**ACQUISITION DE COMPÉTENCE INTERCULTURELLE: LE CAS DES ÉTUDIANTS DÉBUTANTS DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE À L'UNIVERSITÉ DE MAKERERE**

**THE ACQUISITION OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: A CASE**

**STUDY OF FRENCH BEGINNERS AT MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the Acquisition of Intercultural Competence by the Beginner students of the French language at Makerere University. The French language is taught in the Department of European and Oriental Languages (DEOL), under the School of Languages, Literature and Communication in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The Beginner students who are taught French for a period of three years are expected to become linguistically and inter-culturally competent so that they can interact and relate appropriately with others from the French speaking community. Unfortunately, most learners of the French do not achieve the expected level of the intercultural competence. The study therefore examined the dissonance between what is expected of the learners after the course and what is actually achieved following the curriculum content and teaching methods used.

The ICOPROMO Model: Adopted from Byram et al (2002) was used in the study. The ICOPROMO model is transformational in that it articulates the journey the individual undergoes when becoming aware of intercultural challenges as a result of his/her mobility or that of others with whom he/she must communicate effectively. It then describes how and what that individual must learn in order to communicate more effectively, the impact of that learning on his/her attitudes, behaviour and communicative performance and the on-going experience of encountering new challenges and learning new knowledge and techniques to meet them.

Since culture goes hand in hand with language, some specific notions that were difficult to translate were explained grammatically. The application of 'tu' or 'vous' was for example explained during the Focus Group Discussion. These and other grammatical forms can help cause a blockage to comprehension and therefore need explanation.

Data was collected from a total of 67 respondents who were French Beginner Students (FRBs) at DEOL and 4 lecturers of French in the same Department. The 67 respondents comprising of first, second- and third-years students, provided information in a questionnaire and five of these later in a Focus Group Discussion. The four lecturers provided information through an interview. The samples were arrived at following purposive sampling, which is one of the non-random sampling techniques.

Data in this thesis is analyzed using mixed methods. It is mainly qualitatively since it mostly explains how the topic connects with culture, but also quantitative in the sense that some data was collected in a Likert scale form concerning the teaching methods and therefore presented in tabular format. The findings show that the curriculum materials have cultural content but the teaching emphasized more on language other than culture. Also, the cultures of the Ugandan learners are so distanced from that of the French. This causes difficulties in imparting the French culture to these learners. This study recommendations include: richer cultural studies textbooks for each individual learner, a comprehensive text book having Ugandan and French culture, language (grammar), and better literary texts, explanation of specifics in the French grammar that may hinder comprehension, authentic teaching materials like texts, photos, audio-visuals that build language and culture. This is important because internationalization and globalization have become part of our society and contact with diverse people is on the increase.

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