Literature review on teaching and learning of French Language (L_2) with Yoruba mother tongue (L_1) in tertiary institutions in the era of technology

By

Kemi Patricia, Kehinde
Department of Languages and Linguistics, School of Multidisciplinary Studies, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria. kehinde.patricia@bouesti.edu.ng. kehinde.patricia@yahoo.com, +234 806 075 5816. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2024-9105

Oghenefejiro Emonena, Obi
Department of Languages and Linguistics, School of Multidisciplinary Studies, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria. obi.oghenefejiro@bouesti,edu.ng. +234 706 565 5114. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5867-2879

A. C. Kanimodo
Department of French, School of Languages, Sikiru Adetona Cege f Educatin , Science and Techngy, Omu-Ajose, Ogun State. +234 803 721 1737

C.O. Onanuga
Department of French, School of Languages, Sikiru Adetona Cege f Educatin , Science and Techngy, Omu-Ajose, Ogun State, +234 803 444 7348
Corresponding Author's Email: **kehinde.patricia@bouesti.edu.ng. kehinde.patricia@yahoo.com**

Abstract

French Language became the country's second official language in 1996, it strengthened its teaching in Nigerian schools, including tertiary institutions. However, in the south west of Nigeria where this research is going to be carried out, Yoruba Language is the mother tongue while the classroom language of instruction is English; these two variables stand as challenges to Yoruba learners of French Language, especially in the rural areas. It frustrates these learners and reduces enrolment to the department. The study argues that teaching and learning French Language with the aid of technology would solve the difficulties faced by

Yoruba learners in French Language classroom and to ascertain the contribution (positive or negative) of Yoruba Language mother tongue in the learning of French Language. Therefore, the research centres on building a game-like mobile app, with the National University Commission (NUT curriculum to teach French Language (L_2) with Yoruba Language (L_1) for $A1^+$. Gleaning theoretically from psycholinguistics theory, the research findings would be analyzed using mixed method.

Key words: Learning, Yoruba Language (L1), mother tongue, second language, methodology, psycholinguistics.

I Introduction

It is difficult nowadays to find something that you cannot do with a smartphone. You can shop, attend classes, host seminars and book a flight or a hotel room on the other side of the globe with easy-to-use app and websites. There are mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) app which allow you start learning a new language from the scratch at the click of a button. At the moment, a remarkable number of people are turning to their mobile devices to learn a language. The global market for digital language learning product has reached 1.8billion in 2013 according to report. Language learning apps like Babel and Duolingo are immensely popular. There are presently over 100 million downloads of Duolingo from the Google Play Store, and it is completely free to use. The average rating given by users is 4.7 (out of 5). Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian, Portuguese, Turkish, Dutch, Irish, Danish, Swedish, Ukrainian, Esperanto, Polish, Greek, Hungarian, Norwegian, Hebrew, Welsh, Swahili, Romanian, and English are among the more than 35 languages offered by the program (Legac, Mikulan & Oreski, 2023).

II Technology in French Language Classroom

Language learning is a complex and challenging endeavor, and for students to achieve the desired proficiency in a foreign language, there is need to invest time, effort and huge resources in order to cater for different learning styles (Almarooqui & Troudi, 2014). In order to be cost effective, language-teaching institutions strive to provide intensive foreign language instructions using technology, in order to reduce the period needed to learn the target language

through linguistic immersion programme. Technology usage in learning environments has presented itself as a necessity for continued lifelong learning with research suggesting that institutions that lag behind in integrating technology will be unable to meet the needs of knowledge-based societies and as a result will not survive the change in paradigm of education (O'Neill, Singh, & O'Donoghue, 2004).

The advent of new technology has positive influences on both learners and teachers (Mansor, 2001). It boosts the development of teaching methods as well as students' knowledge of L2 and provides learners with regulation of their own learning process and easy access to information the teacher may not be able to provide. In spite of these mobile-assisted language learning apps and media, none has specifically been targeted at the Yoruba learners of French in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

III The concept of Mother Tongue and L2

Learning a foreign language could witness challenges like insufficient time to study and use it, unfavorable learning environment, complicated method of teaching and mother tongue interference among others. In the South West of Nigeria where the research pupation domicile, Yoruba language (L1) is the mother tongue of majority of French language (L2) learners in tertiary institutions. This implies learners have developed firm competency in the L1 more than English or French languages which are the country's official languages. The role played by mother tongue in the acquisition and teaching of L2 have become a long-time research question of debate among scholars, either it should be accepted for instruction in L2 class or otherwise. Different methods of teaching L2, for example, Direct Method-where teaching is done entirely in the language to be learned or Grammar-Translation method have originated further research questions. This paper however argues that it is more rewarding for Yoruba learners of French language to learn French language in their mother tongue, as they would experience robust L2 learning journey, especially when learning is tech-enhanced. In the case of this paper, French language is L2 while Yoruba Language is L1.

Language is the medium of communication generally accepted by a group of people by which messages are passed and received. Mother tongue (MT) is the

language human beings acquire from birth, which one grows up knowing, and known as the native language. It helps the child in his/her mental, moral and emotional development (Noormohamadi, 2008; Rajathurai, 2020). A key factor in second language acquisition is mother tongue. There are two forms of mother tongue transfer: positive transfer and negative transfer. Positive transfer occurs when two languages have comparable habits; negative transfer occurs in all other situations (Kasap & Emamvirdi, 2022). Two major reasons for which MT has become endangered in L2 classrooms are parents' dispositions to it and the presumed mental disarrangement of the two languages in the mind.These are discussed below:

(a) Societal dispositions to MT in classroom

There has always been a debate about whether or not to employ L1 in L2 lessons. It is debatable because various theories of second language acquisition offer varying conclusions on the significance of first language usage in second language classrooms. Certain theories promoted a monolingual approach, contending that L1 and L2 learning processes are not interchangeable and that the best exposure to L2 is crucial, while the least amount of L1 exposure is advised since L1 information impedes the process of learning L2 (Cook, 2001; Krashen, 1981). The inclusion of MT in French Language learning classrooms is invariably considered a deficit of language proficiency on the part of both learners and teachers. In the educational system, using English instead of an indigenous language is typically the favored method of instruction. When they discover that their kids are studying their native tongues in school, some parents get disillusioned. Some parents do not see the need to pay fees for their kids to learn languages they already know (Akinkurolere & Abuya 2013).

On the other side of the coin, teachers can utilize their mother tongue as a pedagogical technique to improve student learning in the classroom and to help streamline the teaching process (Al-balawi, 2016) without ado. This is because cognitive difficulties must be taken into account in instruction, and the teachers need to figure out how to mediate difficult materials (Robertson, 2014) which might include even code switching. However, although there is global trend of modern academic and societal movements that have resulted in a resurgence of support for the widespread usage of students' native tongues in the classroom,

(Hall & Cook, 2012), it is imperative to adapt strategic methodology in its usage for proper, systemic and desired learning outcome in a French class.

(b) Mental disarrangement in the brain while transferring from MT to L2

In spite of the acceptance of researches that have indicated that those who speak their MT well experience comparatively faster cognitive development and intellectual advancement and tend to achieve more academically than those who receive their education in a different language, (Rajathurai, 2020), some educators opine it imposes some cognitive inconveniences termed mother tongue interference to the learners. The intentional effort of a Yoruba learner of French language in the learning of French is faced with several difficulties emanating at various linguistic levels, based on the differences in the structure of both languages (Kehinde & Akoso, 2016). Cook (2001) however, argues against this long-held belief that teachers and students should refrain from using the first language in the classroom based on arguments that stifle critical thinking about the distinction between the two languages in the mind, the questionable compartmentalization of the two languages in the mind, and the noble but not incompatible goal of increasing students' exposure to the second language.

Furthermore, mental disarrangement occurs in the brain while learning L2 with L1 is the question of language knowledge transfer from L1 (Yoruba) to $L2^1$ (English as the first Second Language) which most of the learners have no solid foundation in before transferring to French ($L2^2$). The learners, in this process of language transfer mostly end up with errors in their oral and written production. On a different opinion, we believe that being that the learners have the basic knowledge of their mother tongue, their syntactic errors will be minimal when they transfer directly to French language. A certain level of proficiency in the original tongue is required for learning success. The child can translate his existing meaning system into the new language on his own. The young learner gains knowledge of his linguist's methods as he begins to perceive his language as one specific system among many, classifying its phenomena under broader headings, (Kecskes, 1998) reiterating Vygotsky on multi-lingual development.

Mother tongue interference is a major challenge to Yoruba learners of French language, as the two languages differ at lexical, syntactic, phonetics and

phonological levels of language structure, (Kehinde, 2015). In respect to these areas of divergence, teachers of French language also experience difficulties in teaching the language. There is however the continuous studies on possible solutions to this prevailing challenge of L1 and L2 in the light of several researches. Voicu (2012) views the teaching of L2 with mother tongue as an hindrance, while L1 serves as a resource which learners of L2 adopt to assist in the formation and re-arrangement of data in L2 in order to perform at their best (Manoj, 2014) and that using L1 in L2 classrooms cannot be avoided, as this could enhance the acquisition of the target language (Brookes-Lewis, 2009). However, in spite of these arguments in disfavor of the use of mother tongue in L2 classroom, mother tongue hives a silent but huge assistance while engaging a foreign language. In addition, learning and teaching a foreign language would be effective beyond doubt to assist Yoruba learners of French Language overcome the challenges which their mother tongue could present, especially in this 21st century where mobile phones have become part of every adolescent which includes the students in this contemporary tech era.

IV Theoretical Concept

The human mind expresses itself in the language of its host; first the mother tongue then other language(s) which the speaker has consciously developed the brain/mind to adopt by the reason of use. The brain is an inevitable tool in language formation as the language formation and its usage begin in the brain. In other words, languages are represented in the mind of its speaker and its information is deployed in the production and comprehension of expressions, In addition, the language acquisition level of the speaker is affected by the efficiency of the brain. This is why, for instance, adults undoubtedly do use a different style of speech when they talk to young children, (Clark, Bloor, Ryan & Marshall, 1977). Hence, the brain and the language of a speaker should be studied in order to learn, use, understand and produce languages properly, and this is the domain of the psycholinguistics which this research work draws inference.

Psycholinguistics of Jacob Robert Kantor is the theory which came to light in the 1950s. It is the combination of Psychology and Linguistic. Psychology studies the mind and behavior of man while Linguistics is seen as the study of language. It is the psychological study of how humans understand, learn, produce and use

language. It studies the mental devices which facilitates the usage of language by humans. The aim of this scientific discipline is a coherent theory of the manner with which language is achieved and comprehended, (Garnham, 1990). This theory have link to other discipline like linguistics, neurology, neurobiology, cognitive science and the likes. Also, many of the conceptions used in the analysis of the structure of sounds, of word and sentences as well act as important factors in language processing and they are represented in the mind (William, 2001). Hence, this research work is limited only to the linguistic and psychological aspect of the theory that covers the cognitive processes of acquiring, understanding, producing and using of L2 which is French language. This is because the research is based on the ability to learn, use and understand and produce the L2.

Psycholinguistics as a study of the Psychology of language is realized in language teaching. It assist in studying of psychological factor which are possibly involved in language learning. Its focus is mainly on the application of the actual language and communication. It is important to take the decision to apply several methods which will enable students to easily comprehend a language, (Purba, 2018). This theory becomes relevant to this research in respect to the use of the mobile app to the learning of L2, after factors which have to do with human mind and behavior towards the acquisition of language have been considered. For instance, factors related to teaching methods, time constraints, and lack of interest out of others.

V Methodolgy

The study area

The research study area will cover selected tertiary institutions, both private and public where French language is offered in the South West of the country. The States in this region are Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti. Due to the low student enrolment in French Departments which is a general problem, the study population would be 5 students in these selected tertiary institutions.

Research Design

This proposed study intends to use mixed method research design which includes qualitative and quantitative following the argument of Creswell, 2014. The qualitative aspect will measure the focused group which will comprise five (5) students from selected Institutions. While the quantitative aspect will measure the

selected students' learning progress and the functionality of the app via the electronic data which would be collected through the assessment and monitoring section on the app and onsite monitoring. Also, data would be collected through two focus groups: Lecturers Focus group (LFG) (3 lecturers of French and Respondents Students Focus Group (RSFG) from each Institution selected. This is how the research intends to obtain data.

Population and Sample

For both qualitative and quantitative aspect, the population of study shall comprise 5 students of the selected Universities and Colleges of Education. The research intends to choose 5 Universities (public and private) and Colleges of Education from each State in the South West region of the country. In a State where we have limited institutions, the research would use three (3). The sample will contain five (5) French students in 100L basically, but where 100 level students are not up to the required number, we would use the 200 level of the Universities and Colleges of Education selected.

Research Instrument

The likely constraint we might have is the availability of students in public Universities and Colleges of Education who would be able to afford data to daily study French language via the app for six months consecutively, unless it is provided by the researchers. Also, we might have limited tertiary institutions in a State. If otherwise, the study proposed to use random sampling technique in sample selection. Both interview and the app would be used to acquire information from the sample. The interview would be subjected validity and reliability test. The research will use maxqda to analyze both the qualitative and quantitative aspect of the research.

VI Conclusion

The paper has been able to discuss the relevance of mother tongue and technology to the teaching and learning of French Language in this tech epoch has become an expectation to Yoruba learners of French. It reveals the cognitive contributions of Yoruba Language in the acquisition of French Language, regardless the societal and individual threat against its adoption in foreign language classroom. Also, the

usage of technological in the form most suitable for the learners to access on their phones brings teaching and learning beyond the classroom.

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