ADEQUACY AND SUITABILITY OF RECOMMENDED FRENCH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE PROFICIENCY IN NIGERIAN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study identified the types of communication activities presented in three recommended French Language textbooks used in Nigerian junior secondary schools. It examined the quality and the quantity of communication activities and exercises in the textbooks and their relevance in achieving communicative proficiency in students. The descriptive survey design was used. Three of the five mostly used recommended French textbooks for Nigerian junior secondary schools were purposively selected for the study. One instrument, "Inventory on Textbook Communication Activities" (ITCA) was used to collect data on the quantity, quality and relevance of the communication activities and exercises in the books for achieving communicative proficiency in students. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that communication activities such as choice in language form, choice in language function, and questioning were maximally used in the three textbooks closely followed by discussion activities, dialogues and pair work activities. The communication activities in the textbooks were however considered inadequate for developing communicative proficiency in students as they were found to be less than 50% of recommended activities in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) class. The activities presented were nevertheless found to be suitable for use, in terms of quality, in the Nigerian junior secondary school communicative French class as depicted by a high index of 73%. Like the communication activities, the communication exercises were found to be inadequate with a low index of 44%; the quality of the exercises was found to be average with an index of 53%. The study concluded that recommended French textbooks could be used to achieve communicative proficiency in Junior Secondary School students only if more qualitative communication activities and exercises were incorporated.

Introduction

The roles of language cannot be over-emphasized in a dynamic and progressive country like Nigeria where education is considered an instrument 'par excellence' for effecting national development. More importantly, one cannot talk of globalization, technological breakthrough and economic progress without language, a communicative tool. Language plays a central role in the formation of the political, cultural, economic, professional developments and ethnic identities of the world. It is more than a tool for communication; it forms the basis of intercultural and international relationships. Language gives access to perspectives and viewpoints that might otherwise have remained inaccessible. Language serves two major functions in a nation's educational system; it serves as a subject on the curriculum and a medium of instruction. These two functions are not necessarily mutually exclusive as language may function as both as situations demand. The place of language in Nigerian education and the importance of language study in the nation's educational process are recognized and clearly stated as follows in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (FGN, 2004, p. 10):

> *Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion; and preserving cultures. Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba…For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools but a non-vocational elective at the senior secondary school.*

In addition to geographical reasons, there are also reasons in line with global standards responsible for the emphasis placed on French. Languages originating from the European continent such as German, Spanish, Portuguese, English and French have gained a lot of recognition and have consequently become foreign languages to non-native users and standard languages, accepted as a means of communication, in the international community. The inclusion of French is not surprising as it is considered a major European language with a long tradition of being a foreign language.

French, along with English, is the working language of: The United Nations (UN), United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Olympic Committee, 31 Member Council of Europe, European Committee, Universal Postal Union, International Red Cross, Union of International Associations (UIA) and a host of others. It is also one of the international languages mostly used in areas such as commerce, scientific and technological research, administration, education, literature, and medicine. According to Moreau (2003), French is the second most frequently taught foreign language in the world.

Due to the global importance attached to this language and the emphasis placed on it in the Nigerian society as reflected in the NPE, one would expect to see a sizeable group of knowledgeable Nigerians, in French. Unfortunately, the contrary is the case as an average Nigerian cannot even speak French. Yet, communication is the most basic index of language learning and this is mainly achieved through exposure to communication activities. Moss and Ross-Feldman (2003) explains that communication activities include any activity that encourages and requires a learner to speak with and listen to other learners based on a real need such as to find information, break down barriers, talk about self and learn about culture. Such communication activities include games, role play, simulation, pair work, information gap activities and other activities that allow interaction amongst learners.

The most accessible institution for the development of such skills is the school. In Nigeria's present educational policy, French is to be officially introduced to learners in Primary IV. Unfortunately, not only is the teaching of French completely absent at this level in public primary schools, it has also been observed that most Nigerian public secondary schools do not offer French, and those that do so lay a lot of emphasis on the use of textbooks. This implies that textbooks serve as the basis for most of the language input learners receive and the language practice that take place in the class. Most worrisome is the fact that after such exposure of students to French, they are still unable to use the language for meaningful communication.

Statement of the Problem

Textbooks have been observed to be the major resource used in the Nigerian French language classroom in the Junior Secondary School (JSS). Those who are presently being taught French at this level, which is the starting point for many Nigerian learners, do not demonstrate communicative proficiency in it. Yet, the stipulation of the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) that French is the second official language in Nigeria implies that learners are expected to be able to use the language for effective communication. It is assumed that an average Nigerian French student does not speak French because the textbooks used, which are a major resource in the Nigerian classroom at this level, may not have appropriate communication activities and exercises that may promote such communication. It is therefore necessary to assess the activities and exercises in the recommended French textbooks for JSS students.

Research Questions

1(a) What types of communication activities are used in recommended French Language textbooks in the junior secondary school?
 (b) Are the activities suitable for developing communicative proficiency in the students?
2(a) Are the communication exercises in the textbooks adequate?
2(b) Of what quality are the communication exercises?

Theoretical Framework

Foreign language learning is supported by several cognitive perspectives on learning such as constructivism, situational cognition, reciprocal determinism, and socio-cultural theories. Particularly useful for this study are the theories of Lev Vygotsky and Albert Bandura. Vygotsky, a social constructivist based his theory on individual participation in problem solving. Vygotsky's social cultural theory offers a framework through which cognition can be developed systematically without isolating the social context and the human agent. This theory emphasizes the roles of historical, cultural and social factors in cognition. The theory centers on allowing students to interact actively with others so as to create opportunities for investigating, experimenting and asking questions, which will lead to getting answers that will make learning real and long-lasting. According to Schunk (2000, p. 229),

> *Constructivism is the notion that thinking takes place in contexts and cognition is largely constructed by individuals as a function of their experiences in situations... [it] highlights the interaction of persons with situations in the acquisition and refinement of skills and knowledge... People are active learners and must construct knowledge for themselves.*

From a socio-cultural perspective, Vygotsky (1962) expatiates that all higher mental functions originate in the social environment and the most influential process involved is language. He opines that language is the most symbolic tool provided by the society, emphasizing the individual's interaction with the social environment. He argues that language is about communication with oneself and others. To him, it is through language that people can move from the past into the future and into an alternative world. The major theme of his work is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition.

Another aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). ZPD is a level of development attained when learners engage in social behavior. Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction and the range of skills that can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration and this exceeds what can be attained alone. The ZPD is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help. Vygotsky states that a child follows an adult's example and gradually develops the ability to do certain tasks without help or assistance.

Bandura's social learning theory sometimes called social cognitive theory buttresses Vygotsky's theory. Social learning theory explains behavior in relation to interaction between the cognitive behavior and the environment. Bandura accepts most of the principles of behavioral theories but focuses to a much greater degree on the effects of cues on behavior and on internal mental processes emphasizing the effects of thought on action and actions on thought (Bandura, 1977). He postulates that an individual's understanding of a language and the competence to use it is based on the active mental constructions that one makes as a result of resolving discrepancies and contradictions that result as one interacts in an environment. Bandura describes personality as an interaction among the environment, the individual/personal, psychological processes which involve the ability to perceive, think and imagine, and the language. He argues that the environment plays a greater role in the shaping of one's behavior as human beings are largely a product of learning. He states that human beings learn through direct experience and by observing others. For him, language and other symbolic transformations give consistency and structure to one's self-esteem. Behavior is shaped by the environment; it can affect the environment, which can also affect cognition.

The learning theories proposed by Vygotsky and Bandura enable one to have an insight into the complexity of language learning. Learning a foreign language develops the tools for dealing with the various types of survival challenges, technical skills and interpersonal exchanges across and among cultures. For example, the socio-cultural theory of language views learning as an interaction not only among the teachers and the students, it also recognizes the importance of culture and social context for cognitive development. It emphasizes interactive action between the students and the source of knowledge which would assist the learners to re-establish ideas in their own minds. This allows for individual participation in problem solving. This is a pointer to teachers that learners' understanding of concepts during the teaching process is paramount; thus teachers must be aware of this and use methods and materials that would promote understanding of the subject matter.

Another implication of this theory to language teaching is that it shows the importance of engaging students in meaningful and purposeful exercises which communicative activities and exercises provide as against methods that support grammatical explanations in teaching. Communicative language teaching gives learners a clear idea of what they are learning and its relationship to other aspects of their lives. It appreciates the importance of peer to peer interaction in learning, through which learners share experiences with one another and challenge one another's ideas and thoughts. Vygotsky's theory brings out the importance of communicative activities.

Bandura's theories hold several implications for language teaching. First, it brings to limelight the importance of multi-dimensional approach by the teachers to disseminate

knowledge to their students which helps in developing different cognitive capabilities in the students. This is an indication that the use of the language textbook which reinforces the multi-dimensional approach in teaching, with its various activities and exercises is a necessity in the practice of the target language. Furthermore, meaningful exercises in textbooks are expected to aid learners in making mental constructions that will contribute positively to their interactions with their learning environment. This ultimately is expected to make learning interesting, real and fun to the students. One of the numerous language-teaching methods that also emphasize interaction with materials and human agents is communicative language teaching.

Communicative Language Teaching and Textbooks

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach used in teaching second and foreign languages which emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. Historically, CLT has been used as a response to the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), and as an extension to or development of the notional-functional syllabus. According to Krashen (2002), communicative approach can be said to be the product of educators and linguists who grew dissatisfied with the audio-lingual and grammar translation methods of foreign language instruction. They felt that language learning especially foreign, required more than knowing the grammatical and semantic rules. They noticed that students were not learning enough of the target language; they did not know how to communicate using appropriate social language, gestures or expressions. They were not much in tune with the culture of the language studied.

Educators are still of the opinion that language students should acquire the use of the language learnt in the context of structured and interpersonal exchanges because languages are interactional and transactional. Over the years, the communicative approach has been adapted to the elementary, middle, secondary and post-secondary levels. CLT makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication and almost any activity that engages learners in authentic communication.

CLT lays emphasis on helping students use the target language in a variety of language learning context functions. CLT is usually characterized as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. As such, it is most often defined by a list of general principles or features. However, CLT advocates avoid prescribing the set of practices through which these principles can best be realized.

The CLT uses three different types of materials in promoting the use of the target language – realia, task and text-based materials. Realia involves the use of authentic and real-life materials in the language class such as magazines, newspapers, graphics, and cartoons. Task-based materials are a variety of games, role pay and supportive task-based communicative activities usually in form of different items such as: cue cards, activity cards, exercise handbooks, pair communication practice materials and students' interaction practice booklets. Text-based materials are books specially designed to support communicative language teaching, structured in a way that allows language and communicative practice unlike conventional texts.

According to Richards (1998), language textbooks are resources for the presentation of spoken and written material, source of activities for learners' practice and communicative

interaction, reference source for grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, a source of simulation and ideas for classroom language class, and a support for the less experienced teacher. Language textbooks are expected to have both linguistic and situational realism and be consistent with basic linguistic, psychological and pedagogical principles.

Garinger (2002) opines that the amount of practice provided in standard textbooks and exercises ought to be sufficient, balanced in their format, containing both controlled and free practice. He proposes that students' involvement should be more than mechanical; that exercises should afford the students opportunities to generate examples in the target language on their own and outside the classroom experiences. He explains further that presentation of materials should be in a clear and interesting manner. The language used must be suitable for all learners with different levels of competence. Griffiths (1995) remarks that the language used in textbooks should make it easy to divide the class into groups or pairs, to have role-play or dialogue activities, and to allow students to interact with one another. Dougills (1987) further advocates that language teaching materials should emphasize the clarity of what students are expected to do at the end of each lesson.

According to Freebairn (2000), most foreign language textbooks used in developing countries can be categorized into two: international/global textbooks and local/locally produced textbooks. Most times, the first category of textbooks includes teaching materials produced for international markets which may not be suitable for an all-round development of learners in different societies. Local/locally produced textbooks are produced with the requirement of the national curriculum of a specific country. They are always useful in developing learners' awareness of their cultural identity and encouraging awareness of the target language (Skopinskaja, 2003). Cotrazzi and Jin (1991) divide English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks into three categories depending on their focus on culture as – textbooks based on source culture, textbooks based on target culture, and textbooks based on international target culture. These different types of textbooks have one role or the other to play in the foreign language classroom. The issues reviewed in literature served as a guide in the examination of recommended textbooks in this study.

Methodology

The design used for the study was survey. Three of the recommended French Language textbooks for junior secondary schools in Nigeria were examined. The selected textbooks are:

1. Ajiboye, T., Ogbenege, L. & Ojelade, K., (2002). *Nouvel Horizon*. Ibadan: Bounty Press.
2. Bouacha, A. ,& Paisant, C.,(1991). *Trans Afrique*. Lagos: MacMillan.
3. Mazauric, C., Sirejois, E. , Kim, J. , Makpu, J., & Tijani, M., (2008) *On y va!*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.

One instrument, "Inventory on Textbook Communication Activities (ITCA) was validated by French teaching experts and used to assess the selected textbooks for adequacy and suitability. The ITCA was used to gather information on the quality and the quantity of the communication activities and exercises, types of communication activities and exercises and their suitability as communication tools for achieving communicative proficiency in JSS students. Analysis started with grading the following in the selected textbooks: (a) types of communication activities; (b) suitability of communication activities; (c) quantity of

communication activities; and (d) quality of communication activities. The following parameters were used for grading the items: No communicative activities/exercises – "0"; Between 1 and 5 – A little; Between 5 and 10 – Moderate; Above 10 – A lot. Subsequently, the graded items were classified as follows for analysis: Not at all – 0; A little – 1; Moderate – 2; A lot – 3. Data gathered were analyzed for each of the research questions using frequencies and percentages.

Findings

Research Question 1
(a) What types of communicative activities are used in the French language textbooks?

Table 1 Analysis of Communicative Activities in the French Language Textbooks

S/N	Communicative Activities	Books				
		Nouvel Horizon	Trans Afrique	On y va	Total	Percentage (%)
1.t	Role Play	0	0	3	3/9	33
2.	Simulation	0	1	1	2/9	22
3.	Information gap	1	1	1	3/9	33
4.	Choice in language form	3	3	3	9/9	100
5.	Choice in Language function	3	3	3	9/9	100
6.	Feedback Opportunities	0	0	1	1/9	11
7.	Dialogues	3	1	1	5/9	56
8.	Debate	0	0	0	0/9	0
9.	Communication games	0	1	0	1/9	11
10.	Real life Conversation	1	0	0	0/9	0
11.	Pair work	1	1	3	5/9	56
12.	Communication with peers	1	1	2	4/9	44
13.	Survey	0	0	0	0/9	0
14.	Discussion	2	3	2	7/9	78
15.	Questioning	3	3	3	9/9	100
16.	Small groups	1	1	2	4/9	44
	TOTAL	**18**	**19**	**25**	**62**	**43**

A close look at Table 1 shows that choice in language form, choice in language function, and questioning are used equally maximally in the three textbooks under review. These activities are closely followed by discussion activities with *Trans Afrique* having the highest frequency. Dialogue and pair work are seen to be averagely used. While *Nouvel Horizon* has the highest occurrence of dialogues, *On y va* has the greatest occurrence of pair work. Other communicative language activities such as: small group activities, communication with peers, role play, information gap, and simulation occur sparingly; feedback opportunities and communication games are almost non-existent. Debate, real life conversation, and survey do not feature at all in the books as shown in Table 1. Only *On y va* uses dialogue in comic form as an activity which makes reading appealing and attractive to the students; it also makes use of role play largely. *Nouvel Horizon* uses dialogue as a major activity while *Trans Afrique* uses reading as its major activity. Apart from debate, real life conversation, and survey, which are not used at all and choice in language form, choice in language function, and questioning which are used in the three textbooks, other recommended types of communicative activities only manage to appear in one or the other of
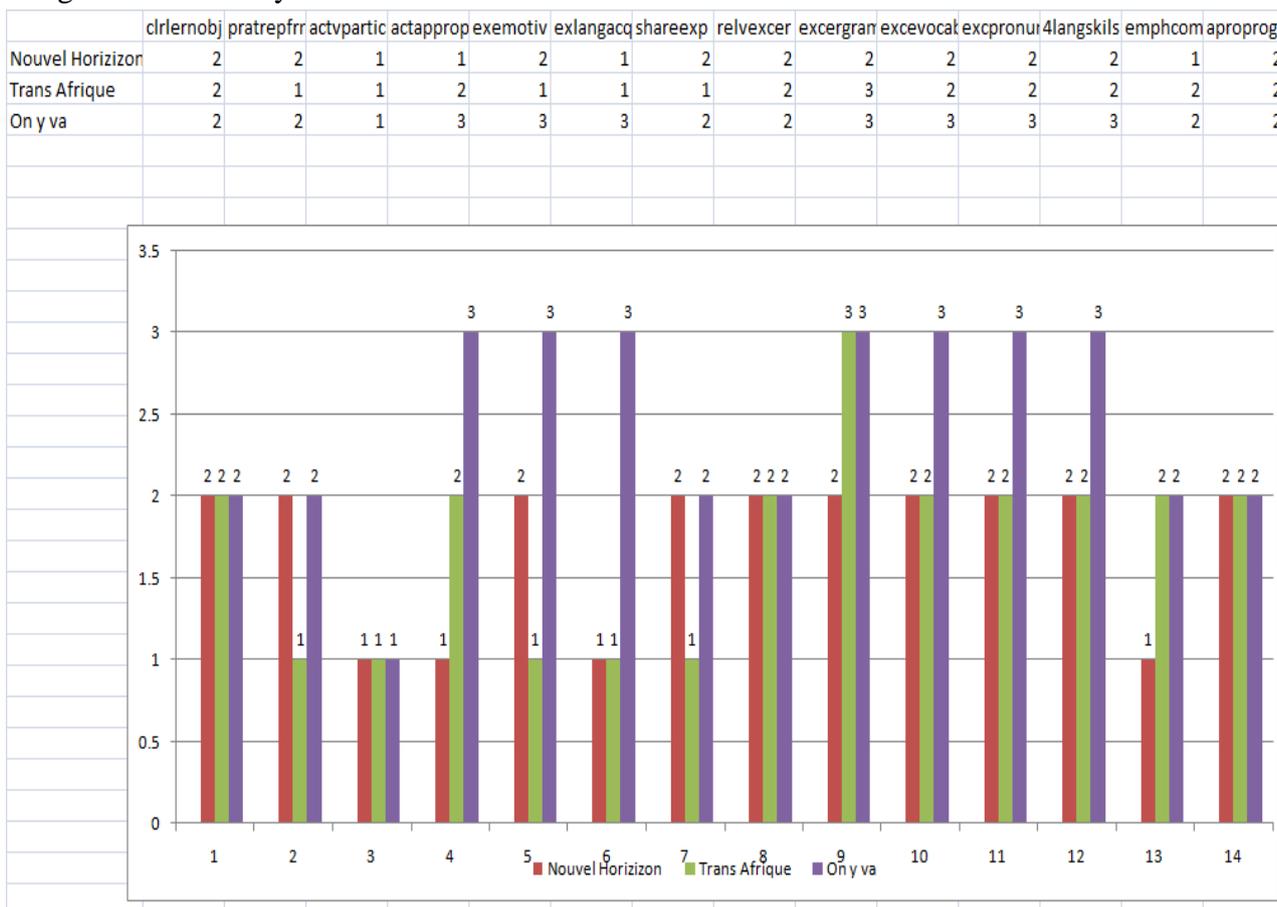
these recommended textbooks. Consequently, communication activities in the textbooks are considered inadequate for developing communicative proficiency in students as they were found to be less than 50% of the recommended activities in the communicative language teaching class.

(b)   Are the activities suitable for developing communicative proficiency in students?

Table 2
Suitability of Communication Activities

S/N	Suitability of Communication Exercises	Books				
		Nouvel Horizon	**Trans Afrique**	**On y va**	**Total**	**Percentage (%)**
1	Clear learning objectives	2	2	2	6/9	67
2	Practice/meaningful repetition of target language forms	2	1	2	5/9	56
3.	Active participation from learner	2	2	3	7/9	78
4.	Activities are level- and age-appropriate	1	2	3	6/9	67
5	Activities are motivating	2	1	3	6/9	67
6.	Activities contribute to learners' language acquisition	1	1	3	5/9	56
7.	Allow the sharing of personal experiences, opinions and feelings	2	1	2	5/9	56
8.	Enough and relevant activities	2	2	2	6/9	67
9.	Activities on grammar	2	3	3	8/9	89
10.	Activities on vocabulary	2	2	3	7/9	78
11.	Activities on pronunciation	2	2	3	7/9	78
12.	Four language skills well covered	2	2	3	7/9	78
13.	There is emphasis on communication	1	2	2	5/9	56
14.	Appropriate pace/rate of progression	2	2	2	6/9	67
	TOTAL	**27**	**26**	**39**	**92**	**73**

Figure 1: Suitability of Communication Activities

	clrlernobj	pratrepfrr	actvpartic	actapprop	exemotiv	exlangacq	shareexp	relvexcer	excergran	excevocal	excpronun	4langskils	emphcom	aproprog
Nouvel Horizion	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Trans Afrique	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
On y va	2	2	1	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2

The responses from Table 2 and Figure 1 show that the activities in the three examined textbooks are suitable. All the three books attracted very high scores on grammar (89%), vocabulary (78%) and pronunciation (78%). The three textbooks treat the four listening skills to a satisfactory level. *Nouvel Horizon* has a section where assumed difficult words are well explained. In *On y va*, there is a section where new words are presented to the students which can help in vocabulary acquisition for the students. *TransAfrique* and *On y va* have revision exercises at the end of every two and three chapters. The quality of the activities is of high standard and is suitable for developing communicative proficiency in the students as evidenced by the high index of 73%.

Research Question 2

(a) Are the communication exercises in the textbooks adequate?

The three textbooks vary their exercises and activities to reduce monotony and encourage interest on the part of the learners by introducing various exercises such as: "fill in the gaps", "cross word puzzle", "sentence reconstruction", "multiple choice questions", "matching words from one column to the other", "answering true/ false", "free and guided writing exercises", and "simple substitution table". *Trans Afrique* lays emphasis on pronunciation through exercises which students will read out. *On v ya* introduces a new dimension where at the end of each chapter, there is a reading exercise tagged "*Reading for pleasure*". This is to encourage reading in the target language.

Table 2 Quantity of Communication Exercises

C	Quantity of the Communication Exercises	Nouvel Horizon	Trans Afrique	On y va	Total	Percentage %
1.	Meaningful dialogue through information gap exercises, conversational strategies, prompts, cues etc	1	0	1	2/9	22
2.	Exercises from exposure to authentic materials such as live radio, tapes, television broadcasts etc	0	0	0	0/9	0
3.	Problem solving exercises to focus on taking decisions giving opinions etc	1	1	1	3/9	33
4.	Group-oriented interaction exercises in the target language	1	1	1	3/9	33
5.	Questionnaires and interviews for soliciting	0	0	0	0	0
6.	Exercises derived from games, story re-telling, spot the differences, piecing dialogues together etc	0	0	0	0/9	0
7.	Pair-oriented exercises in the target language	1	1	2	4/9	44
8.	Out-of-class exercises in real-life situations	1	1	2	4/9	44

In all the textbooks examined, there is a brief summary at the end: conjugation tables and glossary. In addition, *Nouvel Horizon* has various exercises that students can practice to enhance their understanding of the target language. However, in spite of the variety, the low total index of 44% indicates an inadequacy in the communication exercises in the textbooks.
 (b) Of what quality are the communication exercises?

Table 3 Quality of Communication Exercises

S/N	Quality of Communication Exercises	Books				
		Nouvel Horizon	*Trans Afrique*	*On y va*	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Exercises such as pairing and working in small groups were used	3	3	4	10/15	67
2	Exercises attempt to link classroom language teaching with activities outside the classroom	2	2	4	8/15	53
3.	Emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language	0	1	0	1/15	7
4.	Introduction of authentic texts and supportive materials into the communication exercises	4	4	4	12/15	80
5	Provision of opportunities to focus on learning management process not just on language	4	4	4	12/15	80
6.	Use of concrete objects around to facilitate clear understanding	3	3	3	9/15	60
7.	Use of audiovisual materials television and cassettes	0	0	0	0/15	0
8.	Exercises allows oral practice of target language	3	3	3	9/15	60
9.	Exercises allow use of new vocabulary	3	3	3	9/15	60
10.	Exercises are ages and level appropriate	3	2	3	8/15	53
11.	Exercises give enough room for practice	3	2	3	8/15	53
12.	Exercises allow the learners to express their ideas and opinions	2	3	4	9/15	60
13.	Exercises appropriate for teaching communication	3	3	3	9/15	60
	TOTAL	**33**	**33**	**38**	**104**	**53**

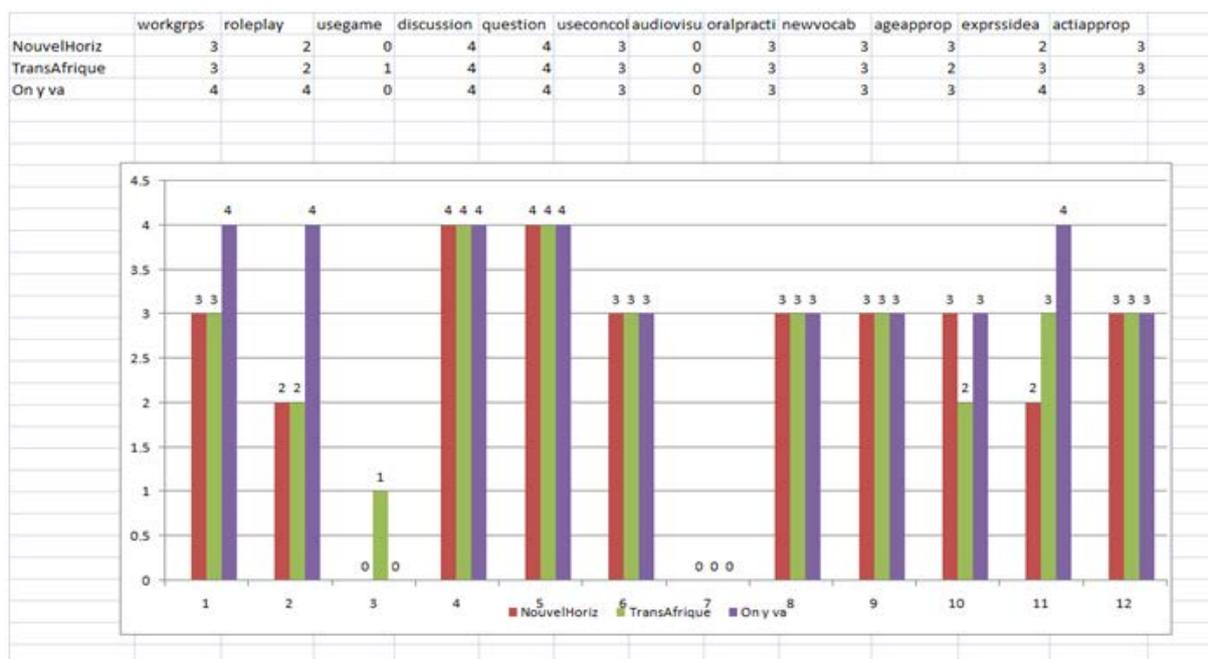|	workgrps	roleplay	usegame	discussion	question	useconcol	audiovisu	oralpracti	newvocab	ageapprop	exprssidea	actiapprop
NouvelHoriz	3	2	0	4	4	3	0	3	3	3	2	3
TransAfrique	3	2	1	4	4	3	0	3	3	3	3	3
On y va	4	4	0	4	4	3	0	3	3	3	4	3

Figure 2: Quality of Communication Exercises

A critical look at the three textbooks shows that there are varieties of practice exercises like "group work"(3)," use of games"(0), "discussion"(4). The quality of the exercises can be described as average as shown in the index of 53% which is not considered sufficient to teach communicative proficiency in a foreign language to the students.

Discussion

A number of reasons may be responsible for inadequate communicative activities in the textbooks. A major reason is that most people see these activities as a waste of time. For example, games are seen as short warm-up activities, a means of passing the time or probably a way to keep the students busy when the teacher wants to do some other things, a notion which should not be so. Communicative language activities such as games should not be seen as insignificant or time-wasting activities. These activities, used in language textbooks, motivate, challenge, sustain, encourage, entertain and allow interaction among learners in the teaching process. CLT also lays great emphasis on helping students use the target language in a variety of contexts, and on learning language functions; its primary focus is on helping learners create meaning rather than helping them develop grammatical structures or acquire native-like pronunciation.

Littlewood (2004) argues that activities in language learning should incorporate two aspects: a form and a meaning as well as a degree of learner involvement that brings out responses from the learners which is not so in the exercises used in the recommended textbooks. This is corroborated by Nunan (2004) who opines that classroom work should enable learners to manipulate, produce and interact in the target language and it should involve understanding grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning. A lot of the exercises in the textbooks concentrate more on mastering grammatical rules. Emphases are on grammar and reading. There is limited space for responses from the learners.

It was also observed that none of the textbooks makes use of audio and video materials which Katchen (2002) and VanPattern (2002) suggest should be part of CLT. They explain that communication should not only be oral but written and gestural; thus CLT should use a broad set of materials such as audio, video and visual materials. They also recommend that learners should be at the centre of the curriculum and their needs and interest should be well taken care of. The importance of meaningful learning is addressed by Skehan (1996) who argues that learners learn a language through the process of communicating with it and that communication that is meaningful to the learner provides a better opportunity for learning than a grammar-based approach which is favored by the recommended textbooks. He suggests the use of activities that do not demand repetition, memorization and grammatical patterns which are largely used in the examined textbooks. Activities that require learners to negotiate meanings and make use of real-life situations would go a long way in promoting communicative proficiency.

Going by Nunan's (1991) five features of "Communicative Language Teaching", a communicative language class should use authentic text in the learning situation which was absent in most of the schools. Out of the three materials recommended for communicative language teaching (realia, text and text-based materials), it was only realia and text-based materials that were used in the class. None of the schools had a language laboratory; teaching was done without the use of audio visuals and cassette. Nunan recommends that efforts should be made to link teaching in the language class with activities outside the classroom.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, it was concluded that recommended French textbooks could be used to achieve communicative proficiency in Junior Secondary School students only if more qualitative communicative activities and exercises are incorporated.

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APPENDIX 1

INVENTORY ON TEXTBOOK COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES (ITCA)

Name of Book:
Author:
Publisher:
Chapter:

A S/N	TYPES OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES	0	1	2	3	Total
1.	Role Play					
2	Simulation					
3	Information Gap					
4	Choice in language form					
5	Choice in language function					
6	Feedback opportunities					
7	Dialogue					
8	Debate					
9.	Communication games					
10.	Real-life conversation					
11	Pair Work					
12	Communication with peers					
13.	Survey					
14	Discussion					
15	Questioning					
16	Small group					
B	**SUITABILITY OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**	0	1	2	3	TOTAL
1	Clear learning objectives					
2	Practice/meaningful repetition of target language forms					
3.	Active participation from learner					
4.	Activities are level- and age-appropriate					
5	Activities are motivating					
6.	Activities contribute to learners' language acquisition					
7.	Allow the sharing of personal experiences, opinions and feelings					
8.	Enough and relevant activities					
9.	Activities on grammar					

10.	Activities on vocabulary					
11.	Activites on pronunciation					
12.	Four language skills well covered					
13.	There is emphasis on communication					
14.	Appropriate pace/rate of progression					
C	**QUANTITY OF COMMUNICATION EXERCISES**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**TOTAL**
1.	Meaningful dialogue through information gap exercises, conversational strategies, prompts, cues etc					
2.	Exercises from exposure to authentic materials such as live radio, tapes, television broadcasts etc					
3.	Problem solving exercises to focus on taking decisions giving opinions etc					
4.	Group oriented interaction exercises in target language					
5.	Questionnaires and interviews for soliciting					
6	Exercises derived from games, story-retelling, spot the differences, piercing dialogues together, etc					
7.	Pair- oriented exercises in target language					
8	Out of class exercises in real life situations					
D	**QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION EXERCISES**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**TOTAL**
1	Emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language					
2.	Introduction of authentic texts and supportive materials into communication exercises					
3.	Provision of opportunities to focus on learning management process not just on language					
4.	Enhancement of learners persons experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning					
5.	Attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom					

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