Advancing French Language Studies in Nigeria Through Digital Storytelling, Cinema and New Media

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Abstract
The advancement of French language studies in Nigeria requires innovative teaching and learning approaches that respond to the changing demands of contemporary education and technological development. Traditional methods of teaching French, which often emphasize grammar translation, memorization and teacher-centered instruction, have not always provided learners with sufficient opportunities to develop effective communication skills. This paper examines the potential of digital storytelling, cinema and new media as innovative tools for promoting French language education in Nigeria. It discusses how digital storytelling can enhance vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, speaking skills, creativity and learner participation. It also explores the educational contributions of French films, documentaries, television programmes, podcasts, social media platforms and other digital resources in creating meaningful opportunities for language learning. Drawing on relevant theories and recent scholarly perspectives, the paper argues that integrating these technologies into French language instruction can improve students' motivation, cultural awareness, communicative competence and overall academic achievement. However, challenges such as inadequate digital infrastructure, unreliable electricity, limited internet access, insufficient teacher training and the high cost of technological resources may hinder effective implementation. The paper concludes that the sustainable advancement of French language studies in Nigeria requires deliberate investment in digital infrastructure, teacher professional development, locally relevant digital content and institutional support. It recommends the integration of digital storytelling, cinema and new media into French language curricula to make language learning more interactive, inclusive and relevant to twenty-first-century educational needs.

Keywords: *French language studies, Nigeria, digital storytelling, cinema, new media, technology-assisted language learning, communicative competence.*

1. Introduction

Language is an essential instrument of communication, cultural transmission, international cooperation and human development. In an increasingly interconnected world, the ability to communicate in foreign languages provides individuals with opportunities for educational advancement, economic participation, diplomatic engagement and intercultural understanding.

French occupies an important position in international communication because it is used across several continents and serves as an official or working language in many international organisations. For Nigeria, the study of French is particularly significant because of its geographical and diplomatic relationships with Francophone countries such as Benin Republic, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

French language education in Nigeria therefore plays an important role in promoting regional integration, international understanding, educational mobility and economic cooperation. However, despite the strategic importance of French, its teaching and learning in many Nigerian educational institutions continue to face challenges associated with inadequate instructional materials, insufficient exposure to authentic language environments, low learner motivation and the dominance of traditional teaching approaches.

The changing nature of education in the twenty-first century has created opportunities for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in language teaching. According to Mishra and Koehler (2006), effective technology integration requires teachers to combine technological knowledge with appropriate pedagogical and subject-content knowledge. Their Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework remains relevant to understanding how digital resources can improve language instruction.

Similarly, UNESCO (2023) emphasises that technology can support educational access, engagement and instructional innovation when it is appropriately integrated into teaching and learning processes. This suggests that French language educators in Nigeria need to explore innovative approaches that move beyond conventional classroom instruction.

One of the promising approaches is digital storytelling, which involves combining narrative techniques with digital resources such as pictures, audio recordings, videos, animations, music and multimedia presentations to communicate stories. Digital storytelling provides learners with opportunities to listen to, construct, narrate and interpret stories in the target language. It can therefore support vocabulary development, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, listening comprehension and oral communication.

Robin (2008) explains that digital storytelling provides an opportunity to combine traditional storytelling with multimedia technologies to promote creativity, communication and meaningful learning. In language education, this approach can make abstract linguistic concepts more understandable by placing them within meaningful contexts.

Another important resource is cinema. French films, documentaries, short videos and television programmes provide learners with opportunities to encounter authentic French pronunciation, expressions, gestures, cultural practices and conversational patterns. Through carefully selected films, students can observe how French is used in everyday communication and different social situations. This exposure can strengthen their listening comprehension and cultural awareness.

New media have also transformed communication and educational practices. Platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, educational websites, online discussion forums and social networking applications provide opportunities for students to access French-language materials beyond the traditional classroom. These platforms can encourage independent learning, collaborative activities and continuous exposure to the target language.

Godwin-Jones (2018) observes that emerging digital technologies and online communication environments have expanded opportunities for language learning, particularly through mobile-assisted language learning and digitally mediated interaction. Similarly, Kessler (2018) highlights

the growing importance of technology-mediated communication and collaborative learning in language education.

In the Nigerian context, the integration of digital storytelling, cinema and new media into French language studies offers an opportunity to address some of the limitations of conventional instructional approaches. It can also expose learners to authentic French language materials despite the absence of a naturally French-speaking environment in most Nigerian schools.

Consequently, this paper examines how digital storytelling, cinema and new media can contribute to the advancement of French language studies in Nigeria. It also identifies the challenges associated with their integration and proposes strategies for improving technology-supported French language education.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance of French language education in promoting international communication, regional integration and cultural understanding, the teaching and learning of French in Nigeria continue to encounter several difficulties. Many students experience challenges in vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, listening comprehension, grammatical accuracy and oral communication. These difficulties are partly associated with inadequate exposure to authentic French language environments and the continued reliance on conventional instructional methods.

In many Nigerian educational institutions, French language teaching is still largely characterized by teacher-centered approaches, grammar explanations, translation exercises, memorization and the use of limited printed instructional materials. Although these methods may contribute to the acquisition of basic linguistic knowledge, they often provide insufficient opportunities for learners to practice French in realistic communicative situations. Another major problem is the limited availability of instructional resources, including functional language laboratories, audiovisual equipment, internet facilities and multimedia learning materials. Daramola and Udogu (2025) identify inadequate language laboratories, overcrowded classrooms, inappropriate teaching methods and weak foundations in French as some of the challenges confronting French language learners in Nigeria. Similarly, Akinpelu and Yegblemenawo (2025) observe that inadequate teaching resources, challenges in the learning environment and language education policy issues continue to affect French language learning in Nigeria and Ghana.

Furthermore, many French language learners in Nigeria have limited opportunities to interact with native or proficient speakers of French. This situation restricts their exposure to natural pronunciation, conversational expressions, cultural practices and authentic communication. The absence of sufficient opportunities for language practice may also contribute to students' low confidence and reluctance to communicate in French. Although digital storytelling, cinema and new media offer opportunities to address these challenges, their systematic integration into French language instruction remains an important area requiring attention. Digital storytelling can provide opportunities for students to construct and narrate stories in French, while cinema can expose them to authentic conversations, cultural expressions and different language contexts. Similarly, new media can facilitate access to online French lessons, podcasts, interactive exercises and virtual communication with other French learners.

The problem, therefore, is the gap between the increasing availability of digital technologies and their effective utilization in advancing French language studies in Nigerian educational institutions. There is a need to examine how digital storytelling, cinema and new media can be

integrated into French language education to improve learners' communicative competence, motivation, cultural awareness and academic achievement.

3. Literature Review

3.1.1 Concept of French Language Studies in Nigeria

French language studies involve the teaching, learning and acquisition of French linguistic structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, communication skills and cultural knowledge. In Nigeria, French is particularly relevant because of the country's geographical relationship with Francophone West and Central African countries.

The study of French provides Nigerian students with opportunities to participate in regional economic activities, international relations, tourism, diplomacy, education and cross-cultural communication. It also promotes understanding of the cultural and linguistic diversity of neighbouring countries. Akinpelu and Yegblemenawo (2025), in their study of French language learning in Nigeria and Ghana, highlight the genuine interest in French among learners while identifying inadequate teaching resources, policy-related difficulties and unfavourable learning environments as persistent challenges. Their findings suggest that improving French language education requires more than curriculum provision; it also requires appropriate instructional resources and effective teaching strategies.

Therefore, advancing French language studies in Nigeria requires the adoption of teaching approaches that encourage active participation, meaningful communication and continuous exposure to the target language.

3.1.2 Concept of Digital Storytelling in Language Education

Digital storytelling is an instructional approach that combines traditional storytelling with multimedia technologies to communicate ideas, experiences and information through digital formats. It involves the use of photographs, animations, video clips, sound effects, music, written texts and recorded narration.

Robin (2008) explains that digital storytelling provides opportunities for learners to develop creativity, communication and technological competence through the construction of multimedia narratives. In French language education, digital storytelling can be used to teach vocabulary, sentence construction, pronunciation, grammar and oral communication. Teachers can introduce short French stories through videos, audio recordings and animated presentations. Students can subsequently retell the stories, create alternative endings or develop their own digital narratives using French. Shen, Shen and Peng (2024) identify digital storytelling as a useful approach for promoting willingness to communicate in a second language. They explain that digital storytelling creates opportunities for language practice, cultural engagement, identity construction and collaborative learning. Furthermore, a systematic review and meta-analysis of oral narrative interventions found that storytelling approaches, including digital storytelling, produced positive effects on second-language learning outcomes, particularly speaking, reading, grammar and vocabulary development. The study also highlighted the importance of learners' proficiency levels and the duration of instructional interventions.

i. Digital storytelling can therefore contribute to French language development in the following ways:

ii. **Vocabulary development:** Students encounter new French words within meaningful stories, making it easier to understand their meanings and remember their usage.

iii. **Pronunciation improvement:** Listening to recorded French narration exposes learners to correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation.
iv. **Listening comprehension:** Students listen to stories and interpret information, identify characters, understand events and respond to questions.
v. **Speaking development:** Retelling stories, recording narration and participating in digital storytelling activities provide opportunities to practise spoken French.
vi. **Writing skills:** Students develop scripts, captions, dialogues and short narratives in French, thereby improving their writing abilities.
vii. **Creativity and motivation:** Creating digital stories encourages students to participate actively in the learning process and take responsibility for their learning.

3.1.3 Cinema as a Tool for Advancing French Language Studies

Cinema is an important audiovisual resource that can support foreign language teaching and learning. It involves the use of films, documentaries, short movies and television productions to expose learners to language, culture and social interaction.

French cinema provides opportunities for students to observe how French is used in different communicative situations. Through films, learners can encounter everyday conversations, formal discussions, greetings, expressions of politeness, cultural practices and social relationships.

Cinema is particularly valuable because language is not restricted to spoken words. Communication also involves gestures, facial expressions, body language, tone and situational context. These features are often difficult to communicate effectively through textbooks alone.

In French language classrooms, teachers can use selected film scenes to introduce vocabulary, explain grammatical structures and develop listening comprehension. Students can also be asked to summarise film scenes, identify unfamiliar expressions, discuss characters and perform selected dialogues.

Cinema can contribute to French language education in the following areas:

1. **Listening comprehension:** French films expose students to different accents, speaking speeds and conversational expressions.
2. **Pronunciation**: Learners observe and imitate the pronunciation and intonation of French speakers.
3. **Cultural awareness:** Films introduce students to French-speaking societies, traditions, lifestyles, historical experiences and social values.
4. **Vocabulary acquisition:** Students learn new words and expressions within realistic situations.
5. **Oral communication:** Classroom discussions, role-playing and dramatization of film scenes encourage spoken interaction.
6. **Critical thinking**: Analysing film characters, themes and events helps students interpret information and express opinions in French.

However, cinema should not be treated merely as entertainment. Teachers should select films that are appropriate to students' language proficiency and educational objectives. They should also provide pre-viewing, while-viewing and post-viewing activities to ensure that film viewing produces meaningful learning outcomes.

3.1.4 New Media and French Language Education

New media refer to digital communication platforms and technologies that facilitate the creation, distribution, sharing and exchange of information. They include social media, websites, podcasts, online learning platforms, mobile applications, video-sharing platforms and digital communication tools. The development of new media has transformed opportunities for foreign language learning by allowing students to access learning materials beyond the physical classroom.

Godwin-Jones (2018) discusses the importance of emerging technologies and mobile-assisted language learning in expanding opportunities for language acquisition. Such technologies enable learners to engage with language materials at different times and locations.

Similarly, Kessler (2018) highlights the growing role of technology-mediated communication and collaborative learning in language education. In Nigeria, new media can be used to improve French language learning through the following platforms and activities:

i. **YouTube:** Students can access French lessons, pronunciation demonstrations, documentaries, interviews and conversational videos.

ii. **Podcasts:** French podcasts can help learners improve listening comprehension, vocabulary and familiarity with spoken French.

iii. **Mobile applications:** Applications such as Duolingo, Busuu and Quizlet can support vocabulary development, grammar practice and independent learning.

iv. **Social media:** Educational groups and communities on platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Telegram can encourage students to exchange messages, share learning materials and practise French.

v. **Online learning platforms:** Digital learning environments can provide structured lessons, quizzes, assignments, discussion forums and opportunities for interaction between teachers and students.

vi. **Artificial intelligence tools:** AI-supported language applications can assist students with vocabulary explanations, writing practice, pronunciation exercises and personalized feedback. However, teachers must guide their use to ensure linguistic accuracy and responsible learning.

The major contribution of new media is that it makes French language learning more flexible, accessible and interactive. It also encourages students to become independent learners who can continue practicing French outside the classroom.

3.1.5 Challenges of Integrating Digital Storytelling, Cinema and New Media into French Language Studies in Nigeria

Despite the educational benefits of digital technologies, their integration into French language education in Nigeria may be affected by several challenges.

1. Inadequate digital infrastructure: Many educational institutions lack functional computer laboratories, projectors, sound systems and reliable internet facilities.

2. Unreliable electricity supply: Frequent power interruptions can disrupt digital lessons and prevent students from accessing online learning materials.

3. Inadequate teacher training: Some French language teachers may lack the technical and pedagogical skills required to produce digital stories, use educational applications and integrate cinema into their lessons.

4. High cost of technological resources: The cost of smartphones, computers, internet subscriptions and other digital equipment may limit access for students and educational institutions.

5. Limited availability of relevant materials: Some available digital resources may not correspond with Nigerian French language curricula, students' proficiency levels or local educational needs. These challenges demonstrate that successful technology integration requires adequate planning, institutional commitment, teacher development and the provision of appropriate learning resources.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on three relevant theories: Constructivist Learning Theory, Communicative Language Teaching Theory and Multimedia Learning Theory.

3.2.1 Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory is associated with the works of Piaget and Vygotsky. The theory maintains that learners actively construct knowledge through experiences, interaction and engagement with their learning environment. Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. This perspective is relevant to digital storytelling because students can work collaboratively to develop stories, exchange ideas, practise French and learn from one another. Through digital storytelling, students become active participants rather than passive recipients of information. They develop their own narratives, select appropriate vocabulary and communicate their ideas through digital resources. The theory therefore supports the use of collaborative digital activities in French language education.

3.2.2 Communicative Language Teaching Theory

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasises the development of learners' ability to use language effectively in meaningful communication. Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence, which extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. The theory supports the integration of cinema, digital storytelling and new media into French language teaching because these resources provide opportunities for meaningful language practice. For instance, students can watch French films, discuss the characters, perform selected dialogues, participate in online conversations and create digital stories. These activities encourage learners to use French for authentic communication rather than merely memorising grammatical rules.

3.2.3 Multimedia Learning Theory

Mayer (2009) explains that people learn more effectively from appropriately designed combinations of words and pictures than from words alone. His theory of multimedia learning provides a useful foundation for integrating digital storytelling and cinema into French language education. The use of images, narration, animation, sound and written text can help students understand linguistic concepts by presenting information through complementary forms. For example, a French digital story containing narration, images and subtitles can help learners associate spoken words with their meanings and visual representations. However, multimedia resources must be carefully designed to avoid unnecessary information and cognitive overload.

3.3 Empirical Review of Related Studies

Shen, Shen and Peng (2024) examined digital storytelling as a literacy-building tool for promoting willingness to communicate in a second language. Their review identified opportunities for language practice, cultural engagement, identity development and collaborative learning. The

study supports the use of digital storytelling to improve students' confidence and participation in French language classrooms. Akinpelu and Yegblemenawo (2025) investigated French language learning in multilingual and Anglophone West African contexts, focusing on learners in Nigeria and Ghana. Their findings revealed genuine interest in French among learners but identified inadequate teaching resources, policy challenges and unfavourable learning environments as factors affecting successful language learning. Their study highlights the need to provide improved instructional resources and more effective learning environments. Daramola and Udogu (2025) examined the challenges confronting French language learners in Nigeria. They identified inadequate functional language laboratories, overcrowded classrooms, inappropriate admission practices and poor public perception of French as important challenges. Their findings reinforce the need for innovative teaching methods and improved instructional facilities.

4.0 Conclusion

The advancement of French language studies in Nigeria requires a deliberate shift from predominantly traditional teaching methods towards innovative, interactive and technology-supported approaches. Digital storytelling, cinema and new media provide valuable opportunities for improving the quality of French language teaching and learning. Digital storytelling encourages learners to develop vocabulary, pronunciation, listening comprehension, speaking and writing skills through the creation and interpretation of multimedia narratives. Cinema exposes students to authentic French conversations, cultural practices, pronunciation and different communicative situations. Similarly, new media provide opportunities for continuous language practice, independent learning, collaboration and access to educational resources beyond the traditional classroom. The discussions in this paper establish that these technological approaches can contribute to improved learner motivation, communicative competence, cultural awareness, creativity and academic achievement. However, their effectiveness depends on the availability of appropriate digital infrastructure, qualified teachers, relevant instructional materials and institutional support. Therefore, integrating digital storytelling, cinema and new media into French language studies should be considered an important strategy for modernising French language education in Nigeria. Such integration can create a more engaging, practical and inclusive learning environment that prepares Nigerian students for effective communication and participation in an increasingly interconnected world.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the discussions in this paper, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. **Integration into the French language curriculum:** Nigerian educational institutions should incorporate digital storytelling, cinema and new media into French language teaching programmes at secondary and tertiary levels.

ii. **Provision of digital infrastructure:** Government and school administrators should provide functional computer laboratories, projectors, sound systems, internet facilities and other relevant technological resources for French language instruction.

iii. **Professional development for teachers:** Regular workshops, seminars and training programmes should be organised to equip French language teachers with the necessary digital and pedagogical skills for effective technology integration.

iv. **Development of digital storytelling materials:** French language teachers should encourage students to create short digital stories, animated presentations, recorded narratives and educational videos using French.

v. **Use of French films and documentaries:** Educational institutions should make appropriate French films, documentaries and short videos available to students. Teachers should use structured viewing activities to develop listening, speaking, vocabulary and cultural understanding.

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