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E-mail: alameenalfira@gmail.com

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For further enquiries, please contact: Editor-in-Chief

SAJOLLCOS, HOD's Office,

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Gombe State University, Gombe

sajollicos@gsu.edu.ng,

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Mariam Titilope Olugbodi

Department of English and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria.
mariam.gobir@kwasu.edu.ng

Olanike Olaleru

Department of English and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria.
olanike.olaleru@kwasu.edu.ng

Anthonia Elejo Dugga

Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State

Maimuna Muhammad Kabir

Hausa Depaertment, Yusuf Maitama Sule, University of Education, Kano State.
maimunatukabirwali@gmail.com

Fauziyya Muhammad Hassan

Hausa Depaertment, Yusuf Maitama Sule, University of Education, Kano State.
Fauziyyahassan46@gmail.com

Dorcas Omaojo Idakwo

Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria.
dorcasogwo606@gmail.com

Ezekiel Olajimbiti Opeyemi

Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria.
opebukola56@gmail.com

Peter Ochefu Okpeh

Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria.
peter.okpeh@fulokoja.edu.ng

Seini Bello

Department of French, Federal College of Education, Yola.
Seinibello1559@gmail.com

Jibrilla Garba

Department of Hausa, Federal College of Education, Yola
garba.jibrilla@fceyola.edu.ng

Obidah Daniel

Department of French, Federal College of Education, Yola.
obidah0164@gmail.com

Atteh, Femi Yinka

Department of Performing Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Nigeria
atteh.fy@unilorin.edu.ng

Yaouba Ousmanou

Department of French, Federal College of Education, Yola
usmanyauaba@gmail.com

Abubakar Muhammad Baba

Department Of French, Federal College of Education, Yola
auwalbappa746@gmail.com

Seini Bello

Department of French, Federal College of Education, Yola
seinibello1559@gmail.com



Shema'u Abubakar Umar

Department of General Studies, Isa
Mustapha Agwai I Polytechnic, Lafia -
Nasarawa State
shemauari@gmail.com

Muntari Babangida

Federal Polytechnic Daura, Katsina
State
muntaribabangida4@gmail.com

Bamidele Ibiyemi Lydia

Federal University of Transportation,
Daura, Katsina State, Department of
General Studies
lydiabamidele@ymail.com

Esther Nuhu Samuel

Federal Polytechnic Daura, Katsina
State
esthersamuelamba@gmail.com

Kwasau Blessing Shiyin

Federal Polytechnic Daura, Katsina
State
kwasau@fedpolydaura.edu.ng

Ngor, Cornelius Iko-awaji

Department of English and
Communication Arts
Ignatius Ajuru University of
Education, Rumuolumeni Port
Harcourt Nigeria.
ngorc89@gmail.com

Dorcas Chide Abdulsalam (PhD Student)

Department of English and Drama,
Kaduna State University, Kaduna
cdorcasabdulsami@gmail.com

Oladele John Toluhi

Department of English Literary
Studies, Federal University Lokoja
oladeletoluhi@gmail.com

Peter Ochefu Okpeh

Department of English Literary
Studies, Federal University Lokoja
Peter.okpeh@fulokoja.edu.ng

Muhammad Muhammad

Department of English and European
Languages, Kano State College of
Education and Preliminary Studies
muhd4muhd@gmail.com

TELLA Samson Adekunle

Department of English and
Linguistics, Kwara State University,
Malete
Samson.tella@kwasu.edu.ng

Ridwan Akinkunmi RABIU

Department of English and
Linguistics, Kwara State University,
Malete
ridwan.rabiu@kwasu.edu.ng

Nafisat Bolanle AIYELABEGAN

Department of English and
Linguistics, Kwara State University,
Malete
nafisat.aiyelabegan@kwasu.edu.ng

Mustapha Ibrahim Garba

Department of English & Linguistics,
Federal University Dutse
Igmustapha6@gmail.com

Abubakar Isa Abubakar

Ministry for Higher Education,
Science & Technology Dutse – Jigawa
abubakarabubakarbkb@gmail.com

Abdullahi Usman Garko

Department of English and
Linguistics Gombe State
augarko@gmail.com



Suku Hyellamada Kenan

Department of Languages and
Linguistics, Gombe State University,
hyellassuku@gsu.edu/hyellawilbe@gmail.com

Juilet Aluke

Department of Languages and
Linguistics, Gombe State University.

Taiwo Mary Akanmu

Department of English and Literary
Studies, Faculty of Arts, Kwara State
University, Malete, Nigeria.
taiwoakanmu155@gmail.com

Olanike Olaleru

Department of English and Literary
Studies, Faculty of Arts, Kwara State
University, Malete, Nigeria.
olanike.olaleru@kwasu.edu.ng

Mariam Titilope Olugbodi

Department of English and Literary
Studies, Faculty of Arts, Kwara State
University, Malete, Nigeria.
mariam.gobir@kwasu.edu.ng

Aliyu Haruna Muhammad

Directorate of General Studies,
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University
P.M.B. 0248, Bauchi- Nigeria
aliyuharuna7@gmail.com

Felix Oluwabukola Oladeji

Department of English, Faculty of
Arts., University of Ilorin, Ilorin,
Nigeria.
Oladejifelix94@gmail.com

Rabi Bashir Ph.D

Department Of Nigerian Languages
And Linguistics, Kaduna State
University, Kaduna.
rabiubashi@kasu.edu.ng

Dr. David Mikailu

Department of English, University of
Abuja
davidmikailu@yahoo.com

Asana Kehinde Alemede

Department of English & Literary
Studies, Federal University Lokoja,
Kogi State, Nigeria
alemsjnr@gmail.com

Ifeyinwa Genevieve Okolo

Department of English & Literary
Studies, Federal University Lokoja,
Kogi State, Nigeria
ifeyinwaokolo@fulokoja.edu.ng

Oluwatoyin Barnabas

Department of English & Literary
Studies, Federal University Lokoja,
Kogi State, Nigeria
oluwabar@yahoo.com

Idowu, Stephen Olufemi

Department of English Education,
Lagos State University of Education,
Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State, Nigeria.
idowuos@lasued.edu.ng

Azeez, Abimbola

Department of English Education,
Lagos State University of Education,
Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State, Nigeria.
azeezas@lasued.edu.ng

Vivian Chukwu

Department of English and Literary
Studies at Federal University Lokoja

Ifeyinwa Genevieve Okolo

Department of English and Literary
Studies at Federal University Lokoja
ifeyinwaokolo@fulokoja.edu.ng



Abba Abba

Department of English and Literary
Studies at Federal University Lokoja
abba.abba@fulokoja.edu.ng

Okache C. Odey

Department of English & Literature,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
okacheodey@yahoo.com

Peace Chinenye Chidolue

Department of Igbo, Federal College
of Education, Yola
Chidolue.pc@fceyola.edu.ng

Suwaiba Mohammed, Ph.D

Department of Languages and
Linguistics, Gombe State University

Fatima Muhammad

Department of Languages and
Linguistics, Gombe State University
fatimam@gsu.edu.ng

YOHANNA, Gilamdo Kwem

Department of English and Literary
Studies, Ahmadu Bello University,
Zaria
gilamdokwemyohanna@gmail.com

SAMUEL, Joy

Department of English and Literary
Studies, Ahmadu Bello University,
Zaria.
joysammy68@gmail.com

Joshua, Josephine

School of Languages, Department of
English, Adamawa State College of
Education, Hong
Josephinejoshua06@gmail.com

Dathini Yinasimma Bright

School of Languages, Department of
English, Adamawa State College of
Education, Hong
dathinibright@gmail.com

Ali Baba Dada

Department of English and Literary
Studies, University of Maiduguri.
alibdhadha@gmail.com

Ben Ita Odeba

Department of Mass Communication,
Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa
State, Nigeria
benjamin.odeba@binghamuni.edu.ng

Jummai Mbuzi Waziri

Department of Mass Communication,
Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa
State, Nigeria
jummaiwaziri74@gmail.com

Desmond Onyemechi Okocha, PhD

Department of Mass Communication,
Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa
State, Nigeria.
desmondoodoo@yahoo.com

Akuta Michelle Idialu

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media
Studies, Bingham University, Karu,
Nasarawa State
gamboakutamichelle@gmail.com

Farouk Umar Mohammed

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media
Studies, Bingham University, Karu,
Nasarawa State
faroukmohammmed@gmail.com



Ruth Barnabas

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media
Studies, Bingham University, Karu,
Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Bridget Azenda

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media
Studies, Bingham University, Karu,
Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Christopher Anyokwu, PhD

University of Lagos

SAKA, Idayat Oyenike

Department of Yoruba, Adeyemi
Federal University of Education,
Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria
ridahtullahi@gmail.com

FARINDE, Muibat Abiola

Department of Yoruba, Adeyemi
Federal University of Education,
Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria
farindemuibat@gmail.com

Prof. Nesther Nachafia Alu

Department of English, University of
Jos, Nigeria
nestherta@gmail.com

Sani, Sylvia

Department of English, University of
Jos, Nigeria
nyuyihyfsylvia@gmail.com

Melchizedec James Onobe, PhD

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media
Studies, Bingham University, Karu,
Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Fasehun Mercy Ayò

fasehunmercy@yahoo.com
Faculty Of Arts, Department Of
Yorùbá, Adéyemí Federal University
Of Education, Oñdó

Òjó Ìlúfóyè Fáwólé

ilufoye@gmail.com
Faculty Of Arts, Department Of
Yorùbá, Adéyemí Federal University
Of Education, Oñdó

Ibrahim Fatima Usman

Department of Languages and
Linguistics, Gombe State University
phartimarhibrahim@gmail.com

Emoruwa, Oluwatoyin Titilayo

Adeyemi Federal University of
Education, Ondo, Ondo State
tititoyin@gmail.com

Melchizedec James Onobe, PhD;

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media
Studies Bingham University, Karu,
Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Richard Okujeni, PhD

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media
Studies Bingham University, Karu,
Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Emoruwa, Oluwatoyin Titilayo

Adeyemi Federal University of
Education, Ondo, Ondo State
tititoyin@gmail.com

Aliyu Sambo Alhassan

Department of English and
Linguistics, Federal University Dutse,
Jigawa State.
asambo1010@gmail.com



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Integrating Hausa Words and Phrases in French Language Instruction Enhances Learning Among Northern Nigerian Students

Seini Bello

Department of French, Federal College of Education, Yola.
Email: Seinibello1559@gmail.com

Jibrilla Garba

Department of Hausa, Federal College of Education, Yola
Email: garba.jibrilla@fceyola.edu.ng

&

Obidah Daniel

Department of French, Federal College of Education, Yola.
Email: obidah0164@gmail.com

Abstract

This essay makes the case that teaching French to pupils of Hausa communities using Hausa words and phrases greatly improves their understanding and participation. The study illustrates how bilingual teaching methods close linguistic gaps and improve students' retention and comprehension by drawing on sociolinguistic and pedagogical viewpoints. According to learner feedback and classroom experiences, using Hausa strategically as a support language lowers anxiety, makes abstract ideas more understandable, and boosts engagement. The study promotes a culturally sensitive program that supports successful foreign language learning while validating students' linguistic identities.

Keywords: Hausa, French Language, Bilingual Education, Northern Nigeria, Language Integration.

Introduction

Proficiency in many languages is frequently regarded as essential for both academic achievement and socioeconomic mobility in a world that is fast becoming more interconnected. However, the conflict between native languages and the major teaching languages rather than linguistic diversity is the problem for pupils in northern Nigeria, where Hausa is widely spoken. Because French is an international language, it has a significant place among the languages of education. However, switching from Hausa, their mother tongue, to French can be a difficult undertaking for many pupils in

northern Nigeria, which can negatively impact their overall academic achievement (Olaseinde & Olaseinde, 2024).

The educational gap between kids from different language backgrounds is the larger problem at hand. Those from the north of Nigeria find it difficult to make the transition from Hausa, their mother language, to French, whereas those from the south, who are frequently English-speaking, tend to handle foreign languages more easily. The dearth of linguistic techniques that take into consideration the significance of students' first languages in their



educational journeys makes this problem worse. Given this, incorporating Hausa into French language education appears to be a viable way to improve students' understanding, retention, and academic achievement in northern Nigeria (Owusu & Adoma, 2022).

According to this study, teaching Hausa to students in northern Nigeria greatly improves their learning of the language. Such an approach provides a more inclusive, efficient, and culturally relevant method of language acquisition by acknowledging the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and utilizing students' linguistic skills.

Divergent opinions exist in the field of language pedagogy regarding the advantages of teaching other languages in one's native tongue. Advocates contend that, particularly for kids learning a language very different from their own, mother-tongue integration improves comprehension, facilitates transitions, and increases levels of involvement. Conversely, detractors argue that these methods could impede complete immersion in the target language, postponing fluency and making learning more difficult (Rajagopalan, 2023).

However, this paper's argument is based on the social and cognitive advantages of helping pupils bridge the gap between their home tongue and the foreign language they are studying. Because of the particular difficulties northern Nigerian students encounter, Hausa integration into French instruction is not only a useful teaching method but also essential for raising academic equity, encouraging greater cultural relevance, and boosting learning results.

The paper examined the theoretical and practical advantages of mother-tongue integration in foreign language learning in order to support this assertion. After

that, it will discuss possible objections and rebuttals and provide evidence-based answers. A discussion of policy proposals for curriculum developers and language instructors will round out the study.

Language and Cognitive Development

Language serves an imperative function in cognitive advancement, particularly within multilingual environments such as Nigeria, where students frequently engage with indigenous languages such as Hausa in conjunction with English and foreign languages like French. Analyzing the interplay among these languages can inform the creation of more efficacious pedagogical strategies (Galloway & Uccelli, 2024).

Hausa functions as a cognitive scaffold for learners, enhancing their understanding of novel linguistic constructs. Learners possessing a robust foundation in Hausa can employ it as a cognitive framework to decipher and interpret new lexicon and grammatical rules in French, thereby expediting their comprehension of French concepts. A notable advocate for using Hausa as a medium of instruction in education is Abdullahi (2025) in his proposal titled *"Breaking Language Barrier to Achieve Higher School Enrolment and Subjects Understanding in Northern Nigeria"*, he argues that employing Hausa in teaching can enhance school enrolment and comprehension among students in Northern Nigeria. Similarly, Governor Mohammed Umar Bago of Niger State (2024) has championed the adoption of Hausa for teaching in primary and secondary schools across Northern Nigeria. He believes this approach will address the region's high rate of out-of-school children and improve educational outcomes.



During the preliminary phases of acquiring French, utilizing a familiar language such as Hausa confers cognitive benefits, as empirical studies indicate that learners are more likely to retain and process information effectively when instructional content is correlated with their native language. This cross-linguistic support has the potential to bolster memory retention, comprehension, and self-assurance in employing the new language.

Nonetheless, the intimate interaction between Hausa and French also introduces challenges associated with linguistic interference. When learners excessively depend on their primary language, certain grammatical configurations or lexical patterns from Hausa may erroneously impact their application of French. Cross-linguistic influence is an inherent aspect of second language acquisition; however, necessitates the implementation of meticulous pedagogical strategies to manage adeptly (Roussel & Sweller, 2021).

To alleviate these challenges, educators ought to embrace instructional methodologies that acknowledge the influence of Hausa while steering learners towards a clear differentiation between the two languages. Contrastive analysis and bilingual instructional resources can assist students in becoming more cognizant of the distinctions and in circumventing negative transfer. Hausa assumes a dual role in the cognitive progression of learners endeavoring to acquire French. A deliberate integration of Hausa into French language pedagogy can capitalize on its cognitive advantages while mitigating challenges, culminating in a more effective and significant learning experience (abdullahi, 2025).

Pedagogical Framework for Integrating Hausa in French Instruction

Bilingual pedagogical strategies are crucial for language acquisition, especially in multilingual contexts like Northern Nigeria, where the Hausa language is widely used. Code-switching and translational techniques are effective methods for bridging the gap between the learner's native language and the target language. Code-switching allows students to understand complex concepts in French by interpreting them in their native language, reducing cognitive load and enhancing retention. Introducing terminology in Hausa before introducing French ensures students gain a solid understanding of new content without being constrained by foreign French words. As students gain understanding and confidence, French becomes the main language of instruction, promoting deeper comprehension and language development (Kirsch, 2021).

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) emphasizes using real language in context through relevant tasks, encouraging linguistic proficiency and active engagement. Creating projects that require students to use their native language as a support language while performing work in French can boost self-esteem and ensure students understand the task's context and goals. Peer interaction in both Hausa and French can promote deeper involvement and understanding, facilitating a seamless transfer from the first language to the target language (González-Lloret, 2020).



Contextualizing French Language Instruction

Creating lessons that are meaningful and pertinent to students by incorporating aspects of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds is known as contextualizing French language training. Effective French teaching in Northern Nigeria, especially for Hausa-speaking pupils, should identify and draw on common cultural allusions and experiences to promote greater understanding and participation. Walz (1989) posits that contextualized practice leads to more meaningful and effective language acquisition.

Including Hausa cultural allusions in French classes is one useful strategy. When teaching food-related terminology, for example, the instructor can compare regional Hausa dishes to their French counterparts. Items like *tuwo shinkafa* (rice pudding), *miyan kuka* (baobab leaf soup), or *suya* (spicy grilled pork) could be used in a lecture on French culinary terminology to teach students how to describe these foods in French: *Tuwo shinkafa* is a traditional dish made with *riz moulu*. This enhances the learning process by validating students' cultural identities in addition to teaching language proficiency (Abdullahi, 2025).

Traditional celebrations and practices such as *Sallah* (Eid), *naming ceremonies* (*sunna*), and *Durbar festivals* can serve as engaging contexts for French oral and written expression. A classroom activity could involve students writing a paragraph or dialogue in French describing how they celebrate *Sallah* in their community: *Pendant la fête de Sallah, nous portons des habits traditionnels et rendons visite à nos familles*. This kind of activity not only develops vocabulary and sentence structure but also strengthens

intercultural awareness (Abdullahi, 2025).

Learning is further improved by incorporating relatable real-world experiences in both Hausa and French. For instance, in a role-playing exercise, students might use well-known Hausa market structures and negotiation techniques to act out a market scene in French. *Combien coûte ce tissu? C'est too cher!* or *Je veux acheter des tomates & des oignons* are some examples of sentences they could practice. Since many students have firsthand experience of shopping in open-air markets, this scenario feels natural and allows them to appreciate the applicability of French in their daily lives (Abubakar, 2024).

Furthermore, both French and Hausa contexts can be used to examine subjects including family structure, school life, and community roles. When talking about families, one may use French terms for family members and allow for analogies to Hausa extended family structures. For instance: *Dans ma famille, il y a mon père, ma mère, mes frères, mes sœurs, et mes cousins. Nous vivons tous dans la même maison*. After that, students can be asked to explain their own families, making comparisons and pointing out cultural parallels and divergences.

Abubakar (2024) continues, stating that incorporating Hausa cultural experiences and familiar scenarios into French classes, teachers not only boost students' knowledge of the language but also bridge the gap between the familiar and the strange. This contextualized approach fosters deeper engagement, increases motivation, and helps students see French not just as an academic subject, but as a practical tool for communication within their multicultural world.



Enhancing Students' Motivation and Engagement

Learning French in Northern Nigeria can be significantly enhanced by utilizing students' prior linguistic expertise, particularly Hausa. This proficiency not only promotes cognitive language development but also makes students feel more at ease emotionally in the classroom. By connecting French words, idioms, and grammar rules to familiar Hausa ones, students can make learning less alien and frightening.

Language anxiety can be significantly decreased by explaining or comparing in Hausa, making students more inclined to take academic chances, engage in conversations, and ask questions. This decrease in anxiety leads to gradual confidence in speaking French, viewing it as an addition to their current language skills rather than a threat (Noordin & Razali, 2022).

Incorporating cultural relevance into French language instruction is an effective way to keep students interested. Teachers can increase the relatability and effectiveness of their courses by establishing links between the Hausa cultural environment and the French language. This includes covering French words associated with daily Hausa activities, comparing Hausa customs and French expressions of politeness and respect, and incorporating well-known Hausa songs, proverbs, and stories into French classes (Casoli-Uvsløkk & Brevik, 2023).

Comparing the Hausa and French-speaking cultures' views on family and community can help students understand the value of learning French in an increasingly globalized world. This culturally sensitive teaching approach

increases students' motivation and self-esteem by helping them develop a personal connection with the language.

Challenges and Considerations

Incorporating Hausa into French instruction requires teachers to possess fluency in both languages and be knowledgeable about bilingual education techniques. Teachers must be fluent in both languages, engage students with intellectual issues, explain complex ideas, and handle potential interference between them. Cultural sensitivity and awareness are crucial components of teacher preparation, as they help students understand the cultural backgrounds that influence both languages and make the learning process more interesting.

Multilingual teaching practices, such as code-switching and scaffolding, are essential for teaching both languages effectively. Teachers should also use Hausa, the students' first language, as a tool to help them better grasp French. This method values the students' native tongue and promotes robust multilingual development. Modern language teaching techniques like task-based language teaching (TBLT) and communicative language teaching (CLT) can be used to promote active language use and practical application (Brown, 2021).

To ensure the efficacy of lessons, teachers need well-defined plans, adequate classroom management training, and evaluation and assessment skills. Teachers should receive training on measuring fluency and understanding in both languages using bilingual assessments and modified evaluation techniques. This allows them to adapt their lessons to each student's needs and offer support when needed.



Overreliance on Hausa in the classroom can lead to difficulties in learning French, as it can cause an interlingual barrier, causing grammatical errors, poor pronunciation, and response delays. Additionally, excessive Hausa usage may prevent children from being exposed to French vocabulary and idioms, which are essential for language learning. When both languages are used in balance, students are not passively relying on their primary language but rather engaging with French as a functional language in itself. This fosters cognitive flexibility and enhances their ability to think across linguistic frameworks. By using French consistently in classroom interactions and activities, students can develop the confidence to switch between the two languages more readily and achieve higher linguistic achievements (Lawal, Lawan & Sani, 2024).

The availability of bilingual learning materials is crucial for efficient language acquisition in bilingual or multilingual educational environments. These resources, including textbooks, audiovisual materials, and digital information, enhance students' educational experiences and bridge language gaps. Textbooks should include context, cultural insights, and real-world examples relevant to the students' experiences, while interactive software, multimedia content, and multilingual dictionaries can help students practice their language skills in various settings. Investing in a variety of bilingual resources ensures students have the tools they need to succeed in areas where bilingual education is essential (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

Case Studies and Examples

The Federal College of Education (FCE) in Kano is a notable example of how integrating Hausa into French language lessons has helped close the gap for students who initially struggled with French pronunciation and grammar. Teachers have creatively incorporated Hausa linguistic structures and vocabulary to explain complex French concepts, making the learning process more relatable. In Northern Nigeria, integrating Hausa into French language teaching has been a successful strategy for many schools. By leveraging the linguistic familiarity of students with Hausa, educators have made the process of learning French more accessible and engaging (Ogbonna, V., & Opara, 2020). In secondary schools in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, the employment of Hausa as a mediating language has assisted the development of French language abilities, particularly in rural areas. Teachers in these schools have noted a considerable improvement in pupils' grasp of French once they began introducing French grammar rules through Hausa. Students can more readily understand abstract linguistic concepts when a more comfortable learning environment is created through the use of a familiar language (Lawal, Lawan & Sani, 2024).

Integration of Hausa and French promotes cultural pride in addition to scholastic advantages. In addition to learning a new language, students are strengthening their cultural identification. Students from Northern Nigeria find this method appealing, especially in places where cultural preservation is crucial. Because of the potential for increased language learning success when students' local languages are respected and integrated into the



teaching process, many schools in Northern Nigeria are thinking about implementing similar strategies (Mukhtar & Cagnie, 2021).

Examining how language integration techniques might be effectively applied in bilingual or multilingual contexts is made possible by international comparisons. A number of nations have shown how to successfully include many languages into their educational institutions, providing insightful examples for similar initiatives abroad. Being bilingual in French and English is a fundamental part of Canadian culture. Teaching children at least two of the national languages is a cornerstone of Switzerland's national ethos, which includes linguistic integration. Another notable example of an educational system in Europe is Finland, where the government incorporates both Swedish and English into the curriculum starting in early childhood.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The integration of Hausa in French instruction offers a unique opportunity to bridge the linguistic gap for northern Nigerian students. This approach makes the French language more accessible by leveraging the native Hausa language, fostering a deeper cultural connection and increasing student engagement. However, challenges include a limited number of qualified teachers proficient in both languages, potential linguistic interference, and difficulties in transferring grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions. Addressing these challenges requires careful curriculum design, teacher training, and continuous assessment of the integration process. The long-term benefits of integrating Hausa in French instruction for northern

Nigerian students include improved language proficiency and future career opportunities in diplomacy, international relations, trade, tourism, and development. This proficiency can also enhance employability within international organizations and NGOs, which often prioritize multilingual candidates. Additionally, integrating Hausa in French instruction can preserve and promote the Hausa language and culture, fostering a deeper sense of pride in their cultural identity and contributing to the growth of a multilingual and multicultural society. The following recommendations are advocated for Hausa language to effectively integrated in French language instruction:

1. Schools and educators in Northern Nigeria should formally integrate Hausa as a supportive language in teaching French. This approach aids comprehension and facilitates a smoother transition into foreign language learning.
2. Education stakeholders should design French language curricula that recognize and respect the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners. Incorporating familiar language structures can make abstract concepts in French more relatable.
3. Teachers should receive professional development on how to effectively implement bilingual teaching techniques. Training should emphasize the strategic use of Hausa to enhance French instruction and manage classroom dynamics.
4. Schools should establish systems to regularly gather feedback from students on the use of



- Hausa in French classes. This feedback will help educators fine-tune their teaching methods and increase learner engagement.
5. By using Hausa as a bridge, teachers can create a low-anxiety environment that encourages risk-taking and active participation in French. Psychological comfort is key to boosting confidence and retention.
 6. Education policies should promote the validation of students' indigenous languages. Recognizing Hausa in the learning process strengthens learners' identity and enhances their academic motivation.
 7. More studies should be conducted to evaluate the long-term effects of using indigenous languages like Hausa in foreign language education across different regions and levels of learning.

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Authors' Biodata:

Seini Bello is the scholar with the department of French, School of Languages, Federal College of Education, Yola, Adamawa state. He holds a bachelor's degree in French language and literature, from the department of French, University of Education, Maroua, Republic of Cameroon. ¹Phone no: 08133003738, 08129801399

3. Jibrila Garba is a scholar with the department of Hausa, school of Languages, Federal College of Education, Yola, Adamawa state. He holds a bachelor's degree in Haus language, from the department of Hausa language, Bayero University, Kano.

²Phone no: 07068777849

3. Obidah Daniel is a scholar with the department of French language, school of Languages, Federal College of Education, Yola Adamawa state. He holds a masters of philosophy in French generative Grammar, from the department of French language, University of Ngaoundere, Republic of Cameroon.

³Phone no: 08087817382