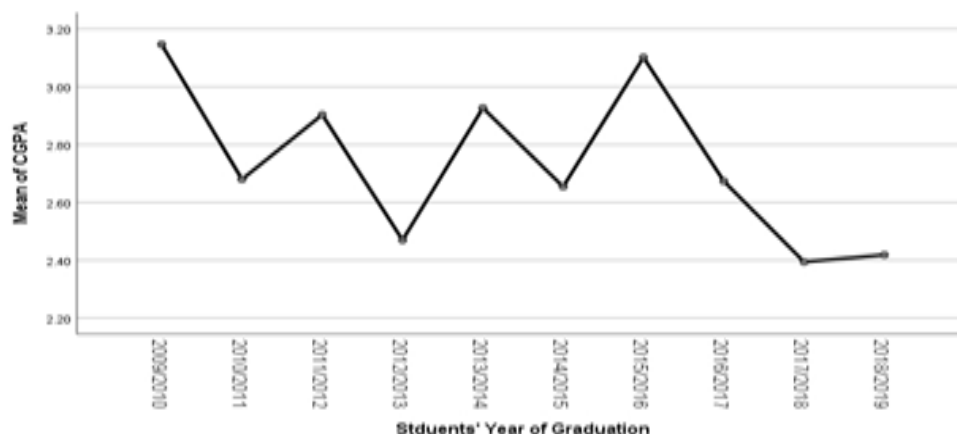
Table 9: Post Hoc Multiple Comparison Analysis

Dependent Variable: CGPA

Tukey HSD

(I) Student Year of Graduation	(J) Student Year of Graduation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
2015/2016	2009/2010	-.04479	.26102	1.000	-.8801	.7905
	2010/2011	.42160	.27850	.885	-.4696	1.3128
	2011/2012	.19861	.25217	.999	-.6083	1.0055
	2012/2013	.63179	.24166	.218	-.1415	1.4051
	2013/2014	.17495	.25637	1.000	-.6454	.9953
	2014/2015	.44694	.25217	.752	-.3600	1.2539
	2016/2017	.42783	.24486	.767	-.3557	1.2114
	2017/2018	.70696*	.21989	.048*	.0033	1.4106
	2018/2019	.68277	.21989	.065	-.0209	1.3864

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results in Table 5 show a pairwise comparison of ten years (2009/2010 to 2018/2019). The mean academic performance difference was marginally statistically significant between 2015/2016 and 2017/2018, with a mean of 0.70696, the highest mean difference and significant at 0.048. It implies that the significance was accounted for by the academic performance in the two sessions (2009/2010 to 2018/2019).

Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that the same trend of academic performance was observed in the two types of results considered in this study. In the final year, when the students had the opportunity to be together since admission into the programme, the non-beginners performed better, and the difference was statistically significant. The same finding was observed with the graduating CGPA of the two sets of respondents. The non-beginners graduated with better CGPAs; in this case, the difference was also statistically significant. Therefore, a correlation existed between the mode of entry and the respondents' academic performance in this study. Previous studies such as Tamimi et al. (2023), Joe et al. (2014), Alamoudi et al. (2021), Meyer et al. (2019), Mommert et al. (2020), Okpilike (2011), Apantaku (2003), Aboma (2023) and Adeyemi (2009) found a similar correlation on the relationship between mode of entry and overall academic performance, as measured by CGPA, of students in various academic contexts. The finding, however, went contrary to results from studies such as Salahdeen & Murtala (2005), Mlambo (2011), Opoko et al. (2014), Umar (2022), Emaikwu (2012), Hussaini, Bawa & Sani (2022) and Yusuf (2023), who reported that students did not differ significantly in their academic performance based on the mode of admission into the university.

In furtherance of the objectives of this study, a post hoc multiple comparison analysis of the performance of the respondents across the years revealed that the significance observed in the performance of the two sets of students was accounted for in only two academic sessions over the ten-year period considered in the study. The differences were not therefore consistent across the years but were concentrated in specific periods. The significance observed in the two layers of analysis was accounted for by the performance in the 2015/2016 and

2017/2018 academic sessions. However, in the final year (Part IV), the mean difference in the two sessions (2015/2016 & 2017/2018) was borderline significant, whereas with the graduating CGPA, that difference was marginally statistically significant. This finding points to the fact that even though the non-beginners had better results, the beginners' performance was not worse, which suggests that some credibility should be accorded to the model put in place by the Department of French, Obafemi Awolowo University to boost its students' enrolment profile.

Recommendations

(i)   The better performance of the non-beginners students indicates that students admitted with a background in French perform and graduate with better results than those admitted without it. It could, therefore, be inferred that secondary schools remain the best feed for admission intake into French studies in tertiary education. A candidate who has gone through six years of French studies in secondary school will expectedly perform better than someone admitted without prior knowledge of French. In a study on the situation of French in Nigeria and Ghana, Akinpelu & Yegblemenawo (2023, p. 28) revealed that "… at the senior level of secondary school, it (i.e. French) loses this status and becomes an elective subject. As data show, this creates a serious setback to enrolments at the tertiary level, since only very few senior secondary students choose to include French in their final examination". Hence, one of the sure ways to boost enrolment for French at the tertiary level is to make French compulsory up to senior secondary schools in Nigeria (Olusa & Akintayo, 2017). For this reason, as reiterated by many other scholars and researchers over the years, this study recommends that French should be made a compulsory subject in secondary school at both junior and senior levels, and students should also be encouraged to attempt it at Ordinary Level certificate (O 'Level).

(ii)   To improve the communicative skills of beginners' students, provide them with the necessary confidence to use the language, and allow them to compete favourably with their peers who were admitted through the conventional mode of admission, it is recommended that the Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, supports the students through supplemental tutorials and guided socio-educative activities geared towards French language practice in its oral and written components.

(iii)   The foreign language status of French in Nigeria, coupled with the lackadaisical attitude of governments and education stakeholders at all levels in promoting it, implies that Departments of French across the country will continue struggling to have a substantial number of students who choose French as a course of study at the tertiary level. As such, in order to stay afloat and maintain their relevance, those departments will continue to improvise innovative ways to attract more students to study the language. In the specific case considered in this study, the data shows that only 60 (28.7%) students applied to study French through the conventional channel over a ten-year period. However, the Department was able, under the same period, to attract an additional 149 (71.3%) students through the beginners' window. In light of the foregoing, this study recommends that the OAU model (two-type undergraduate French admission program) should be replicated in other departments as a unified model and an alternative mechanism to boost the enrolment of students into French degree programs across the country. Compared to other available models (remedial/pre-degree/diploma programs), the OAU model is incorporated into the university's degree program and, as such, is time and cost-effective for the students since it does not require them to spend one or two years on another pre-university program.

(iv)   The scope of future research should be extended to investigate the effectiveness of similar models (syllabuses A & B) instituted in some other Departments of French in order to have a larger sample size and even go a step further to compare the academic performance of students admitted through this method to further validate a push for a unified model that could be replicated or even adopted as an alternative mechanism to boost enrolment of students for French degree program across the country.

Conclusion

Admission criteria play a vital role in the quality of students admitted into universities. This study sought to investigate the relationship between the mode of admission and the academic performance of graduates of French from the Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University. The graduates were admitted through two different criteria and were divided into beginners and non-beginners classes according to their background in French. The investigation aimed to examine the impact of the division on the academic performance of students and also to ascertain the effectiveness of that mode of admission put in place by the Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, to boost the enrolment of students into the program. The results of the study showed a positive correlation between the mode of admission and the academic performance of the students. The non-beginners students had better performance, even though it was only statistically

significant in two academic sessions out of the ten sessions considered for the study. In view of these facts, discussion of findings and appropriate recommendations were made.

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