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## TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT STATE UNIVERSITIES IN ZIMBABWE: CASE OF MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

*This article, using the case of Midlands State University (MSU), Zimbabwe aims to unravel the perceptions of Tourism and hospitality management students towards foreign languages. The study of the students' perceptions is an integral factor in the education of foreign languages as these students are the future workforce of the Zimbabwe's tourism sector and beyond. It also aims at determining the benefits of studying foreign languages to both the students and the industry at large and the challenges students encounter when studying foreign languages. A survey was conducted on fourth year students who had already done Portuguese in their second year and currently doing French as foreign languages. A sample of sixty-nine students was targeted in May, 2015. The study revealed that most of the students had positive perceptions of studying French and Portuguese as part of their modules contributing to their academic achievement. The benefits of studying foreign languages were put forward as: employment benefits, memory improvement, improvement of communication skills, part of personal achievement, understanding of the new culture, networking and encourages mobility. However, fear, confusion, lack of confidence, limited financial resources as well as few hours allocated to French and Portuguese were highlighted as major challenges students confronted with in learning foreign languages.*

**Keywords:** French, Portuguese, Foreign language, Midlands State University, Multilingual, Students, Tourism and hospitality industry, Zimbabwe.

### Contribution/ Originality

This study contributes in the troubling of existing literature on foreign languages, specifically French and Portuguese, learnt at Zimbabwean universities meant to enhance service delivery in the tourism and hospitality workplaces. It prioritises the perceptions of fourth year students who combine both workplace experience and theory learnt in the classroom.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The travel and tourism sector is one of the service industries that generated two hundred and seventy-seven million jobs for the global economy in 2014 (WTTC, 2015). Within the context of Zimbabwe, the tourism and hospitality sector contributes significantly to its economy. In 2013, it has contributed to forty three thousand five hundred jobs (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2014). The sector also contributed to 5.6% of the Gross Domestic Product, in 2013 (WTTC, 2014) thus placing it at the third position after mining and agriculture sectors. World-wide millions of people are employed in different tourism and hospitality sectors such as the accommodation sector, travel agents, tour operators, museums and monuments, national parks, airlines, other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services), restaurants, fast food outlets, national tourist boards and tourist centres among others. The employed human resource is expected to speak different languages because the service providers are doing business through tourists and other clients from different language backgrounds drawn from across the globe and communication of different languages is needed most. Communication seems to enhance global interactions, which makes it more necessary for global citizen to be competent in other languages.

Zimbabwe as a tourist destination is not an exception; it needs a multi-lingual workforce to cater for the needs of guests from all corners of the globe. The hospitality industry is characterised by a multicultural diversity and the ability to use foreign languages is essential in international hospitality services. Although Zimbabwe, from its background, is a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country that deploys English as the official language of business and speaking other indigenous languages such as Shona, Ndebele, Venda, Tonga and Xichangana, among others, it has to speak other foreign languages in order to fit in the multicultural world. Foreign languages aid in their business transaction at a global scale. Among these foreign languages, English language, although an indigenous language for some Zimbabweans, is mostly used as the official language in education, commerce as well as in other business dealings.

Within the context of tourism and hospitality, English is one of the languages that are mostly used for guest communication. As well, because of the political domination of the United States of America (USA) and England, English language's stature as the global language of communication is growing worldwide. However, the ability to use English language is increasingly proving to be no longer adequate in the ever globalising world. It has to be complimented by other foreign languages that are spoken by some key tourist sources such as French, Portuguese, Spanish and Mandarin among others. It is in this context that universities that are growing as the prime source of tourism sector human resources, training institutions in Zimbabwe are expanding their curricula to incorporate the teaching of foreign languages. Therefore, the research seeks to achieve the following:

1. To investigate tourism and hospitality students' perceptions towards learning foreign languages at Midlands State University.

2. To highlight the benefits of learning French and Portuguese for tourism and hospitality management students at the Midlands State University.
3. To assess the learning strategies that could be used by tourism and hospitality students when learning Portuguese and French in order to succeed.
4. To identify the challenges faced by tourism and hospitality students when studying foreign languages at Midlands State University.

## **2. BACKGROUND: THE GROWTH OF THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE**

The history of tourism and hospitality industry in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, started in the 1900s with the opening up of a Bulawayo Museum, Victoria Falls motel, Victoria Falls Reserve, Meikles hotel, construction of the railway bridge across the Zambezi river, as well as the establishment of national parks across the country. In the 1950s Kariba dam was opened and there was also the establishment of the national parks across the country. This was followed by the establishment of many hotels in the 1960s by the Southern Sun Rhodesia in cities like Harare, Mutare, Victoria Falls and Bulawayo. Nowadays these hotels (Holiday Inn Bulawayo, Holiday Inn Harare, Beitbridge Holiday Inn among others) are now owned by African Sun Group.

Moreover, as Zimbabwe gained independence, many hotels were constructed and hospitality providers in many facets were being witnessed in offering tourism services to tourists from all walks of life. The trained human resource was obtained from the Bulawayo Hotel School, which was opened in 1963 by then. The school was offering diplomas in housekeeping and catering. Their education was mainly tailor made to suit the chefs who were going to work in the kitchens. The school was, however, producing a limited number of diploma holders to cater for the whole economy. During that period, many of the hospitality employees in Zimbabwe did not have any formal qualifications in the form of certificates, diplomas or degrees. Most of the work force was taken from the streets or from Zimbabwe's rural areas. Their form of training was on the job training without an academic qualification and communication was a big challenge in their respective departments. This saw the bulk of the employees working in the back office (kitchens, laundry, housekeeping and maintenance, among others) where they were not in direct contact with guests. For those who were able to speak English, they worked as waiters, receptionists, concierges or barmen.

Due to high demand of human resources in various facets of the tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe and abroad, this saw various tertiary institutions like universities and poly technical colleges introducing diplomas or degrees in the 1990s and 2000s related to the tourism and hospitality sector. The University of Zimbabwe was the first tertiary institution in the country to offer a degree programme related to tourism management. Their training targeted managerial positions in the sector. The introduction of the degree programmes gave an opportunity for diploma holders to upgrade their education and for new entrants to gain degrees.

Other tourism related degrees offering universities are the Chinhoyi University of Technology and the Midlands State University. Currently, among the colleges offering diplomas, there is Harare Polytechnic, School of Hospitality and Tourism (Bulawayo), Culinary Arts Academy, DMC Hotel Training Centre.

Since its inception in 2000, the Midlands State University saw the need to address some of the human resources challenges faced by industry and strengthen the Zimbabwean hospitality business. The University has introduced a degree programme in Tourism and Hospitality management under the Faculty of Commerce. The degree is called Bachelor of Commerce in Tourism and Hospitality Management and is tenable within four years.

The content of the tourism and hospitality management honours degree at Midlands State University has included foreign languages in its curriculum after a consultation from the industries' needs and expectations. As Yuan *et al.* (2006) argue, the introduction of foreign languages has a great contribution to the success of the tourism and hospitality industry in general as well as to the success of the students in their future careers. The foreign languages opted for were corresponding to the predominant foreign clientele that visit Zimbabwe as a tourist destination. The foreign languages that are included in the MSU tourism and hospitality management degree programme are French and Portuguese at two different levels. French was chosen because it is a mark of the French dominance in the realm of haute cuisine (Preston, 2011). The catering sector is using French words or terms such as (*a la carte, aperitif, amuse-bouche, a point, au gratin, au poivre, au jus, au bleu, assation, a blanc, affriander, table d'hote, saucier, sous chef, chef de partie, commis, sommelier, degustation, garde-manger, maitre d', mis en place, prix fixe, bon appetite*, among others). Most of the international recipes use French culinary terms. While Portuguese was seconded because over two hundred million people around the world speak it as their native language. Today, Portuguese is said to be the seventh most spoken language in the world, behind Mandarin, Chinese, English, Hindi, Spanish and Russian (Ibid).

At MSU, French is being taught in academic year four while Portuguese is on offer at level two. The cited modules are supposed to be covered in two educational years (Year two and four). Each academic year is comprised of two semesters and students are expected to learn for thirty six hours in each semester thus totalling seventy-two hours per academic year. The learning of these foreign languages is described as a kind of re-wiring of the brain which can form new neurons and connections among the intellectual network (Chau, 2014).

From the interviews conducted with the learners at MSU, regarding the content of the modules of the foreign languages, the modules are expected to cover, among other, reading skills, pronunciation and accent, listening skills, tourism and hospitality terminology, presentation and negotiation skills as well as grammar (including the use of prepositions, regular verbs, pronouns, use of a third person, physical descriptions, singular and plural for nouns and adjectives). During their foreign languages learning period, students are taught the alphabet, introductions-how to say your name, surname, where one lives, what one does for a living or one studies, introducing

someone else, members of the family or naming objects, numbers, days of the week, months of the year, seasons or the weather of the day, how to ask for time and say the time. The students are also taught how to order food and beverages in restaurants, buying from supermarkets or to ask how much is something or how many, how to book a room in a hotel and check-in, ask for directions or say the directions, say the names of the animals in a national park, among others. These foreign language skills are developed in the lecture rooms through the students' participation in activities such as discussions, conversation and role plays. Every student is encouraged to take part in every activity because foreign language learning needs more practice. The spreading of the learning of the foreign languages across the whole semester gives the lecturers enough time to assist students who are having challenges with the oral or written aspects of the language and other problems relating to their failures. Therefore, lecturers play a critical role in making the learning meaningful to students (Ketsman, 2012). In the next section the paper turns to review related literature on foreign languages to explore more on the challenges and opportunities in the learning of foreign languages.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Foreign language, as defined by Dictionary.com (2015) refers "to any language used in a country other than one's own." The language has to be learned by people in order to speak that language and become global citizens. The foreign language could be learned at various places, maybe in the communities they live, at school or at college or at the workplace. The learning of foreign languages or multicultural education has to be done to develop the relevant interpersonal communicative skills (Kay and Russette, 2000). Without the ability to communicate with one another, true access to business transaction is barred. This is because in the world we are living, people or countries depend on each other for the supply of goods and services, to solve political disputes as well as to ensure international security (Vistawide, 2004). Therefore language skills are a prerequisite for the survival, growth or prosperity of the countries or businesses in the global community. Vistawide (2004) goes on to say that if people are competent in different languages they can bridge the gap between cultures, promote national security and world peace, contribute to international diplomacy and to successfully engage in international trade.

Within the context of this paper, foreign languages that dominate the Zimbabwe's tourism sector include French, Portuguese, Mandarin as well as English. However, English is the dominant language in business making, it is the sort of the official language in the country. These languages are mostly used in their operations as most of the Zimbabwean tourism industry's source markets are from the Western markets, which largely speak French, Asia (Mandarin) and from other Portuguese speaking countries (Brazil, Guine-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola and Cape Verde, Portugal). The front line employees are of much interest in this study as they are constantly in contact with guests. Some of the university students are going to be the future front line employees of the tourism and hospitality sectors in Zimbabwe and other countries

abroad. It has been established that where employees are fluent in two or more languages, it drives the whole tourism economy higher (Selke, 2013) and it helps to promote equal treatment of guests.

Whilst the above advantages of the mastering of foreign languages in the tourism sector exist, not many organisations have been able to take advantage because of the absence of trained personnel. In part this emanates from high failure rates or fear of failure among the students. A number of reasons have been proffered to account for the failure of students in foreign languages modules. Some of the cited factors which contribute to language learning failure by Schwarz (1997) include anxiety or fear about making mistakes in grammar and pronunciation, understanding the teacher as well as about remembering vocabulary. Additionally, there is also lack of effort, poor language learning habits, lack of motivation, and low ability in language learning among others also contribute to student failure. Merritt (2012) adds that lack of curiosity, not listening enough, rigid thinking as well as a single method is cited as common mistakes language learners make. These various reasons could affect their motivation as well as their passing grades at the end of each semester.

There are a number of proposals to minimise the failure rates among the students studying foreign languages. Among others, there is need to increase the motivation levels of the students. Ward (2011) postulates that the teacher/lecturer trainers are finding it difficult to teach students with mixed abilities. The author cited that the students seem to be interested in many things and less attention could be given to the learning of that language. Ward goes on to ask a question on what could be done by trainers to motivate these students. As a way of motivation from the trainers, Dittmer and Griffin (1997) came up with Ten Commandments after a survey with over two hundred Hungarian teachers teaching second languages. This set of ten motivational macro-strategies was called 'Ten commandments for motivating language learners'. These include:

- I. Setting a personal example with your own behaviour
- II. Developing a good relationship with the learners
- III. Increasing the learners' linguistic self-confidence
- IV. Making the language classes interesting
- V. Promoting learner autonomy
- VI. Presenting the tasks properly.
- VII. Creating a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom/lecture room.
- VIII. Familiarising learners with the target language culture.
- IX. Personalising the learning process.
- X. Increasing the learners' goal-orientedness. Dittmer and Griffin (1997).

The cited motivational strategies create a good working classroom environment. The teacher or lecturer is seen as the key motivational component in the learning of foreign languages (Azarnoosh and Tabatabaee, 2008). The classroom environment which includes reactions to the teacher is also cited as another factor that would influence the attitude of students towards their

learning. The classroom environment might affect language, self- confidence (Azarnoosh and Tabatabaee, 2008). A favourable atmosphere in the classroom promotes the involvement of students and boosts their self- confidence. Assuming that the teachers do what is expected in their teaching of foreign languages and students reciprocate to this. There are various benefits that accrue to students after the learning of these languages.

Georgia State University 2011 came up with eight strategies which could help students who are learning foreign languages to achieve better results. A list of strategies is listed below:

**Strategy 1:** During lecture time students can use audio tape to tape record lectures. By reviewing the audio tape, one could allow himself/herself an additional exposure to the sounds and structure of the foreign language. Furthermore, by reviewing the information presented in the lecture, one could check his or her lecture notes for accuracy and completeness.

**Strategy 2:** Students can practice and make rehearsals as part of the learning process. This would enhance memory and learning of vocabulary. Students can make use of flash cards as well as practice learning new words on a daily basis. As a way of increasing students' motivation to study, they can arrange to work at least once or twice a week with another classmate. If students have a study buddy, it makes studying more enjoyable and gives them an opportunity to practice communicating orally in the foreign language, and help them assess their learning progress. Students are also encouraged to develop and take practice tests similar in format to the lecture room tests. This would help them to learn and review class material as well as enhancing their test taking skills.

**Strategy 3:** Students can liaise with their lecturers about the availability of self-paced learning opportunities through the use of guided self-instruction manuals, audiotapes available in a language lab, individualized tutoring as well as computer instruction to augment their learning.

**Strategy 4:** Students can review the module outline before or on their first day of lectures. Skim over textbook chapters to get a better understanding of the module material and the pace at which it would be covered. Lay out an initial study plan with consideration for extra review and practice time.

**Strategy 5:** Communicate with the lecturer about the possibility of getting handouts that correspond with oral information presented in lecture room so that one can see the spoken words and phrases through their written representation.

**Strategy 6:** Students can also ask their lectures for assistance in pointing out the patterns and redundancies of the foreign language by highlighting the relationship between more frequent root words to less familiar derivatives. Gaining an understanding about the ways in which the structure of the foreign languages relates to the structure of one's native language can also be helpful.

**Strategy 7:** As a way of stimulating one's own interest and excitement about learning a foreign language, seek out opportunities to immerse yourself in the foreign language and culture for instance talk with native speakers of the foreign language, rent a movie in the foreign language or visit festivals or events that celebrate the countries in which the people speak the foreign languages.

**Strategy 8:** There is some evidence that, for students who are at risk for having difficulty learning a foreign language, first taking a course in linguistics in their native language could better prepare them to learn a foreign language. (<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wworld/6429.html>)

It can be discerned from the above that both the teacher and the student had to play their part for successful results. With regards to foreign language skills, Selke (2013) holds the opinion that communication skills have an integral component in the provision of high standard of service in the hospitality sector. The same author goes on to highlight the necessity of employees using foreign languages in three, four and five star hotels based in Malaysia in their communication. This was supported by Dittmer and Griffin (1997) who highlighted that the accommodation sector usually accommodates different types of tourists from different nations often employs employees who are fluent in two or more languages to help travellers who are not fluent in English. Cañas and Pérez (2014) assert that language strategy is the best answer for operators preparing to receive foreign tourists from abroad. Lack of these skills is likely to result in the loss of business opportunities.

Besides business benefits, there are also social benefits that could be gained from the learning of foreign languages. The learning of foreign languages encourages people to become more perceptive (Merritt, 2013). Merritt cites the study from Spain's University of Pompeu Fabra, which revealed that multilingual people are better at observing their surroundings than monolingual. People would be able to focus on relevant information and editing out irrelevant material. The author goes on to highlight that multilingual people would be in a better position to spot misleading information.

Merritt (2013) is of the opinion that there is also an improvement in memory through practising a foreign language. To the author, educators equated the brain to a muscle, which functions better with exercise. This is because when one is learning a language, it involves memorising rules and the vocabulary which strengthens that mental muscle. The speakers are said to be better at remembering or retaining shopping lists, directions and names among others. Merritt goes on to cite that one would become smarter. The speaking of foreign languages had the capacity of improving the functionality of one's brain as it challenges it to recognise, negotiate meaning as well as communicating in different language systems. The author adds that the acquired skill would boost one's ability to negotiate meaning in other problem-solving tasks as well.



King and Honeybone (2000) go on to support the learning of languages as it assists learners on how to listen to the media, public announcements, for specific information and detailed understanding. People can learn on how to speak in an interaction which could be a casual conversation, a transaction, a formal/informal discussion, an interview, a debate, how to give instructions, make presentations, giving a prepared speech as well as asking for directions. Furthermore, effective writing skills could also be developed to complement other learning skills (Ibid).

The United Kingdom's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2007 also postulates that there is also an opportunity for students to participate in the society whose language they study and to operate within different linguistic and cultural contexts if they are multilingual. This would place them in a privileged position; they can be ambassadors for their own society within the foreign society and they can also learn to view their own society from new perspectives. They can compare and contrast diverse visions of the world, thus promoting intercultural understanding and bringing distinctive benefits both to their own society, for example in employment terms, and to the society or societies of the target languages (Ibid).

However, this present study is premised on the belief that, these future manpower's perceptions have to be viewed in preparation of the future competitive hospitality market. It is better to catch the employees while they are still at University rather than when they are already in the industry. The perceptions of students provide an insight to the trainers of the tourism and hospitality management degree programs when designing their modules. It would also contribute to the effective promotion of French and Portuguese like any other foreign languages that could be learnt in Zimbabwe and in other countries. Moreover, from the perspective of the industry, it would be less expensive to retrain the employees that already possess one or two foreign languages.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

The study is mostly based on primary data collected from sixty-nine registered students doing foreign languages at Midlands State University- Zimbabwe. Students in academic year four were randomly interviewed. These were students who had done Portuguese and French as foreign languages. More than two-thirds of the group was randomly selected to get the students' opinions and feelings about learning Portuguese and French. Data was collected through face to face interviews with ten students and self-administered questionnaires were given to forty-two students. During interviews the researcher used an audio tape to tape record the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. The collected data was qualitatively analysed following themes that emerged to be important to students' perceptions at Midlands State University. However, this current research has a limitation that, the views of the lecturers teaching French and Portuguese were not considered. Future researchers could also do a research on lecturers as they play a critical role in the success of their students.

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the forty-two administered questionnaires, forty completed questionnaires were returned and ten interviews were successfully done with students doing tourism and hospitality management at Midlands State University. This contributes to a 96.2% response rate as portrayed in table 1 below:

**Table-1.** Response rate from questionnaires and interviews

Research Instruments	Targeted sample	Actual responses	Response rate	Method of selection
Questionnaires	42	40	95.2 %	Simple random sampling
Interviews	10	10	100%	Simple random sampling
Total	52	50	96.2%	

Source: Primary data

From Table 1, it can be discerned that there is a favourable response rate of 96.2%.

From the questionnaires collected and interviews conducted, the researcher used deductive approach to data analysis. The research questions were used to group the data in order to look for similarities and differences. From the questionnaires and interviews it was found out that 80% of the respondents had positive attitude towards French and Portuguese as they pointed out that they really liked French and Portuguese as part of the modules constituting their degree programme. They also pointed out that the learning of foreign languages has many professional benefits after the completion of their studies in the job market. The respondents were of the opinion that they could have a competitive advantage in the labour market unlike a monolingual employee. They also felt that they would be in a better position to fight competition among other students looking for employment in other countries rather than relying on the Zimbabwean economy. They believed that if they were fluent in these foreign languages, they would become integral in their near future jobs related to tourism and hospitality industry. Others would be employed in managerial positions, as they would be able to deal with a wide range of business clients as well as employees from different cultures. This replicates other findings (Merritt, 2013; Chau, 2014; Smith, n.d) which revealed that employment benefit is significant to those who speak multiple languages. This showed that students are confident and aware of the potential contribution of French and Portuguese in their near future. The acquired foreign language skill is now as an asset to the student.

To support the employment benefit students highlighted that if the prospective employment organisation wishes to expand its market in other countries across the globe, there was also an opportunity to be employed in that same organisation and would expect lucrative benefits in the foreign land. Alternatively, other companies would have local offices abroad and they need staff

who are speakers of the native languages, which may be foreign. Therefore the company would not waste much of its resources, employing translators and interpreters since they possess the right workforce. As future employees, they would be confident to conduct their business, communicating with the locals as well as other tourists thus contributing to a better customer service.

Furthermore, 72% of respondents were of the opinion that the learning of the other languages was important in the improvement of their mother languages. There was an improvement in their mother languages, as the learning of the foreign languages gave them room to focus on the grammatical rules of sentence construction. The acquired experience gave students a new insight into their own language and offered opportunities for improvement. Besides an improvement in their mother's language, they pointed out that it was also a sign of showing intelligence in them and improved their guesswork. This could enhance their long life skill in communication. This marries with a study done by [Gallagher-Brett \(2004\)](#) which revealed that language graduates had achieved personal and social development as students had developed confidence in their ability to stand up in front of others.

84% of the respondents were happy to learn foreign languages, as they would be able to access other cultures across the globe and improves their understanding on the differences between countries. There was a high probability of learning new cultures as different cultures have their own music, history, culture, literature among others which was interesting to know. There was an opportunity to read other books, listen to the television as well as looking for information through the internet in foreign languages. Thus, giving them a greater understanding of the world in which they lived and how it worked. 20 % of the respondents went on to add that if they were able to communicate with different people using the people's language, it would demonstrate that they had some knowledge regarding the culture and rituals of those people. The respondents would be able to bridge the cultural gap among different countries they are doing business with. This aids in global understanding. This finding is supported by [Vistawide \(2004\)](#) who posits that if people are not able to communicate and understand a culture on its own terms, true access to that culture is barred. This also gives credence to Gandhi's contention that rightly pointed out that, no culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive (Gandhi, cited by [Vistawide \(2004\)](#)).

Furthermore, the learning of foreign languages to students was seen as a personal achievement for them. They believed that after the four year degree programme they would be confident in speaking French or Portuguese. 66% of the students assumed that they would be delighted and satisfied once their hard work and effort had paid off. They would experience substantial personal benefits akin to personal actualisation.

68 % of the respondents pointed out that the learning of the foreign languages enabled them to communicate and interact with people outside Zimbabwe. There is also an opportunity to make friends in French or Portuguese speaking countries. This would also ease their travelling to

foreign countries and go for shopping in these countries. The cited reasons were found to be motivating factors to students learning French and Portuguese.

72% of the respondents went on to cite that the learning of French or Portuguese helps to build teamwork as the students would work in groups during and after lecture hours. Some of the students (62%) felt that there was more prestige in speaking these foreign languages rather than speaking Zimbabwean languages. 2% of the respondents felt out that it was not good to expect other people outside Zimbabwe to speak their own language without them speaking their language. They felt that there was a need for a trade-off among people.

However, 20% of the respondents expressed a negative attitude about learning French or Portuguese at Midlands State University. The respondents highlighted that they would rather spend much of their time on other modules other than French or Portuguese. These foreign languages were seen as a burden to the students as they pointed out that they did not like the process of learning French and Portuguese. 12 % of the respondents were only doing it for the purpose of completing their degree and they felt that they might need it in their future. If the learning of French and Portuguese was not compulsory, 16% of the respondents said they were going to choose other elective modules.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to highlight the challenges they were facing during the learning of foreign languages at their institution. 100% of the respondents complained of less time allocated to the learning of the foreign languages per week. The respondents pointed out that thirty six hours per semester were not enough for language proficiency. As such, they felt that they needed more time or to do the module on a daily basis so that they would not forget. 32% of the students cited common mistakes they found to affect their success, not listening enough or thoroughly, easily forgetting what was taught. 54 % of the respondents highlighted the lack of finance to purchase learning aids such as audio tapes or to visit some regions which are hosting exhibitions or festivals speaking French or Portuguese. While 20% of the respondents said they were afraid that other students would laugh at them when they speak French or Portuguese. 10 % of the respondents felt that other students spoke French or Portuguese better than they did. 14 % of the respondents were not confident when they were speaking French or Portuguese in their lectures. 4% of the respondents said they got nervous and confused when they were speaking French or Portuguese in their lectures.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

From the foregoing discussion, it can be discerned that the majority of students at Midlands State University had a positive attitude towards French and Portuguese offered at their institution. They acknowledged the importance of these foreign languages in a globalised economy as they could contribute to their future job prospects, development of communication skills, networking and an understanding of different cultures as well as personal achievement. They also believed that the learning of foreign languages had a positive effect on their mental

development. Smith (n.d) said the learning of these foreign languages was also found to be health to the brain as it delayed the onset of brain related diseases such as dementia and Alzheimer as compared to those speaking their local language.

The above findings may have a positive impact on the marketing of these foreign languages. The learning of foreign language by students seems to offer socio-cultural benefits as well as economic benefits to them. French and Portuguese are assets to those who are fluent in these languages and the effects of globalisation and even the war on terrorism would increase the demand for the skilled linguists in an increasing range of languages (Connell, 2002). Their French or Portuguese speaking skills or qualifications would become a unique selling point in many hospitality operations because of their multicultural component.

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