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Abstract

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to support the teaching and learning of foreign languages, particularly French, has been the centre of concern for researchers for several years. Education, especially second language teaching, must adopt new technologies and renew itself to be compatible with globalization within the West African sub region. To this end, it has become necessary to identify technologies that will efficiently support the integration of ICT to enhance the teaching and learning of French in Ghana. This study discusses the prospects and challenges associated with the integration of digital technologies in the teaching and learning of French as well as some strategies and techniques required for more successful integration.

Key words: *ICT, pedagogy, competence, adaptability, digitization, novelty*

1. Introduction

In recent years, there have been debates on the adoption and use of digital technologies to support the teaching and learning of foreign languages particularly French. This is as a result of the observation that there is low level of enthusiasm towards foreign language learning as a result of the continual failure by teaching staff to adopt technologically inclined tools and techniques to transform their way of teaching to enhance the learning experience of students. The techniques employed, the activities and the level of application in language teaching have undergone a number of important changes in terms of technological development. In the 21st century, technology has become a "must have" in many homes around the world, and its influence has spread to all facets of our lives, including educational settings (Boiron, 2005).

This paper further discusses the political context that could eventually partner the traditional method of teaching and learning in institutions in Ghana. Potentials and characteristics of ICT techniques that serve as models, are also discussed as a focal point in this research. This research is significant based on the fact the wave of the future in language teaching, will be driven by the new age of digital educational multimedia (World Bank Report, 2007, Boiron, 2012, 2005 and Karsenti, 2009). Thus, the rapid progress manifested by technology has led to the development of ICT which offers new and endless possibilities to promote the quality and effectiveness of the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

2.1 The Ghanaian Political Context

The government of Ghana since 2004 has attached a lot of importance to the deployment of fibre technology across the country in order to boost the integration of ICT into the day to day dealings of government, particularly in the educational sector. Since then, successive governments have initiated actions across different spheres to impact their resolve in strengthening the capacities of the citizenry towards the efficient integration and use of ICT. Indeed, under the recommendation of the government of Ghana, the Ghana Education Service (GES), in 2004, set up a committee to review the structure and content of formal education in Ghana. This committee declared in its report called, "the government white paper" on the new educational reform in October 2004, that:

i At least one Senior High School (SHS) in each region of Ghana should have one computer room;

ii Each pupil in each public school should have a laptop; and iii Distance education courses for professional development of workers be encouraged.

As a follow up to these proposals, the government of Ghana, in collaboration with the Indian government, established the "Kofi Annan ICT Centre of Excellence" to promote the use of ICT in education and serve as a point of orientation and reference for the development of Ghana (The Government White Paper" ICT: PROJECTING GHANA INTO THE 21st CENTURY", 2004: 43-44, 2.5).The government then, realizing the role of teachers in achieving this objective, strengthened the competencies of teaching staff in the adoption and use of these new technologies. Through the Ghana Education Service (GES), the government collaborated with the French Embassy in Ghana to establish FrancoZone, a national multimedia resource centre,

for information and training on new technological resources to support the efficient delivery of French language. This indicates the importance attached to the incorporation of ICT in teaching. (The Government White Paper" ICT: PROJECTING
GHANA INTO THE 21st CENTURY", 2004: 43-44, 2.5)

There have been several researches to back the need for governments to support digitized teaching. Perrenoud (2004. 121) argues that: "*The school must be part of what is happening in the world given the spectacular transformations that new information and communication technologies (ICT or NICT) affords us in the fields of communication, marketing, business development as well as education".* In the same vain: Schleicher (2012) established that: "*Many countries have seen rapidly rising numbers of people with higher qualifications. But in a fast-changing world, producing more of the same education will not suffice to address the challenges of the future. Perhaps the most challenging dilemma for teachers today is to adopt digitalization of their activities".* According to Legner et al (2017), "In the face of a digital revolution, national and regional governments are increasingly defining digitalization as a strategic priority and are setting up large-scale initiatives to foster digital tools into education".

Karsenti and Ngamo (2009), in a study carried out in five countries, namely: Ghana, Cameroon, Senegal, Mali and Benin, observed that 11.3% of the participating schools were committed to the use of ICT. The study further indicated that the integration of ICT in teacher training schools is of real importance in Africa due to the fact that most teachers have poorly placed professional orientation when it comes to the use of technological devices in their dayto-day practice. In one of the schools according to (Karsenti and Ngamo 2007: 676), a teacher decides to draw the Internet Explorer browser window on the blackboard using a piece of chalk as captured in figure one (1) below. This is one instance of a teacher trying his best to be creative, but the real question here is, how well or how quickly can the students assimilate this? But that is the case in many schools across Ghana. The researchers further stated, after observing hundreds of classes, that the pedagogical integration of ICT is poorly understood by teachers. Additionally, the researchers concluded that schools with properly established computer laboratories connected to the information super highway (internet), discovers limitless opportunities in the use of these techniques in their day-to-day interaction with students. Karsenti and Ngamo (2007) report from their research the following observation:

"We are in a secondary school in a large capital in West Africa. 95% of the students in this high school have email addresses and frequent cybercafés. However, computer classes teach them parts of the computer. Isn't that an absolute irony?"

The observations made by Karsenti and Ngamo in their research confirm similar situations in most institutions in Ghana. In several schools in Ghana, (primary, junior & senior high schools, Universities as well as Colleges of Education) the main idea is to conceptually expose the students to, "the different parts and the fundamental functioning of the computer system". This consists of memorizing the different parts of the computer and then defining their functions. Yet, the pedagogical integration of ICT requires the use of ICT by the teacher and the learners in order to develop skills or promote learning. The pedagogical integration of ICT goes beyond teaching computer science. It is getting students to use ICT to learn about other school subjects, in particular: science, mathematics, languages among others. The revelation of Karsenti and

Ngamo (2007) leads to the review of the adoption and use of our technological tools in educational institutions in Ghana.

3. The contributions of new technologies in the enhancement of pedagogic approach.

This section answers two critical questions about the integration of ICT in French language teaching in Ghana: **the Why** and **the How**?

1- **Why**? Why is it critically important to integrate ICT into teaching and learning? What could be done to enhance both teaching and learning with these new technologies in Ghana? What are some of the characteristics of digital resources integrated into the classroom practice?

2- **How**? How could institutions or governments cautiously integrate "ICT" into teaching and learning taking into consideration, the lack of financial muscle to deploy these technologies and the lack of technical know-how on the part of the teachers?

There is no longer any doubt that the use of ICT has positive effects on teaching / learning of foreign languages especially French in the Ghanaian context. Its impact strongly depends on how it is used in other words, the motivation of the teacher and his/her "**know-how"**.

The impact of new technological tools on pedagogic practices of the teacher seems obvious to support teaching (Laurillard, D. 2008).

Digitizing the teaching of foreign languages by adopting techniques such as, Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), Virtual Learning Platforms can provide the ability to control pedagogical approaches, have access to novelty and creativity, provide feedback and also refer to adaptability. In brief, we expand on the characteristics of new technologies in education.

3.1 The ability to control the presentation.

This ability makes the difference between new tools (N.T), magazines, and books. Books have a fixed presentation, unlike these new techniques, which combine visuals with listening materials, text with graphics and images.

3.2 Novelty and creativity.

The use of ICT in teaching ensures novelty in teaching. This is because unlike teaching with textbooks where all contents are the same, with ICT, a teacher can use different authentic documents for each lesson at his/her own convenience. There is that flexibility in terms of choice. **3.3 Feedback.**

The new tools provide quick feedback and produce instant responses to users. It also corrects, sometimes even gives appropriate advice to improve on one's performance.

3.4 Adaptability.

Computer programmes can be adopted by teachers according to their needs and their level of knowledge of the language or levels of the learners, unlike books, which are produced in a single and uniformed format and must be taught without taking cognizance of the students' ability. A second important advantage arising from the use of ICT in the language class is based on the opportunities it offers for cooperation and collaboration with peers. Examples of Digital spaces are Radio France International, TV5MONDE, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et Européennes MAEE, CAVILAM and educational websites.

A third advantage is based on the growing number of teaching resources available to language teachers which allows them to provide individual support and allows autonomy of the learners (Educational audiovisual "DVD"s).

Indeed, "we no longer have to choose which book/s to carry along when going to teach: I take 30 on my reader (Kindle), I will choose later according to my desire of the moment" (Dambre, 2010).

4. Other Basic Scanning Options

New technologies offer both teachers and students with numerous ways to learn a language other than immersion (provision of numerous digital resources).

4.1 E-learning (internet)

E-Learning is made possible with a combination of tools and techniques (i.e. Computers, data communication devices, etc). Without a doubt, face-to-face interactions have been strengthened in various institutions. The increasing speed of internet connections, easy to use technological gadgets, evolution in social media and opportunities for multimedia training has also left a great impact on education.

The advantages of online learning can be summarized under the following headings:

i. **Access** - the Internet offers ubiquitous opportunities to experience the target language without the need for travel. It strengthens distance education.

ii. **Flexibility** - The Internet allows users to learn the French language at their convenience since lectures can be recorded and uploaded onto systems for later consumption.

iii. **Response** – E-Learning platforms offer the possibility of instant feedback to users. This greatly improves teaching and learning experiences.

iv. **Repeatability** – Students can have access to uploaded content anytime and anywhere making it possible for them to review the structure of the language repeatedly until mastery is achieved (non-linear).

v. **Sustainability** – With a robust information super highway (Internet), access to information will be sustained unless the intervention of force majeure. vi. **Modality** - the Internet is a multimodal learning tool. It stimulates in a rich sensory and cognitive and thus fertilizes the acquisition of the target language. vii. **Specificity** - the internet allows choice and variety both in what and with whom will be drawn. Learning can be tailored to the specific needs of the learner.

viii. **Cost** - The Internet is a business model which, due to economies of scale, can offer services that cover a significant period at a low price.

ix. **Communication** - the Internet allows users not only to share brief messages, but also to create large documents, thus facilitating collaborative exchanges. In addition, learners can share graphics, sounds and videos. Thus, the Internet contributes to creating an authentic and communicative environment.

x. **Augmented and Virtual Reality** – augmented and virtual reality has transformed teaching and learning by modeling traditional teaching contents contained in textbooks and magazines into visual aids which offers higher learning satisfaction.

The integration of information and communication technology in teaching and learning is seen as an environment in which a variety of pedagogical approaches and philosophies can be implemented. However, ICT as a teaching tool is more complex in that, it requires more specific skills from the teacher, "**the HOW".**

The "How"; the user or the subject must develop some basic skills referred to as technopedagogical skills. The subject or the user must:

i. Recognize / identify the essential components of new technological tools

ii. Have the capacity to implement the main peripherals: (television, projector, DVD player, Home Theater, etc).

The **Know How** to develop ***lesson zero*** strategies that is to negotiate the apprenticeship contract, getting the learner of the foreign language to understand and value the ***new entrant*** "foreign language" as an additional component and know yourself and get to know other aspects of the foreign language as well as the culture.

According to the model of Desjardins (2005), users of the new technological tools are required to adopt and develop some specified roles useful for its integration.

The model Desjardins (2005) is presented under four skills labeled, "technical skills", "social skills", "informational skills" and "epistemological skills". According to Le Boterf (1999), these skills are articulated in a system of conceptual and procedural knowledge as stated earlier, organized in operating schemes which allow the intention of a set of situations, the identification of a task-problem and its resolution by an effective action. In other words, the model skills facilitate the identification of deviations and the implementation of appropriate remedies to a particular situation.

Desjardins (2005), concludes that it as the relationship that the human subject can establish that is to say the teacher / learner towards the technological object. The four skills recommended are referred to as the four technical characteristics.

Technical characteristics

This first stage of the training provides basic skills for trainers to do the following:

i. Operate a computer and its peripherals without help (other technological equipment)

ii. Use the most complex software functions to develop professional quality products

iii. Use computer and technology appropriately in both oral and written communications.

iv. Use the help functions integrated into the various software programs to troubleshoot (to help solve basic problems).

On Social Characteristics of the user, this order considers other communicative advantages of digital tools in the pedagogic activities of trainers.

i. Encourage the use of information and communication technology (ICT)

ii. Communicate through email and other social media platforms as stated earlier.

Further, Informational Characteristics, the Informational order is a phase that allows teachers to identify and organize data relevant to classroom activities.

i. Use several fields to sort or search in a database for relevant and useful information

ii. Use and identify appropriate notional network to search by keywords

iii. Make a critical judgment on the documents found to be relatively useful in class activities.

With regards to Epistemological order, it assists the user to choose and apply new skills in educational activities to improve performance. For instance,

i. Process data on new technological equipment to improve knowledge.

Digitizing teaching / learning no longer serves as a simple additional means, but ICT is an indispensable part of the diverse and contemporary teaching / learning environment. **6. The application of ICT in teaching practice and other relative advantages**

The application of ICT gives more possibilities for communication between teachers and learners (Gordon, 2014). They can exchange information in real time, participate in blog discussions, work as a team on different projects, exchange emails, and get better training and information. The use of the authentic materials provided by the internet for example, allows us to have a better idea of the culture of the native.

There are significant evidence of the benefits and advantages that digital teaching and learning can offer to users.

7. **Other factors / obstacles detriment for the effective integration of new technological tools in the pedagogic activities of the trainers have also been identified.**

Pelgrum, W. J. (2001), in his assessment outlines several factors that combine to limit the positive effects of new technologies. These include:

Lack of teacher training (capacity building) for trainers, lack of targeted training (needs analysis) immediate needs, lack of interest on the part of teachers (nothing motivates the trainers to change or improve their practices), unfriendly and rapidly obsolete materials (difficult in moving away from tradition), lack of maintenance and above all, lack of specific, appropriate and quality educational software. Gradually, even obvious efforts set up, run out and many computers end their careers in the trash or in "Abossey-Okai" (a scrap dump in Accra Ghana).

As a result, teachers in educational institutions are used to frequent subject innovations, but not necessarily more ingenious or open to new ideas through ICT. There were pieces of evidence

of many problems in terms of technical skills (first order) with our teachers in Ghana (Kokroko, 2020).

The researchers suggest that teachers together with learners, put themselves in the pursuit of change: an individual and professional change which tends towards a diversified teaching practice, an institutional change which tends towards harmonized practices, a global change which tends towards innovative international exchanges, a progressive change which tends towards the synergy of all stakeholders, a change which requires us to reuse our computer rooms in our institutions for more targeted purposes in the educational field for the accelerated development of the country. On those, the researchers end with the thoughts of Kofi Annan (2005). As he noted:

We are living in an era of rapid change where technology is playing an increasingly central role in all areas of our lives. Indeed, ICT have an important influence on the evolution of all societies on the planet and significantly affect all dimensions (economic, social or cultural) of the functioning of these societies. With ICT, everything changes: the ways of teaching, living, learning, working and even making a living (Kofi Annan, 2005).

Schmitz (1984), in a historical speech, noted that; South Korea and Kenya had similar economies forty years ago but that Asian country now has an economy forty times greater than that of its African colleague, in particular because technologies have successfully established themselves in all spheres of the Korean society including education.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that digitization of teaching and learning provides a powerful, effective and efficient environment for the rapid development of a country. Many countries are making investments in ICT integration and that ICT is seen as an effective tool for the renewal of educational practice. Without doubt, technology has revolutionized society in many areas around the world. In particular, the Internet has become a channel where people can learn, share and collaborate in an incredible way compared to previous years. However, there are challenges associated with integration of ICT in teaching the French language. The researchers suggest that appropriate remedies should be considered in order to confront the various obstacles retarding the integration of new technologies in education. First and foremost, from the political point of view, the government should go on specific needs of teachers training future trainers, provide adequate models in the institutions and create a welldefined space for specific subject for the integration of ICT. Further, appropriate and clear capacity building projects should be organized for the teachers. Lastly, obsolete and unattractive equipment should be discarded in order to motivate the users.

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