

NEW TRENDS IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FRENCH IN NIGERIA: MULTIMEDIA APPROACH

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Abstract.

The significance of French language in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. As the second international language in Nigeria, every Nigerian is expected to learn French language education, especially in the secondary schools and tertiary institutions. There are new trends in the study of this language. The use of the computers and the internet as a means of learning and practicing the French language has increased significantly in recent years. Gone were the days when traditional and direct methods of learning and teaching of French language were used. The world evolves and so there are recent discoveries on the learning and teaching of French language. This paper examines the role and importance of the multimedia in enhancing the study of French and it discusses new trends in the teaching of the language. The tools for the effective teaching and learning of French language are listed for teachers and students to know and use. The paper finally identifies challenges and advantages of the new trends in the teaching and learning of French language. We used the method of textual analysis to carry out this research.

Key words: French language, new trends, challenges, learning, teaching,

Introduction.

Nigeria, an English speaking country is linguistically land locked by francophone communities. This situation will remain so for many years to come. It is in fact difficult to imagine what can change it. Even though Anglophone trapped in a web of francophone countries, Nigeria must interact with its neighbours at bilateral as well as multilaterals levels. It is the need for this interaction that determines the importance of French language in Nigeria. Nigeria's geographical position in the midst of French ex-colonies far away from any

English speaking country has given rise to certain realities which make the acquisition of French as a language of international communication a most desirable if not essential instrument. To go to Ghana the nearest Anglophone country to Nigeria, one needs to pass through two francophone countries – Benin Republic and Togo. Indeed, in the two sub regions of West and central Africa, the immediate as well as the far neighbours of Nigeria are francophone. To the West we have Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali and Côte d’Ivoire while in the East we have Central Africa Republic, Gabon, Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). (Iwala, 2012). Thus, there is great need to study French language in schools as proposed by Nigerian Government. French language is the second official language of Nigeria in view of this, National Policy on Education states that:

Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of Promoting social interaction and national cohesion and preserving Culture... for smooth interaction with our neighbors, it is desirable For every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the official language in Nigeria, and it shall be compulsory in junior secondary school, but non-vocational elective at the senior secondary school (FRN 2004)

This means that French language should become a compulsory subject from the primary to the Junior Secondary levels of the Nigerian Education system. This is in accordance with Obanya (2004) assertion that it is necessary to start using the language at an early stage if the language as an efficient tool of learning at higher levels of education. French language is listed among the non-vocational elective subjects for senior secondary schools in the 4th edition of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2002). Furthermore, the policy states that ‘for a good relationship with our neighbors, it is desirable of all Nigerians to speak French language. French language will therefore be a second official language in Nigeria and it will be made compulsory in junior secondary schools’. This study is important for educational sector in Nigeria. In this paper, we are discussing the teaching of French language with the use of multimedia facilities. The thrust of this paper is to discuss the role and importance of the multimedia as it facilitates the teaching and learning of French in Nigeria. Traditional and modern approaches will be discussed as well as the new trends in the teaching of this language.

We used linguistic theory which states that language is an instrument of communication. Teaching is not possible without language, being it verbal or sign language (Roman Jakobson, 1971).

Traditional approach

The traditional approach was used in the teaching of Latin and it was imposed in schools. The methodology used was grammar-translation approach. In the 18th century there was the need to promote mother tongue which is French language, as a result students were busy translating literary texts from French into Latin observing all grammatical rules. According to Iwala, 'la méthodologie traditionnelle prend goût à traduire essentiellement les textes littéraires, c'est-à-dire, faire traduire et mémoriser des textes littéraires. Le professeur de cette époque-là, donne une liste de mots ou de vocabulaires et puis, de demander aux apprenants de les traduire' (2002, 30). However, there was a change in the 19th century concerning the teaching of Latin. It was considered as a waste of time and there was need to communicate, so other approaches were developed. Example of such approaches are: Direct approach, active approach, communicative approach, etc. All these approaches are not sufficient in the teaching and learning of French language so multimedia approach is needed for effective learning and teaching of French.

Multimedia approach in the teaching and learning of French language.

In the past, efforts towards effective French language studies could not yield better result due mainly to the traditional approach. The few available textbooks were the only instructional materials the teachers relied on, but the introduction of the multimedia approach to language teaching has now come to the rescue of French language teaching.

The use of multimedia facilitates the study of French language. Multimedia facilities are those instructional technologies that teachers and students can use to facilitate the effective and successful learning of a particular subject or lesson. Romiszowski (1996) listed multimedia facilities to include : posters, bulletins, journals, radio, television, audiocassettes, tapes, internet, information and communication media, film scripts and slides, overhead and opaque projectors and computers. The 1999 edition of the *Hutchinson Encyclopedia* explains multimedia to include a computerized method of presenting information by combining audio and video components, using text, sound and graphics. It concludes that multimedia applications emphasize interconnectivity between the computer and the user. Ike (1995) sees multimedia approach as the employment of many media to achieve a specified objective. Ayogu (2002) stated that when multimedia is used effectively, the facilities have the potential to influence the thinking, attitude, and knowledge of adult education students.

Esim (2003) remarked that a variety of these multimedia facilities that cannot be afforded by some schools are available to the learners in their homes or places of work where they could be used to maximize learning.

Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM).

Apart from the use of multimedia in French study, there is another method: Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM) which was developed by a French teacher (Wendy Maxwell) in 1999. The AIM uses gestures, music, dance and theatre to help students learn better.

The basic premise of AIM is that students learn and remember better when they do something that goes along with the words they are saying. For example, while the students say ‘regarder’ (to look), they hold their hands in front of their eyes. This ‘gesture approach’ includes defined gestures for hundreds of essential French words, known as ‘pared down language’. The gestures are then combined with theatre, storytelling, dance and music to help students remember and use the language. According to Lawless (2011), teachers have found great success with this integrative approach to language learning and added that, some students achieve results comparable to those in full immersion programs, even when the AIM–educated students only study the language for a few hours a week. AIM is particularly well suited for children, but it could be used for adults.

New trend in the learning of French.

Webster – The Free Dictionary defines trend as a general direction in which something is developing or changing while the free dictionary online defines trend as the general direction in which something tends to move as well as a general tendency or inclination. On the other hand, trend is defined by business dictionary as a pattern of gradual change. It should be noted that it is difficult to face out traditional methods of language learning in Nigerian schools. The way of language learning by memorizing form of verbs, nouns, adjectives, pronouns and grammatical rules is still being used today in some schools and colleges. This was the way most people learned by memorizing the sounds and forms of the language words. Such people can only read and speak the language but cannot use it to carry out a meaningful conversation. The reason for that is because they learned the language by memorizing the forms of the language words; this will not make learners speak the language fluently.

However, there are signs that this is not going to last for long because of the recent new trends in language learning. The new trend of learning French language today is that we can now learn French through cell phones, mp3 players and other gadgets. We can have live online tutors with the use of skype. There are now many courses on French learning in the Internet, some of them are free, at least for the fundamentals. If

one is really interested and has the time and the Internet connection, French learning is no longer a big problem, unlike before where we have to pay tuition and miscellaneous fees to learn in school.

Secondly, there are now video and audio lessons on French learning that can be accessed through the Internet, in those days, we only had the textbooks and the dictionaries. We were never sure if our teacher pronounced the foreign words correctly since he or she was also not a native of that foreign language.

Thirdly, according to Cronin, (2003), we have now translations with the click of our computer mouse. There is an unedited machine translation which is available to a large public through tools on the Internet. These produce a rough translation that, under favourable circumstances, 'gives the gist' of the source text. There are also companies like Ectaco which produce pocket translation devices that utilize machine translation (MT).

There are talking dictionaries where one types a word in English, chooses the language he/she wants a translation of this word in, and hits the return key and will hear the word in the other language. Presently, there is this kind of dictionary for French, German, English, Italian, Latin, and Spanish.

We now have the Virtual Personal Interpreters (VPI). These are software translators that can translate phrases and sentences. One can also hear how the words, phrases or sentences are pronounced by native speakers. At present there are VPI for French users in Spanish, German, Italian, and English. You can take a look at these talking dictionaries and VPI at <http://www.logoi.com/languages.html>.

Tools for learning French language.

The tools for learning French language include: mobile phones, portable media players, mp3 players and other hand-held gadgets. These tools are also becoming increasingly popular. Thus, language tutors can offer lessons online using programs. If your language course includes CDs for example, you can convert the recordings into mp3 and transfer them to your phone or mp3 player. The importance of these tools in the learning of French cannot be overemphasized as it enables learners to study without leaving the comfort of their own homes at times that suit them, and often costs less than hiring a teacher. Such arrangements can be made directly or via websites that bring tutors and learners together. Such sites enable learners to recommend tutors who help learners decide which tutors to choose. The world evolves, it is not static it is dynamic there are new innovations every day, the technology is at our door steps.

Some institutions that offer foreign languages in schools offer online lessons and other materials which their students can access before, during and/or after their courses. These offer students the opportunity to learn

the language outside the classroom and enable language schools to keep in touch with their students. According to Lawless (2011), many people are learning languages using online lessons, she said that most of the online lessons are available for free, but there are charges for some of them. She added that the quality of online lessons varies greatly. In view of this new trend, we advise French learners to practice their language online with other learners and/or with native speakers. There is a significant increase in the number of online resources that can help French teachers and students in their studies, the resources include: radio and TV stations, newspapers and magazines and other sites which contain material in many different languages. This is very useful as the more exposure you get to languages the better.

Challenges and advantages of multimedia facilities.

Institutions that use multimedia are faced with the following challenges: the gadgets are too expensive for some institutions to purchase. There is the problem of power consumption and power instability. There is also an implementation complexity; some teachers find it difficult to manipulate some gadgets. However, despite these challenges, the advantages of these gadgets are numerous: it makes the learner very active in the classroom activities. It eliminates all forms of distractions such as noise, competing responses etc. multimedia approach in instruction makes for effective learning. This approach gets all the senses devoted to the necessary learning activities. The senses of touching, hearing are all active when the multimedia approach is used in instruction. Ike (1995) admits that multimedia learning involves more than a sense organ or of the body. When a recorded cassette is played, a short film is presented towards the achievement of a stated instructional objective; no student is likely to be at a loss. This is because those who have problems with hearing can see or even touch as the case may be. Thus, all will benefit from the instruction. Adding to the importance of this approach, Iwala (2002), opines that 'La méthode audio - visuelle aid les apprenants à voir et à toucher les objets qu'ils apprennent en classe' (101). The fast learners and the slow learners in the group will equally benefit since the approach regulates the speed of the teacher.

Conclusion.

New trends are new changes and innovation from old to new method of teaching that will make teaching very effective and interesting to the learners. Effective use of multimedia will help learners learn with ease. If developed countries invest so much in the teaching of foreign languages in their schools for greater participation in world affairs as often explained, Nigeria will have no reason at all to encourage only the study of English as a foreign language of cultural exchange. It is risky and will be very regrettable if Nigeria does not embrace the new trends in the teaching and learning of French in Nigerian schools.

Recommendations.

In order for the teaching and learning of French to be effective, the following recommendations are made:

1. Multimedia facilities should be used in the teaching and learning of French
2. Accelerative integrated method (AIM) should be used both for children and adults and both in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.
3. French teachers and learners of French should embrace the new trends in the studies of French.
4. There is need for government to match words with action by ensuring implementation of policies geared towards promoting the new trends in French language teaching and learning.

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