



STRATEGIC EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND DIGITAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A NEXUS FOR EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

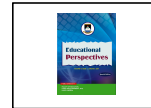
The phenomenon of emerging digital technologies has led to digital literacy globally. This is essential to survive in the digital environment. The role of language teachers has shifted towards developing this literacy and they are expected to understand how to leverage digital technologies to assist digital natives to use them effectively. Many questions have arisen in terms of digital literacy and its implication for language teaching and learning. The focus is on how students can be critically aware of media, especially digital media, for their learning. This paper examined Digital Literacy and English Language as a Nexus in effective language teaching. Computer literacy is just as important in our modern world twenty-first century, digital literacy effectively prepares learners to acquire, develop, and prepare for better job prospects. The study adopted a qualitative research design. Thematic analysis was used for the study which includes the use of interviews. The findings indicated that some of these language education teachers had some knowledge and skills in computer and digital literacy but their depth of applications in digital knowledge and skills was limited. Digital literacy skill competencies for language teaching and learning in the twenty-first century amongst language teachers need to be improved upon. This study concluded that digital literacy knowledge should be made a compulsory requirement for effective language teaching and learning. The study recommended that digital skills training should be included in language teacher education.

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Introduction

Essentially, technology provides instant access to information. Its presence in the classroom is so vital for instance, smartphones, computers, and tablets are already an omnipresent element of everyday life for students and teachers alike. With the improvement of technology in Nigeria, teachers are supposed to integrate technology into the classroom. In the 21st century, technology has made significant changes in many homes and around the world. Its influence has invaded all facets of life, especially in the teaching and learning process. During classroom instruction, students engage in the teaching and learning process using technologies. Indeed, it is also believed that the use of technology in the language classroom can be integrated into English as a Second Language. Harris (2015)

The integration of technology and language learning can help the teaching and learning process, the teachers can design their teaching appropriately with the use of technology. On the other hand, the students also seem to have an opportunity to increase their learning by using technology. At this point, they are required to be capable of understanding the device. Thus, the more literacy skills on digital they have, the better they can utilize technology for their learning. However, some students can use it while others are not able to. Then, the question will be focused on how they can operate it. In line with these descriptions, in an academic context especially in English language teaching and learning, digital literacy is also considered to be one of the important things to support students learning. As Harris (2015) proposed that digital literacy involves the way and how they participate in community life, and gaining additional education and training. In summary, it is possible to include digital literacy as an important skill in the classroom to increase students' learning process.

The increasing acceptance of digital technology has necessitated the promotion of foreign language learning and teaching, especially in areas where there is inadequate exposure to genuine resources and materials. Contemporary digital technologies have become powerful avenues for the teaching and learning of languages. Nowadays, electronic means of learning foreign languages have become the most appealing to the digital natives' needs. Digital technologies have impacted various aspects of language learning, such as modern learning management systems autonomous, self-paced, collaborative learning, as well as socio-constructivist target-language acquisition. For these aspects of language learning, the common ground remains the central premise of communicative language teaching; i.e., learning by participating/doing rather than just dictating. Raman, A. & Mohammed, A.H. (2013).

Digital literacy can influence teachers' performances and development. Information and communication technologies have been effective in every aspect of life, and as a result, many changes have occurred in different ways of doing our regular work (Gao et al., 2022; Wang, 2023; Wang Y. L. et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023a). English teachers must be equipped with these skills to prepare for future jobs. The position of digital literacy in teaching and learning has not been emphasized as much as it should be. In line with the professionalization of English language teachers, increasing their literacy seems necessary and vital (Belda-Medina, 2022). The traditional concept of literacy refers to the ability to read and write. In the 1990s, the emergence of digital technology changed literacy based on paper, tradition, and knowledge into modern and social computer literacy (Carolus et al., 2023). In other words, literacy was redefined in this period as a collaborative concept in different times and places. This literacy through multimedia resources can lead to creating favorite materials, changing the shape of language learning, increasing critical thinking, and sharing views with others (Chik, 2011; Guo et al., 2023).



Digital Literacy

Nowadays, the appearance of the internet and the development of technology have provoked changes in literacy and created a new form of literacy (Schmar-Dobler, 2003). The term digital literacy has been considered as a source in the learning process. In this context, in the education setting the teachers are required to be the facilitators and motivators who help students prepare for the next phase of the digital environment by utilizing digital literacy in the classroom like utilizing information and communication technology in English and Foreign Language teaching and learning process. Regarding those roles, both as facilitators and motivators in the classroom, the success of the use of digital literacy in the classroom is related to teachers' decisions about the materials. Thus, the students are supposed to learn how to use technological resources to support their learning (Thorne et al., 2009; Dooly, 2014).

One of the uses of Information and Communication Technology is using the internet in the classroom. Gathering information from the internet sometimes requires a specific type of literacy such as using hyperlinks or application of critical thinking. As a consequence, students may be strained due to unsuccessful search of information. Hence, as educators, we need to foster new literacy in the classroom by providing appropriate Information and Communication Technology in the classroom.

Baldauf (2012) describes language planning as the quintessential example of applied linguistics, combining as it does the need for theoretical understandings of language and a requirement for application to real-life situations. Recently, language planning activities have emerged as the focus of attention of educational planners, emphasized by the growing involvement of language planners in the management of linguistic resources. Compared with other fields of study, language planning is a relatively new disciplinary addition to the academy, coming into existence as it did in the years immediately following World War II. However, its philosophical and practical roots in the West go back to the Napoleonic era in France and the need for a single language to manage the army (Wright, 2012). Baldauf (2012) observed that the impetus for early language planning studies and the development of the discipline, initially called language engineering, came from the breakup of European colonial empires after World War II leading to the emergence of new nations in Africa, South, and South East Asia and to the need for national languages under the one nation - one language model (KAPLAN, 2003; NEKVAPIL, 2011).

According to Ouedraogo (n.d), language planning has been defined differently by different specialists in different contexts. However, all the definitions refer essentially to two kinds of activities which involve purely linguistic activity (corpus planning) and a purely political and/or administrative activity (status planning). Nowadays, the situation seems to be more complex, and very often language planning includes both linguistic and politico-administrative activities proposed to find solutions to language or communication problems.

The study by Ouedraogo was an innovation and this goes a long way in solving the problem of African languages in terms of their teaching, learning as well as utilization for growth and development of the West Africa sub-region. Ouedraogo (n.d) observes that African languages, which are spoken by the majority of the indigenous people, are rallying points and are critically important as well as play big roles in development in several sectors like health, agriculture, governance, trade, population control, environmental improvement and the elimination of poverty. This is because development necessarily involves the full participation of the people, and cannot be imposed upon them from the top. People cannot participate in their own



development when they cannot understand and control the knowledge and skills required for development.

English Language and Technology

The use of technology helps to make information reciprocal among people, and it helps to keep information safe. Digital technologies consist of hardware and software. The digital technologies consist of developed technologies including laptops, digital libraries, and the WWW. The English language has been used as the main language in technology. English and technology are used in international communication; for example, English is learned by EFL. Being able to use English helps to achieve success in many fields such as economics and politics. Students can be professionals in technology when they are good at English and know how to use computers, assuring the concept that being good in modern technology requires one to be good at English; as a result, there will be increased experience in the scope of technology.

Because of the excessive use of digital technologies inside and outside school, the function of the tutors is altering in the classroom. According to Jenkins (2009), when new kinds of technology appear, the relations between the tutor and the student and their relations with conventional instruments such as “rulers, pencils, and pens” will be changed. Additionally, teachers should try to increase their experiences to develop their way of teaching. The knowledge of the teacher includes his experience in the subject he teaches and teaching methodology. Additionally, teachers should have a particular experience about a particular subject matter to teach it to particular students within a particular situation.

Having experience in hardware and software is not enough to achieve professional teaching. The relationship between teaching methodology, technology, and the subject matter should be taken into consideration. Teachers should have enough experience with every tool so that they can teach specific subject matters easily. Therefore, the use of technology may provide some beneficial consequences for the learners. Moreover, tutors need to have good experience with the teaching methods and the subject matter that they want to teach to provide their information professionally to their learners. Consequently, tutors will always need to keep up with modern technologies, but this is difficult for them.

Policymakers, researchers, language learners, and teachers can rely on the outcome of this study when planning to adopt new technologies that can assist language learning; this study provides information on the latest technologies, their advantages, and challenges, as well as the manner of their application to language teaching and learning.

Digital Literacy in English Language Instruction

Once the teachers are going to applied digital literacy in English classes, they need to consider some points. What the things need to be concerned about are the teachers needed to design instructional solutions to foster new literacy in the classroom, it can be from the Internet. First of all, the teacher should know what the students need, they must be provided some opportunities to experience the technology for themselves. The teacher should plan for the time it takes to do this. Moreover, they also need to know whether the instruction is efficient for students' literacy or not. Thus, the teachers need to give some instructions to the students appropriately. Here, we proposed that the Internet, for instance, could be the main medium in which both teachers and students can share everything, especially for their learning. Indeed, the new technologies in combination with the new literacy might offer valuable support for students' learning such as in students' reading development. This idea is also supported by Ciampa (2012) who revealed that



using e-books in English classes can help students to be more motivated. The result shows that the students are highly motivated to read and write when using e-books.

Furthermore, the most important one when we are going to implement digital literacy for English language instruction is we need to know students' proficiency levels both in English and technology use. After their proficiency level is identified, then defining the learning objective of the lesson which is related to digital literacy skills must be the main goal since the aim is to develop their proficiency both in English and in technology use. Objectives here are meant as what the instructor believes students will be able to do by the end of class. Hence, classroom activities should reflect the objectives. A standard objective refers to what students will be able to do at the end of the course. To create meaningful objectives, the instructor needs to evaluate the tools that students will need to accomplish these objectives.

Besides, the teacher knows what kind of strategies will be used in the classroom to help the student reach the lesson objective. Thus, consider the technology that students will use in their daily practices. The importance of digital literacy cannot be separated from the daily classroom. It is important to select some media and material that can be taken from videos or websites to teach both language content and skills. Thus, the teacher or lecturer needs to consider the use of technology as well as the lesson being taught such as the material or the topic as a part of learning content. Another concern is what skill is being trained. Thus, the content and also language skills can be taken at the same level.

Then, the design for the classroom activities can be focused on student-centered as the primarily practiced activities in the classroom. This approach aims to engage students actively involved in their learning which is meaningful to their lives (Peyton et al., 2010). Hence, this technique would be more beneficial for students' achievement and their acquisition as well. Besides, creating digital literacy also cannot be separated from the material which is authentically constructed for students' learning.

Hence, the material design should cover some criteria like providing thematic units, constructing problem-based learning, or project-based learning. Those designs provide content into which authentic digital tasks can be integrated and combined. Since it is language learning then the unit would include some lessons such as vocabulary, grammar, and so on.

As English Language Learning develops basic digital literacy skills, many opportunities will arise to extend English language acquisition outside the class. Since the learners are capable of maintaining digital literacy, they may have the capability to create and communicate with others through online platforms. This situation may provide unlimited English language acquisition activities. Related to this description, digital literacy skills can be included in four language skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing. As mentioned in the U.S. Department of Education, any project, topic, theme, or problem-based approach can be extended including language skills that are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The next is discussing those four skills briefly.

In the speaking classroom, the use of digital tools along with the lesson objective for speaking class can be implemented when the students are required to create a recorded audio file that is put online hence that others can listen and download that audio. This activity can make students more enthusiastic in which creating multimedia products can be highly motivating to the students. Some activities that can be implemented for listening class are the students might be given an individual assignment to listen to podcasts, YouTube videos, and others. Thus, it is required that teachers should differentiate instruction and better meet the diverse needs, interests, and abilities of the students.



Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design using the thematic analysis approach was used for this study. This study was conducted due to the unsatisfactory use of digital technologies in the English and Foreign Language classroom. Due to this fact, this study is intended to investigate the use of digital literacy among teachers and students. The study was conducted in the Ojo Local Government area of Lagos state, and the researcher interviewed the students of selected senior secondary schools in the study area.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total number of One hundred and fifty (150) students (respondents) were sampled using the proportional random technique. The interview was followed to collect data on digital literacy in teaching and learning of English language.

Findings

Students' Use of Digital Technologies

The students agree on using digital technologies for general learning purposes, this indicates that students are using digital technologies for their general learning purposes. They use digital technologies for English research projects papers, and essays as well as digital technologies for my English studies assignments and practice.

Digital Technologies for Learning Listening

The students agreed that they use (WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Netflix) to improve their listening skills with the extensive use of these platforms as justified by the fact that they are known for their popularity and ease of use. However, the students showed moderate agreement on “listening to (podcasts, radio) to improve listening skills”, and watching News channels in English to improve speaking.

Digital Technologies for Learning Speaking

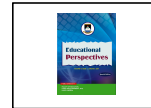
The students highly agreed that “I use online applications such as (google meet, Skype, and Zoom) to practice speaking and interact with native speakers through special learning websites to improve their speaking skills. On the other hand, a moderate agreement was revealed on the “use of Google Meet to practice speaking with their friends. Students who are so comfortable on using “Skype, Zoom, and Google Meet” to learn and improve their speaking skills could be justified by these applications being widely used among students, where students can have video calls to learn and check pronunciation from each other.

Digital Technologies for Learning Writing

The students agreed that they “use “Grammar checker” to check their writing and use collaborative writing tools like Google Documents to share their writing draft with friends. Additionally, the respondents showed high agreement in “use writing enhancement platforms to improve my writing skills. There was moderate agreement on “use digital applications like “Story Toolz” and “Zotero” applications to practice writing”. The high mean scores of using Grammar and grammar checkers and games chat rooms indicate the usefulness of digital technologies in learning writing.

Digital Technologies for Learning Vocabularies

The students agreed that they “use e-dictionaries to learn new words read e-books to learn new vocabularies then use games such as (Cross Words, Puzzles, Word finder) to enhance their vocabulary competence. In general, the findings show that digital technologies are highly used by EFL students to learn vocabulary.



Digital Technologies for Learning Reading

The responses of students approved that they “use E-book to read English books to enhance their reading skills. Additionally, make very good use of online learning websites to improve my reading skills, read online magazines and newspapers to improve my reading skills. In general, the findings showed a moderate level of using digital technologies for learning to speak, which indicates that students need more literacy and knowledge on how to use modern applications and websites such as “Newsella” to learn and improve reading skills.

Teachers’ Basic Digital Literacy

Teachers have a high level of basic digital literacy skills. The teachers showed high agreement on the use, access, and locating of the information needed to fit in for the teaching and learning of new technology in teaching and learning of English Language, teachers can recognize and manage digital resources such as creating folders, links, and favorites using learning management systems make use of communication and presentation tools and search engines (Google, Bing). In general, it can be concluded that teachers have a high level of skills regarding the use of digital technologies for general purposes.

Conclusion

This paper outlined three different ‘takes’ on digital literacy: one focused on technological skills, the other emphasizing critical reading and evaluation, and one aimed at balancing it all out through the inclusion of digital production. I have argued that although the three takes should not be considered radically different approaches, and in fact could be seen as different aspects of digital literacy, they are rooted in different epistemic assumptions and discourses about what is digital literacy and why we should pursue it as an educational goal. Overall, the results of this study have shown that digital literacy has influenced learning, language skills, and effective utilization of the English language in communication. Although some undergraduates do not use digitally oriented, the vast majority of them do. The result also informed the university authorities especially lecturers who have observed some undergraduates with language and communication problems to assist them in how to translate the usefulness of the Internet into their own lifestyle and language development skills. The result also emphasized the fact that the course of an undergraduate does not have any impact on the utility of Information and Communication Technologies. It is for all and sundry. It is believed that despite any caveat this study might have, it advances the extent to which Information and Communication Technologies have impacted undergraduates’ language teaching and learning and skills.

Recommendations

- It is necessary to rethink or reassess some key elements of our teaching and our role as teachers, to align what we do with the ethos of digital culture.
- Digital culture and public policies aiming to deal with it are shifting faster than educators can cope with or keep up with, requiring us to be constantly attuned to these conversations and reassess our pedagogies.
- In language teaching digital literacy should not end with the technical mastery of a determined software, the teacher who also understands evolving technology should be able to guide students to the discovery of the “new contexts of language learning.



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