Students' attitudes towards the French language: a field study on a sample of primary school students in the municipality of Inzgmir, Adrar state.

اتجاهات التلاميذ نحو مادة اللغة الفرنسية (دراسة ميدانية على عينة من تلاميذ مرحلة التعليم الابتدائي ببلدية انزجمير ولاية ادرار)

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Abstract:

The current study aims to identify the attitudes of primary school students towards the French language in some schools in the municipality of Inzgmir, Adrar state. The study used the descriptive approach, and the sample consisted of (90) male and female students studying in the fifth grade of primary school during the academic year (2022-2023). The study reached the following results:

- The presence of positive attitudes towards the French language by fifth-grade primary school students.
- The absence of statistically significant differences in the French language between the sexes.

Keywords Attitudes**;** The French language**;** Students**;** Primary school**;** Fifth year**.**

ملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التعرف على اتجاهات تلاميذ مرحلة التعليم الابتدائي نحو مادة اللغة الفرنسية ببعض مدارس بلدية انزجمير ولاية أدرار. حيث استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي، وقد تكونت عينة الدراسة من (90) تلميذ وتلميذة يدرسون في السنة الخامسة ابتدائي خلال السنة الدراسية (2022-2023) وتوصلت الدراسة إلى النتائج التالية:

_ وجود اتجاهات ايجابية نحو مادة اللغة الفرنسية من قبل تلاميذ السنة الخامسة ابتدائي.

_ عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية في اتجاهات نحو مادة اللغة الفرنسية بين الجنسين.

كلمات مفتاحية: اتجاهات؛ اللغة الفرنسية؛ التلاميذ؛ التعليم الابتدائي؛ السنة الخامسة.

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1 - Introduction

Learning a language in addition to the mother tongue has become a necessity in this era. With the modern developments in the contemporary world that have made the world like one village, it is obvious that technological progress leads to a growing desire to learn new languages, especially the most widely spoken languages in the world. Teaching and learning these languages has also become an indispensable necessity. To open up to the outside world and learn about the different civilizations and cultures of people worldwide. Learning more than one language benefits its learners and society in general.

Foreign languages are considered important topics that have attracted the attention of researchers due to their importance, especially (English and French). This is due to their uses, global discussions, and the facts imposed by global circumstances as the language of information and communication technology and the language of communication between nations and civilized societies.

Teaching foreign languages to children from an early age empowers them with the skills they need to succeed in the future. It allows Algerian students to access global knowledge directly, embrace diverse cultures, and foster connections between secondary education, vocational training, and higher education. To achieve these objectives, educational language policies should focus on revising the general aims outlined in the National Education Guidance Law. Specifically, Article 4, Chapter Two of the law should be amended to emphasize the importance of students mastering at least two foreign languages. This will enable them to engage with the world, access documentation from various sources, and engage in exchanges with foreign cultures. (Qaidum, 2021)

The French language is considered one of the foreign languages used in the educational process in Algeria due to its historical environment and cultural, social, and educational status in Algerian society. The educational system has adopted the programming of teaching the French language in educational programs starting from the third year of primary school to understand the French language better. Anita Wolf Locke also confirmed that the earlier an individual learns a second language, the closer his pronunciation is to that of a native citizen.

Despite the great efforts made by the state to provide all available means to improve academic performance and keep pace with modernity and technology targeted by the modern world, students still suffer from a decline in the French language, as their linguistic performance and linguistic skills are insufficient. The reason for this is the student's tendency towards this language. Since the amount of an individual's contribution in a particular field depends on the extent of his belonging, love, inclinations, and tendencies toward this field, and from this standpoint, we tried through this study to know the tendencies of fifth-year students toward the French language.

1.1- Statement of the Problem

The topic of psychological tendencies occupies great importance in educational and psychological literature, as it has received and continues to receive great attention from researchers due to its importance in the lives of individuals in society, as well as being one of the basic components of personality, according to which the different responses of individuals towards most topics, issues and events that confront them are determined because everything around the individual can be the subject of tendencies, Kegan and Hoffman define tendencies as "organized beliefs and enduring feelings toward certain situations".(Mazouzi, 2018)

Attitudes are among the most important determinants that direct and regulate behavior. They define and explain behavior and regulate motivational, emotional, cognitive, and perceptual processes. Based on them, the individual responds to the subject

or situation by accepting or rejecting. Attitudes also play an important role in the learning process, as they define and explain the student's behavior towards a group of practical educational elements such as the school, teacher, subject matter, and academic achievement. A positive attitude towards a subject facilitates learning it, while a negative attitude hinders learning it.

Perhaps the student's attitudes towards learning the French language are among the things that are related to his success or failure in it. The student who has a positive attitude towards the French language accepts to study and learn it. In contrast, students with negative attitudes toward the French language refrain from studying and learning it. In some studies conducted to find out the attitudes of students towards the French language, such as the study of "Otalib, 2014," suggests that students with negative attitudes toward French find it challenging to learn the language. Their reluctance stems from unfavorable beliefs about the language and its speakers, leading to poor academic performance. "Attitudes towards learning a foreign language connect to students' attitudes towards its speakers." (Mazouzi, 2018).

In this way, all positive or negative trends are determined in the direction of learning. If the trends are positive, students will accept it driven by themselves, no matter how many obstacles stand in their way. However, if the trends are negative, they will only accept learning if these trends and attitudes change. Accordingly, standing on all these trends towards learning the French language is necessary to reveal the factors related to learning the French language represented in forming these trends and working to develop them and improve the conditions surrounding the teaching and learning process in a way that makes students accept learning with a satisfied soul and positive trends.

From this standpoint, the research problem came to identify the nature of students' attitudes toward the French language in our schools, and since students' attitudes are positions, th, ey play a decisive,e role in accepting or rejecting something.

Based on what has been mentioned, the following question is posed:

What are the trends of fifth-grade primary school students toward the French language?

From this main question, the following sub-questions emerge:

-What is the nature of the trends of fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language?

- Do the trends of fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language differ according to gender (males, females)?

1.2- Hypotheses of the Study

- There are negative trends among fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language.
- The attitudes of fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language differ according to gender (males, females).

1.3- Objectives of the Study

The current study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To reveal the nature of the attitudes of primary school students towards the French language.
- To investigate the effect of the gender variable on the attitudes of primary school students towards the French language

1.4- Importance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its study of the attitudes of primary school students towards the French language, considering that attitudes are one of the basic components

of personality and are also the main factor that gives motivation towards or against something. The importance of the current study is represented in:

- To know the attitudes of fifth-grade primary school students toward the French language, as this helps the teacher understand the nature of the student's attitude toward learning the subject, which leads to better performance on his part.
- This study is the first to monitor the attitudes of fifth-grade primary school students toward the French language according of the researcher's knowledge.

1.5-Define the Concepts

- Attitudes: Attitude, as defined by "Allport", is a state of neuropsychological readiness and preparedness shaped by personal experiences. It exerts a directive influence on an individual's responses to various topics and situations. (Bani Jabber, 2011, p266)

"Bogardus" describes attitude as an individual's tendency to behave either toward or away from certain environmental elements. This tendency is influenced by positive or negative beliefs based on the individual's proximity or distance from those elements. He differentiates between momentary and long-term readiness levels. (Al-Khatatneh, Al-Nawaisa, 2011, p148).

In essence, attitude refers to a mental state of preparedness for a particular response, either positive or negative, toward a specific topic, situation, or individual.

Procedurally: The degree the student obtains through the questionnaire prepared to measure attitudes towards the French language subject.

- French language: The French language is the product of the unification of several ancient dialects of Latin origin, similar to other world languages like Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish. (Daniel, 1995).

The French language serves as an official language in 29 nations, forming the Francophonie, a community of French-speaking countries. Algeria is among these Francophone nations, adopting French as the primary language of instruction throughout education and utilizing it as the lingua franca for scientific research and instruction in higher education. (Boualmaner, Rawaq, 2021, p371).

2- Method and Tools:

2.1- **Research Approach**

The choice of the method used for the study is determined by the nature of the research problem to be studied. The current study seeks to determine students' attitudes towards the French language subject. Accordingly, the descriptive method was appropriate for such studies. It is concerned with accurately describing the phenomenon to be studied through the results and their interpretation.

2.2- **Study Population and Sample**

The study community included students in primary education institutions' third stage of primary education. The study sample was selected using a simple random method without categorization from (3) primary schools in the municipality of Inzgmir, Adrar state, with a total of (90) male and female students studying in the fifth year of primary school, and data collection took place in January 2023.

Table (1): shows the distribution of the study sample members according to the gender variable.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	47%
Female	48	53%
Total	90	100%

Source: Prepared by researcher

From Table No (1), we note that the percentage of females is greater than the percentage of males, as the percentage of females was estimated at (53%) of the sample, while the percentage of males was estimated at (47%).

2.3- **Data Collection Tools**

To answer the study questions and achieve its objectives, a questionnaire was prepared that measures students' attitudes towards the French language subject after reviewing the literary heritage in the field of attitudes and the scales that measure attitudes, and those that measure attitudes towards the subject, which the researchers benefited from in constructing the current scale, and among these scales: (Barala, 2007) study, and (Ali Abkar, 2016) study, and (Rezziki, 2018) study, and study of (Awad Khalil, 2022).

The questionnaire included the following dimensions:

a. **The cognitive dimension:** This refers to the knowledge, experiences, and beliefs that the student holds about the French language subject.
b. **The emotional dimension:** This includes the student's feelings, emotions, and desires towards the French language subject, the degree of his acceptance or dislike of it, and his love or hatred for it.
c. **The behavioral dimension:** refers to the student's behavioral or practical methods or responses to his actions toward the French language subject.

To answer the paragraphs, graded alternatives were placed according to the three-point Likert scale, which consists of three levels.

The respondents' answers were coded according to the following weights:

Phrases	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Positive Paragraphs	3	2	1
Negative Paragraphs	1	2	3

Source: Prepared by researcher

The questionnaire's total score was estimated at 57 points, which is the total score for the first dimension (5×3) + the total score for the second dimension (7×3) + the total score for the third dimension (6×3).

We note that the upper limit of the questionnaire is 57 points, and the lower limit is 19 points. The study considers that those whose scores fall between 57 and 38 points have positive attitudes towards the French language, while those whose scores fall between 38 and 19 points have negative attitudes towards the French language subject.

2.4- **Psychometric Properties of the Study Tool**

For the study tool to be reliable in collecting data, its psychometric properties are calculated after it has been applied to a survey sample from the study community and from outside the study sample consisting of (50) male and female students from the primary education stage who were randomly selected. The statistical package (Spss) was used to calculate the psychometric properties.

A- Validity

1-**Constructive validity:** The questionnaire's constructive validity was calculated through internal consistency. The correlation coefficient between the questionnaire's dimensions and the study tool's total score was calculated, and the following table shows this.

Table (3): shows the constructive validity of the questionnaire.

	Dimensions	Correlation
1	Cognitive dimension	0,848**

2	Emotional dimension	0,892**
3	Behavioral dimension	0,876**

Source: Prepared by researcher

Table No (3) clearly shows that the correlation coefficients of each dimension of the questionnaire are highly correlated with the total score, ranging between (0.848**) and (0.892**), which confirms the validity of the questionnaire.

2-**Discriminant validity:** For the tool to be able to distinguish between the two ends of the characteristic, the difference between the averages of the upper group and the lower group was calculated using the (T) test, where 27% was taken from the upper end and 27% from the lower end after arranging the individuals' scores in descending order, as shown in the following table:

Table (4): shows the discriminant validity of the study tool

Groups	**N**	**Mean**	**Stand Devin**	**T**	**Sig**
Lower	14	36.00	4.84	14.14	0.000
Higher	14	55.06	1.44		

Source: Prepared by researcher

The table above shows that the average of the upper group was (55.07) with a standard deviation of (1.44), which is higher than the average of the lower group, which was (36.00) with a standard deviation of (4.84). The value of "t" was (14.14) with a probability value of (0.000) less than the significance level of (0.05). Accordingly, we decide that there are statistically significant differences at the significance level of (0.05) between the average of the upper group and the average of the lower group in favor of the lower group. Accordingly, the questionnaire has a high degree of discriminant validity and is suitable for the study.

B- Reliability

1-**Half-split:** This method was adopted to calculate the reliability of the tool for measuring students' attitudes towards the French language subject, where each individual's scores were divided into two halves; the first half represents the individuals' scores on the even items and the second half represents their scores on the odd items, then the correlation coefficient between the two halves was calculated using the "Pearson" method and then corrected using the "Spearman-Brown" method. The following table illustrates this**:**

Table (5): shows the reliability coefficient using the split-half method for the study tool.

N	**Correlation coefficient before correction**	**Spearman-Brown correlation coefficient correction**
50	0.790	0.883

Source: prepared by researcher

The table above shows that the correlation coefficient's value before correction was estimated at (0.790). After correcting it with the Spearman-Brown equation, we obtained a correlation coefficient of (0.883), which is a high correlation coefficient that confirms the tool's stability.

2-**Cronbach's Alpha:** The internal consistency stability coefficient of the questionnaire was calculated using the Cronbach's Alpha method as shown in the following table:

Table (6): shows the stability coefficient of the study tool using the Cronbach's Alpha method

Phrases	**Cronbach's Alpha**

19	0.868

Source: prepared by researcher

From Table No (6), we find that Cronbach's alpha coefficient was estimated at (0.868), which is a high coefficient of stability, indicating the consistency between the questionnaire items, i.e., the questionnaire has acceptable stability and can be relied upon**.**

3- Results and Discussion

3.1- Presentation of the results

A- **The first hypothesis**: which states that "the attitudes of fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language are negative", to verify this hypothesis, we relied on the use of frequencies and percentages.

Table (7): shows the attitudes of the study sample members towards the French language.

Trends	Frequency	Percentage
Negative	24	27%
Positive	66	73%
Total	90	100%

Source: prepared by researcher

Through the results shown in the table above, we find that the attitudes of most of the fifth-grade primary school students are positive attitudes towards the French language subject, as their number reached (66) students, equivalent to a percentage of (73%), while (24) students, or a percentage of (27%), have negative attitudes towards the French language subject. Through these results, it becomes clear to us that the nature of the attitudes of the fifth-grade primary school students is positive toward the French language subject. From this, we reject the hypothesis that the attitudes of the fifth-grade primary school students toward the French language subject are negative. We accept the alternative hypothesis, which states that the attitudes of the fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language subject are positive.

B- **The second hypothesis**: "The attitudes of fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language differ according to gender (males, females)". We relied on the T-test to study the differences between two independent groups to verify this hypothesis.

Table (8): shows the differences between the attitudes of the study sample members towards the French language according to the gender variable.

	N	Mean	Stand Devin	T	Sig
Male	42	43.02	7.93	-1.591	0.798
Female	48	45.53	7.56		

Source : prepared by researcher

The results of the table above show that the arithmetic mean for males is (43.02) with a standard deviation of (7.93), while the arithmetic mean for females is (45.53) with a standard deviation of (7.56) and the value of "T" is equal to (-1.591) at the significance level of (0.795), which is greater than the significance level of (0.05) and a statistically insignificant value, which means that there are no statistically significant differences in the attitudes of fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language subject according to gender. Accordingly, it appears that attitudes towards the French language subject are not affected by the gender variable.

3.2- Discussion of the results

A- **The first hypothesis**: The results of testing the first hypothesis showed that the nature of the attitudes of the fifth-grade primary school students towards the French language subject is positive, as shown in the results in the table above, as the percentage reached (73%).

Thus, this result expresses that the attitudes of the current study sample towards the French language subject are positive.

This result was consistent with the study of Semaan (2004), which confirmed that students' behavior changed through educational activities that contributed to forming a positive attitude towards French language classes, while the study of Nisreen Salah (2005) showed the presence of a positive attitude among the second year of commercial secondary school towards learning the French language. In contrast, there is the study by Barala (2007), whose results showed that the attitudes of male and female students toward the French language are more positive than their attitudes towards the Arabic language, as well as the study of Abkar (2016), which concluded that the attitudes of secondary school students towards studying the French language are positive, and the study of Raziki (2018), which indicated the presence of positive attitudes towards learning the French language by first-year secondary school students in the city of Latakia.

The student's positive attitudes towards the French language in the current study are due to several factors, including The teaching method used by the teachers of these students, which may have an impact on forming these attitudes. The success of the French language program depends on the teacher and his teaching strategies, thus facilitating the process for students and making the subject enjoyable and interesting. It is possible to form a positive view of the French language. Referring to the questionnaire items, we find that 80.7% of the study sample answered in agreement with the second item, which states, "I would like to learn it as much as I can," and that 72.7% answered in agreement with the eighteenth item, which states, "I do my best to master it well." This indicates the love and enthusiasm of these students for studying this subject and thus leads to positive attitudes towards it. The French language also provides students with linguistic skills, and due to cultural diversity and the importance of society's openness to other cultures, knowing a foreign language makes the individual socially adaptable and understanding with the native speakers because the language breaks down psychological barriers and is a means of communication or a bridge between peoples.

B- **The second hypothesis:** The results of the second hypothesis test indicated that there is no difference between the sexes in attitudes towards the French language, i.e. that males and females have a similar attitude towards the French language, as its results agreed with Fawzy's study (1990), which showed no significant differences between boys and girls in the attitude towards learning the French language, as well as the study of Braleh (2007), whose results showed no significant differences in the attitudes of male and female students towards the French language according to gender, and the study of Al-Rubaie (2023), whose results concluded that there were no statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) attributed to the gender variable.

This result differed from different studies, such as the study of Abkar (2016), which concluded that there were statistically significant differences in the attitudes of secondary school students towards the French language subject attributed to the gender variable in favor of males and the study of Raziki (2018) which showed statistically significant differences in the attitudes of first-year secondary school students towards learning the French language between males and females in favor of females.

The reasons for the absence of a difference between males and females in attitudes towards the French language subject are that students are exposed to a unified French

curriculum, which means that each individual has an equal opportunity to be influenced by the knowledge they acquire, as knowledge is the first component of the elements of attitude. It is worth noting that Algerian curricula do not differentiate between genders in the educational process. Given that students live in the same educational area, it is one factor contributing to the formation of similar attitudes among both sexes. The maturity factor is important in understanding and accepting the educational material presented to students. This means that the nature of the attitude is not affected by gender differences in our study.

4- Conclusion

From the above, we find that success, progress, and excellence in any subject are goals that a person seeks to achieve, and these goals can only be achieved if there is a specific direction toward these subjects in general and the French language in particular. The student cannot excel, succeed, and achieve his goals except by having positive directions toward them. Students set their goals and work to achieve them based on their directions towards those goals as they prefer, as is the case in their learning and achievement in the French language.

The study concluded that fifth-grade primary school students' attitudes toward the French language are positive, and there are no differences in attitudes toward the French language between the sexes.

In light of the results of the study, we present the following suggestions:

- A study of the impact of modern curricula on students' attitudes towards learning the French language.
- Conducting a study that reveals the role of the teacher in developing attitudes towards the French language
- Working to create a suitable school climate and avoiding everything that causes anxiety and unwillingness to learn the subject.
- Conducting a comparison between the attitudes of students of different grades (third, fourth, and fifth) towards the French language to find out how Trends change as you progress through the school year.

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