



DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN FRENCH LANGUAGE

By

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Abstract

This study investigates the availability and usage of digital technologies for literacy development in French Language. The aim of the study was to find the level of availability and usage of digital technologies for enhancing French literacy development, whether the contemporary teachers agree or disagree with the replacement of traditional method of teaching with the modern one. It is also to find the relationship that exists between the use of technological facilities and literacy development in French Language. The study adopts a descriptive research design of the survey type. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The sample for the study consists of 40 respondents. The 40 respondents (teachers) were selected from 20 public and private secondary schools in Ekiti State through simple random sampling techniques. A self-structured questionnaire was used to elicit information for the study. The instrument was in two sections, section one consists of bio-data of the respondents, while section two consists of items on digital technologies and literacy development in French language, the questionnaire was sent to the teachers online. Responses were collected and analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis. The findings reveals that learners who learn with technological facilities learn better and faster than those who learn without the facilities. It finds that technological facilities are not sufficiently available in many schools and that many teachers are not using digital technologies for teaching. Therefore, the following recommendations were made: Technological facilities should be made available for students in schools. Training sessions should be organised for teachers who have not been trained in the usage of digital technologies and they should be mandated to use the facilities for teaching.

Key words: Digital technologies, Literacy, Development, French Language, Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Digital Technologies are electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data. Examples are: social media, online games multimedia and mobile phones. While literacy is the art of reading, writing and computing. Technology and Literacy development seems to be inseparable since they seem to be the wheel of progress and survival in this twenty first century.

Any learning that uses technology is called Digital learning and no one can claim to be truly literate in our world today without a knowledge of technology. Digital Technology has turned into one essential aspect of the society that helps students to understand the bigger picture of the world, not just staying confined to what schools and teachers teach in the classrooms. Today's innovations in technologies sometimes turn out to be tomorrow's memories and the use changes at a pace that is sometimes difficult to follow.

Digital technologies has come to stay, therefore, teachers and educational institutions have to key into the trend by accumulating growing experience and expertise in the use for language teaching. Alejandro (2017) points that teachers have to find and develop creative ways of using technology to enhance both their own teaching as well as the learning opportunities, and use it as a resource to support their teaching and evaluation of all aspects in language.

The use of Digital technologies for French Language teaching becomes more important in our present times to be able to keep up with the technological knowledge of students who are quite competent, and dependent on computers and other technological facilities. According to Graddol (2000), changes in the way learners learn also requires changes in the way teachers teach, the way the school operates and where the teaching takes place. However, for technology to be used effectively, investment is needed not only on technology but also on the training and support for teachers in order to be able to make the best use of the technology for French language teaching. Presently, new roles for teachers and learners are emerging and the nature of French language classroom learning is changing every day. Online technology-supports for French Language learning that provides limitless opportunities for new modes of learning, creates multiple modalities and takes learners out of the classroom into a world without walls (Healey 2011).

The use of Digital technologies for teaching, learning, practicing and assessing French language has many advantages, particularly where learners have very few opportunities to practice and assess the language skills, it plays an essential role for engaging students in learning. Kvale (2006). This study seeks to investigate the place of digital technologies and literacy development in French Language, establishing the level of availability and usage for enhancing French literacy development. It also finds the relationship that exist between the use of the facilities and literacy development in French Language.

Statement of the Problem

Digital technology is considered to be one of the most important drivers of linguistic change in modern period. Over the last decade with its' remarkable entry as an educational device, the traditional method of Language teaching has drastically changed. The use of French Language is on the increase with the alarming rate of in flows of French speakers into Nigeria from neighbouring francophone countries. These coupled with the security challenges and the supposed present status of the language as the second official language in Nigeria are the reasons for this study. The study therefore investigates the availability of digital technologies for enhancing French literacy development and finds the relationship that exist between its use and availability for literacy development in the Language.

Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- 1: There is no significant relationship between availability of digital technologies and French literacy development.
- 2: There is no significant relationship between utilisation of digital technologies and French literacy development.

The Language, French

French language is a language of the Indo-European family. It descended from the Vulgar Latin of the Roman Empire, as did all the roman languages. French language is the most acceptable and official language of the francophone nations. It is an official language in 29 countries across multiple continents, most of which are members of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). A community of 84 countries also share the official use or its teaching, McNurty & Lazarevic, (2012). Across the world today, French language is the second

most spoken language by total number of speakers and the second or third most studied language worldwide. In Nigeria, it is taught in various levels of education.

Concept of Technology

In the world today, technology influences human life through its products and processes. Technology influences the quality of life and the ways people act and interact. Technological changes are often accompanied by social, political and economic changes which can be beneficial or detrimental (Ahmed, 2016). Technology in several ways has influenced various aspects of human life such as providing financial services, improving banking activities on the internet by way of making online savings, deposits, withdrawal, among others (Ajeesh, 2019).

The landscape of language teaching has been transformed in recent years. While only a few years ago the primary context and resources used in language teaching were the classroom, textbooks and the tape-recorder or video player, today's learners inhabit a different world. Interactive whiteboards, mobile devices, computers and the internet are increasingly viewed as integral and necessary component of the teaching and learning process and teachers are challenged to discover effective ways of integrating technology into their lessons, Cohen & Manion (2004). And for many learners the classroom might constitute only a small segment of their learning environment since they conduct much of their learning outside of the classroom – at home, in a media lab, on the train or bus. The classroom has been “flipped” in many cases and may serve not as the primary learning site but just one of many, and often as a place to prepare for and review out of class learning. This is why this study will consider the role of digital technologies in today's French language classrooms, Brown, (2012).

Digital Technology as a teaching and learning resources

Digital technology is changing the ways language teachers teach and the way learners learn. Consequently, the change is playing an increasingly central role in curriculum implementation (Levy, 2012). Computers and interactive whiteboards are increasingly common in schools world-wide and the speed with which schools can connect to each other and the world is constantly increasing. For teachers and students, technology is now mobile, and laptop computers, tablet devices and smart phones are a normal part of the teaching and learning context in

many schools. More and more teachers and school administrators accept the role that digital resources and the internet can play in raising levels of motivation and engagement in learners, supporting learners with different learning styles and helping in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Digital French language learning is a broad category that includes:

- i. Online learning, whether self-paced or collaborative;
- ii. Digital learning resources (e.g., e-textbooks, e-grade books, interactive media);
- iii. Mobile learning apps, including educational games and other mobile services.

The ways in which language schools can apply any of these technologies are equally broad. For example, a school may choose to offer online learning, whether as a stand-alone programme for remote students, as a complement to classroom instruction for students on site, or a tool to use before or after studying abroad, Marshall (1996).

Additionally, a school may choose to provide mobile devices or mobile apps to allow students greater opportunity for independent study outside of class time. Teachers may bring technology into the classroom in the form of new teaching tools, such as interactive whiteboards or computer-based assessments, and more, Milana & Narmin, (2009).

The use of digital technologies in schools is no longer an option but is a core requirement of today's schools. Teachers are expected to be technologically literate just as quality schools are expected to make effective use of the resources. Levy (2012) identifies five levels at which digital technologies can support French language teaching. The physical level, with tools such as mobile phones, digital cameras, laptops and tablets, the management level, which includes learning management systems (LMSs) that enable the administration, delivery, tracking, reporting etc. of French language course. Application level, including word processing software, email and chat clients, social-networking sites and blogs. The resource level, which includes access to authentic materials, such as online newspapers, magazines, language tutors and dedicated websites for learners. The component technology level, such as spelling checkers, grammar checkers, electronic dictionaries

and other support tools. Taillefer & Luna (2014) point that digital technology can provide support in curriculum for learners, teachers and institution.

Support for Learners

The potential benefits to learners include: Provides a wider exposure to French- e.g. through the internet increases opportunities for authentic interaction with other learners worldwide enables flexible learning – students choose when and where to learn. Supports different ways of learning such as visual or auditory learning supports different skills, allowing students to focus on a particular skill such as reading or listening. Suitable for learners of different proficiency levels encourages more active learning since students are more in control of the process and the outcomes, Shin & Son (2007).

Encourages learners' autonomy giving learners' choice over what they learn and how they learn, it provides a less stress environment than classroom learning and a social context for learning, allowing learners to interact socially with other learners. Increases motivation and allows access to engaging materials such as digital games and YouTube content multimedia presentations screen. It does not matter if it is a television, iPad, video console or computer screen, Reeves & Hedberg, (2003).

Support for Teachers

Technology- supported teaching potentially enhances teaching in several ways: Enables more learner-centered teaching: Supports teaching with mixed-level classes: Expands the classroom to the real world: Enriches the curriculum: provides new roles for teachers from transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator who supports and guides student learning. Provides opportunities for teachers to take greater individual responsibility for their courses:

Creates a better learning environment where students are engaged in interactions and communication among themselves. Provides greater opportunities for monitoring learning through technology. But, teachers' individual interest in the use of the facilities, his skills at incorporating them for classroom tasks, availability of the amenities and technical support in schools are the key factors influencing the use for French language classroom (Shin & Son, 2007).

Usage of Digital Technologies for French Language Teaching

Digital technologies available for classroom use are extensive and changing. They include computers, interactive whiteboards, mobile devices like smart phones and tablets, digital cameras, social media platforms and networks, software applications, and the internet, Motteram, (2013). There are many ways in which technology can be integrated into teaching, learning and assessment, and new possibilities become available almost weekly. For example: Project-based learning using technology, use of mobile devices in the classroom, electronic portfolio assessment, PowerPoint presentations, learning with Mobile and Hand held devices such as cell phones, mp3 players and tablets, creative uses of interactive whiteboards, video-based final assessment, web-based projects and collaborative online research, student-created media such as like podcasts, videos, and slideshows, collaborative online tools such as Wikis or Google Docs and use of social media

Teachers who use digital technologies usually finds that they need to change the way they teach, because it changes the role of the teacher who takes on different responsibilities such as adviser, facilitator and coach. As facilitator the teacher sets project goals, provides guidelines and resources, and moves around the class providing suggestions and support for student activity, Mollaei & Riasetti (2013).

Teachers may need two kinds of support: technical knowledge about how to use the resources as well as advice on how to integrate technology into their curriculum (Reinders, 2009). Without such support teachers may be unable to use the resources technology can offer. Such support can include workshops, a technology co-coordinator, as well as support from other more experienced colleagues. Sharing information about successful uses of technology can be achieved through newsletters, bulletin boards and informal meetings.

Advantages of using digital technologies for French language classroom were listed as providing authentic materials for learners, making students meet native friends online, and assisting teacher-student communication (Healy, 2011). The use of PowerPoint presentations can suggest chances for integrating “colorful texts, photographs, illustrations, drawings, tables, graphs, movies, and transition from one to another through a slide Show” (Richard, 2014). Teachers’ individual interest in the use of technological facilities, teachers’ skills at

incorporating them for classroom tasks, availability of the amenities and technical support in schools are the key factors influencing the use for French language classroom (Shin & Son, 2007).

Literacy Development in French Language

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. In October 2018, the Unesco defined

Literacy development as the process of learning words, sounds, and language. Children develop literacy skills in order to learn to read and write confidently and eventually improve their communication skills overall. Literacy development is the process of learning words, sounds, and language. Children develop literacy skills in order to learn to read and write confidently and eventually improve their communication skills overall. Literacy development refers to the on-going development of skills needed to successfully communicate through written communication. Literacy is essential to developing a strong sense of well-being and citizenship. Children who have developed strong reading skills perform better in school and have a healthier self-image. They become lifelong learners and sought-after employees. ... There are many ways to include reading in all stages of childhood. Literacy skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also include such things as awareness of the sounds of language, awareness of print, and the relationship between letters and sounds. Other literacy skills include vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension. The five stages of literacy development include emergent literacy, alphabetic fluency, words and patterns, intermediate reading, and advanced reading. Each stage of literacy development helps the child move forward and become a stronger student.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. The sample for the study consists of 40 respondents. The 40 respondents (teachers) were selected from 20 public and private secondary schools in Ekiti State through simple random sampling techniques.

A self-structured questionnaire was used to elicited information for the study. The instrument was in two sections, section one consisted of bio-data of the respondents, while section two consisted of items on digital technologies and literacy development in French language. Administration of the instrument was done by sending the questionnaire to the teachers online. Responses were collected and analysed using Pearson Product Moment

Correlation statistics to determine the relationship between the use of digital technologies and literacy development in French Language.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between availability of technological facilities and French literacy development.

Table 1: Table showing relationship between availability of technological facilities and French literacy development.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-cal	r-tab
Availability of Technological facilities	40	.77.73	2.12	0.428	0.349
French literacy development	40	1.05	0.64		

P<0.05

Results in table 1 showed that (r) calculated value (0.428) is greater than table value (0.349) at 0.05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between availability of technological facilities and French literacy development.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between utilization of technological facilities and French literacy development.

Table 2: Table showing relationship between utilization of technological facilities and French literacy development

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-cal	r-tab
Utilization of Technological facilities	40	23.21	2.12	0.613	0.349
French literacy development	40	1.05	0.64		

P<0.05

Results in table 2 showed that r-calculated value (0.613) is greater than table value (0.349) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between utilisation of technological facilities and French literacy development.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study revealed that:

1. There is significant relationship between utilisation of digital technologies and French literacy development. This implies that utilization of digital technologies will have direct positive impact on French literacy development.
2. Teachers had limited training on the use of digital technologies, they took it as an easy-to-overcome challenge.
3. There were limited access to digital facilities and the internet as indicated by researchers. Teachers also stated that government restrictions on Internet resources has restricted the uses, even when available.
4. The use of computers in learning French language can improve students vocabulary, knowledge and listening skills, it can augment their intelligence but technological facilities does not help them develop their writing skills. Computer use is not as valuable for writing skill as oral practice, it needs to be accompanied by other methods for French language learning.

It was found out that female teachers have more negative attitudes towards the use of digital technologies. More Information and Communication Technology related courses should be inserted into the existing language teacher education programme.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that technologies and literacy development in French Language are closely related. It could also be concluded that the utilisation of technologies serves as a best determinant of learners' literacy development in French Language. That is to say that the teaching of any language among second language learners needs the utilisation of technological facilities. However, many teachers all over the world have certain gaps in benefiting from them as indicated by Healey (2011) when he says that the pace and extent of technology for teaching have made it difficult for many teachers and administrators to know how best to employ them in language teaching. This study concluded that learners who are able to learn with digital technologies learn better and faster than those who learn without them.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Organizing training sessions for teachers who have not been trained in the use of digital technologies.
- Future researchers can choose a larger sample of teachers with mixed age and sex to scrutinize the real factors underlying their preference of traditional methods.
- Students can also be involved in further study of comparisons between the perceptions of students and teachers on the application of technologies in second language acquisition.
- Joint effort should be made between the government and the stakeholders in the provision of digital technological facilities for schools.
- Government should develop teachers of various categories making them to attend seminars, workshop and conferences in order to boost their instructional delivery competence and enhance academic performance of their students as well as their language proficiency.
- Organizing panel meetings with teachers of older generation, and sharing ideas about the usage and benefits of digital technologies for the teaching and learning of French Language.

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