

SOCIAL NETWORKING AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF
FRENCH LANGUAGE IN NIGERIA

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1.0 Abstract

The main objective of this research was to enhance the use of French expressions among our students on social network since majority of them detest consulting books, journals, encyclopedia etc. Being a descriptive study, the researcher examined undergraduates' morphosyntactic blunders as exhibited on whatsapp through a pilot experiment. The target audience in this research was a group of 100 level students from two institutions : Tai Solarin University of Education and University of Ibadan, Nigeria in the 2014/2015 academic session. Vygotskian theory was employed in this research in order to assess their academic performance in their acquisition of the target language. The data obtained were tabulated and analyzed by using percentage means. On the basis of our analysis, it was concluded that the social networking tool enhanced the performance of most of the active students which necessitated the division of the students into superior and inferior groups.

Therefore, it is recommended that social networking apparatus should be incorporated into the teaching and learning process especially at tertiary institutions in order to facilitate the growth and development of French language in Nigeria.

Keywords: Vygotskian Theory, social networking, electronic teaching and learning, whatsapp and French language

1.1 Introduction

There is no gainsaying the fact that the entire world is gradually becoming a global village if not a petty family through the use of information and communication technology [ICT] (cf. Kuupole & De-souza 2010). This study *Social Networking as a Springboard for Effective Teaching of French Language Nigeria* is a descriptive study aimed at examining certain morphosyntactic misinterpretations which learners are confronted with during acquisition process. *Whatsapp* is a social network and an instant messaging application for smartphones that operate under a subscription business model. By social networking, Edebiri (2015:30) opined that “...the incorporation of multimedia in the teaching of French will change the traditional perspective of the present teaching as well as facilitate the French language studies”. As postulated by Edebiri, we can easily affirm that multimedia or also social network can boost learners’ motivation and interest towards the acquisition of French language. However, social network, in this communication, is synonymous to Whatsappism, Facebookism, Googleism, Youtubism, Yahooism, Palmchatism, Twitterism, Skypism, 2goism or BBMism. In our contemporary society, it is no longer a news that most youths detest books (reading of textbooks), novels as well as all other academic materials recommended to them by their teachers so as to enhance their intellectuality; they rather prefer to engage in one form of social network or the other to exchange ideas or messages with their friends. This is why the researcher deem it fit to drift from conventionality by adopting Whatsappian communication which is believed will foster the enthusiasm of learners in the acquisition of French language.

Knowing fully well that education is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills and habits of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training and

research (Dewey, 1944). The Vygotskian approach was adopted in this study which refers to **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** where learners construct the new language through socially mediated interaction (cf. Olayiwola 2013). Vygotsky's social development theory was adopted and made prominent in the Western World through Jerome Bruner who laid the foundations of the model of a language development in the context of adult-child interaction.

Consequently, the quality or importance of this teaching can be oriented towards inculcating the following values:

- ❖ Respect for worth and dignity of the individual
- ❖ Faith in the participants' ability to make a rational decision
- ❖ Promotion of physical, emotional and psychological development of the students
- ❖ Acquisition of competencies necessary for self reliance
- ❖ Proficiency in French language in both oral and written communication

In the same vein, Garba & Garba (2015) considered this concept as “**Realia informatique**” which can be interpreted as – **ICT Realia, Computer Realia** or **Tablet Realia** where students will be privileged to :

- ❖ Determine the objectives
- ❖ Define the content
- ❖ Select the apt methods and techniques that will guarantee their language proficiency
- ❖ Be able to evaluate themselves

In brief, all these values are considered and classified under the electronic teaching as **autodidactism**.

More importantly, we have decided to carry out this research among year one students studying French in Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED) and their counterparts at

University of Ibadan who predominantly possess Yoruba language as their L1 for the fact that their classes are dominated by the said ethnic group. As a matter of fact, after a thorough individual interaction as well as Whatsappian activities with the targeted audience, the performance of only 12 students will be illustrated by classifying the groups into inferior and superior respectively.

1.2 Research Procedure and Methodology

1.2.1 Research Design

Our research design can be appreciated through the real nature of this write – up which can be classified as **correlational study** as a result of their **Whatsappian activities** and **Academic performance**.

1.2.2 Methodology

Methods of teaching French language are the general principles, pedagogy and strategies used for classroom instruction. Social networking method was put in place due to the fact that teaching has now been modernized (Rumeliotis, 2013). The traditional chalk and talk method has now been replaced with different teaching techniques especially with the advent of classical modern instructional media. However, the instructional strategies include all approaches that a teacher may take to actively engage students in learning. The basic methods are :

- Lectures
- Peer tutoring
- Language laboratory
- Social networking discussion

- Project pedagogy (as attributed to Lev Vygotsky)
- Conversation
- Demonstration
- Collaboration

As regards **lecture method**, it is an oral presentation of factual information on principles, concept, ideas, and theoretical knowledge by the instructor to the trainee. Taylor (2012) opined that, to promote effective learning in lecture method, some discussions, questions and answers period must be allowed to permit the trainee to actively participate. More importantly, all other methods such as conversation, collaboration, demonstration, peer tutoring, language laboratory as well as project pedagogy were also considered in this research. Consequently, good lecture should possess the following :

1. It must not exceed trainee attention span.
2. It must attend a single theme.
3. It must build on pre-existing lectures.

As a matter of fact, these three qualities emanated from our whatsappian activities as there was preliminary discussion before the social network activities. The topic of the exercise attracts effectively the attention of our participants as well as focuses on a single theme, idea.

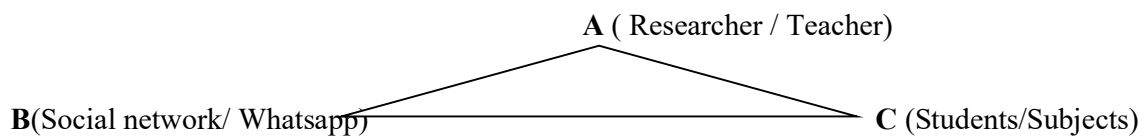
Bracke (2001: 175 -6) as cited by Olayiwola (2013:63) defined project pedagogy as a process of teaching and learning whereby pragmatic dimension of language has privilege over other language activities of the learners. In this situation, “the different content of teaching is deeply effective in the pedagogic project which major objective is communication competence”. As a result of this development, our participants will be proactive not only in oral communication skills by reading others comments but also learn a lot of vocabularies in the written communication skills. Generally speaking, this kind of teaching is a situation

whereby the learner is equipped with eclectic principles to exhibit talent. The platform of activities in this teaching is obviously traceable to the motivation of learners through the use of French expressions on Whatsapp.

1.3 Vygotsky : Socio-Cultural Theory

Vygotsky opines that the development of a child commences through interaction process. This theory socio-historico-cultural development of the superior mental functions enable Vygotsky to defend the adequate visionary thesis on early sociability of a child and infer the consequences by establishing a theory of a child development. Meanwhile, our targeted subjects in this context are considered as children due to the fact that they are practising an acquisition strategy. Vygotsky (1984:281) as cited by Olayiwola (2013:65) reiterates that “it is through others intermediary or also adult intermediary that a child engages in his activities. The child’s attitude is absolutely pounced on, and deeply rooted in social activities. Academically speaking, the class whatsappian group has been created long time ago for their personal activities as well as widespread of campus information particularly on their assignments , class lectures, socio-educational programmes etc. before their mentor (the author of this project) hijacked it from them in favour of their French language proficiency.

In fact, the child relation with the real world is the commencement of his social interaction. In this situation, we could affirm that the infant is a superior human being; this is because the theory is developed under the influence of Zone of Proximal Development. Symbolically, the ZPD is synonymous to the researcher’s **ABC** triangular concept as follows:



It is noteworthy to note that the researcher is the Adult intermediary as suggested by Vygotsky who monitors the activities of his subjects on whatsapp through expressions such as “Du courage” – **keep it up** , “@ XXX, est-ce que tes camarades ont déjà fini la description de la photo?” – **At XXX, has everyone in your class commented on the photo ?** Etc. XXX is used to represent a student’s name in the above expressions.

More importantly, the ZPD enables students to be independent through the created class group on whatsapp whereby it will be incumbent on them to read what other members have written on a topic as well as ponder over the message and write their own point of view towards the success of the social network assignment.

1.4 Research Instruments

The instrument is a one-on-one interaction between the researcher and the subjects orally and electronically. During the face-to-face interaction, some of the following questions were raised:

- Comment t’appelles –tu ?
- Où habites – tu?
- Que fais – tu ?
- Tu es dans quel département?
- Vous êtes combien dans la famille?
- Ton père fait quel métier?
- Décris ton pays.

As a result of this concept, the following morphosyntactic errors in the table below were decoded by the researcher during the one – on – one conversations in form of impromptu dictation.

Table 1 – Morphosyntactic Errors through Natural observation

s/no	Errors	Corrected Version	English Equivalent
1	Mon pays est <u>belle</u>	Mon pays est beau.	My country is magnificent.
2	Il <u>est marié</u>	Il s'est marié.	He is married.
3	<u>Il</u> femme est madame Ebele.	Sa femme s'appelle Mme Ebele.	His wife's name is Mrs. Ebele.
4	Nous sommes <u>chritien,musluman</u>	Nous sommes chrétiens et musulmans.	We are Christians and Muslims.
5	<u>En</u> mon village	Dans mon village	In my village
6	Les enfants <u>lis</u>	Les enfants lisent.	The children are reading.
7	Mes parents <u>aime moi</u>	Mes parents m'aiment.	My parents like me.
8	<u>Ma</u> cour est <u>interessantes</u> .	Mon cours est intéressant.	My course is interesting.
9	Je suis <u>étudier</u> .	Je suis étudiant.	I am a student.
10	Je <u>suis écrire ce</u> lettre.	J'écris cette lettre.	I am writing this letter.
11	Mon <u>department</u>	Mon département	My department
12	Nous <u>sommes produire</u> .	Nous produisons.	We produce.

However, most students still commit one error or the other after almost a year of their acquisition process. During the electronic communication, the subjects were asked to comment on an image displaying a student carrying a pack of soft drinks on his head and a school bag trapped to his back. As a matter of fact, their errors were minimized during the electronic learning process due to copy-paste-modification strategy while others were obliged to check meaning of certain morphemes.

1.5 What makes it correlational ?

Correlation is a valuable type of scientific evidence in fields such as education, medicine, psychology, and sociology. But first correlations must be confirmed as real, and then every possible causative relationship must be systematically explored. In the end, correlation can be used as powerful tool to establish a **whatsappian activity-and-academic performance relationship** between a treatment and the benefit, in order to ascertain their superior performance within the classroom setting alongside Information and Communication Technology (ICT) . But it is also one of the most abused type of evidence, because it is easy and even tempting to come to premature conclusions based upon the preliminary appearance of a correlation.

Well-designed experimental studies replace equality of individuals as in the previous example by equality of groups. The objective is to construct two groups that are similar except for the treatment that the groups receive. As a result of this obstacle, the researcher randomly correlates the performance of 12 subjects from both institutions as regards their competence on whatsapp exercises and academic performance. Some of the information captured can be viewed under preliminary conversation.

1.6 Preliminary Conversations

As part of the preparation towards the development of this academic communication, the researcher established a social network conversation between himself and one of the students (XXX). Below is a display of this Whatsappian conversation:

Researcher : Ça va XXX ? [How are you XXX ?]

XXX : Ça va très bien. [I am very fine.]

Researcher : As –tu déjà pris la photo personnelle à l'aide de ton sac et les boissons?
 [Have you taken the personal snapshot alongside your school bag with some soft drinks?]

XXX : Oui, j'ai la pris déjà. [Yes, *I it have taken* already]

Researcher : Je l'ai pris ... [**I have taken it...**]

XXX : D'accord Monsieur. [Ok sir]

It is highly interesting to note that the researcher did not only exchange greetings with the student but he equally wanted to confirm if the student was able to carry out the photograph snapshot (i.e an image of himself carrying a pack of soft drink as well as a school bag). Looking at the conversation lines 4&5, the researcher corrected the erroneous morphemes displayed by the student in order to enhance his proficiency of the target language.

All the underlined morphosyntactic errors in the above table emanated from an impromptu test given to our students during the research so as to evaluate their performance and sample their level of understanding in the target language.

1.7 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The validity and reliability of our whatsappian instrument was measured and appreciated as noticed from their various blunders exhibited as explained below. Most of the subjects were

able to expand their vocabulary power. Below is a percentage of selected audience scores which strongly affirm the **reliability** of this ICT tool in Table 2.

Table 2 : Percentage of Morphosyntactic Errors

Candidate	Score	Percentage
C1	7 ½ /10	75%
C2	3/10	30%
C3	8/10	80%
C4	4/10	40%
C5	7/10	70%
C6	7/10	70%
C7	5/10	50%
C8	7 ½ /10	75%
C9	7/10	70%
C10	4/10	40%
C11	5/10	50%
C12	3/10	30%

However, the deduction of the morphosyntactic errors from the corrected ones constitutes **score** while the total marks of each candidate multiply by 100 gives the **percentage**. In brief, the performance of students below 50% are considered as **inferior** (C2 – 30%; C4 – 40%; C10 – 40%; C12 – 30%) while those with 50% and above are classified as **superior** (C1 – 75%; C3 – 80%; C5 – 70%; C6 – 70%; C7 – 50%; C8 – 75%; C9 – 70%; C11 – 50%) respectively. Through the validity and reliability processes, it is obvious that majority of the students commit less errors via the experiences gathered from social networking. As such,

virtually all expressions from one subject to another in **Table 1** consist of different types of errors emanating from :

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| - Choice of adjective (masculine or feminine) | - syntactic error |
| - The selection of personal pronoun | - syntactic error |
| - Verbal agreement | - syntactic error |
| - Conjugation of verbs | - morphological error |
| - When and where to use diacritic signs etc | - syntactic error |

1.8 Conclusion

The paper has underscored the need to incorporate whatsappian activities in the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language (FFL) in Nigerian Universities. This becomes necessary for the fact that most contemporary students feel reluctant consulting books for further explanations on a topic taught in class or in their educational domain; rather they opt for the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Frankly speaking, French language can never be learnt in isolation most especially by young and upcoming learners; that informs why the researcher put in place a collaborative learning method on social network within the framework of Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which culminated from John Dewey's Project Pedagogy. This concept is vehemently formidable as it shifted the activities from teacher to students hence, making the class student-centred as such this set of informants were able to assist one another as well as to correct themselves when the need arose.

In conclusion, this academic research was set out as a beam to all language teachers especially French at all tertiary institutions. They should make their classes more interesting as well as make them student-centred. Appropriate methods of teaching should be adopted by mentors in order to make their classes lively for learners.

1.9 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to ensure the effective teaching and learning of French as a foreign language.

- Students should be obliged to make use of their bilingual dictionary (French – English) in order to know the grammatical / semantic structure of words.
- Teachers must not show aggression on students during or after class activities so as to create the enthusiasm in the students to learn this foreign language.
- Social networks such as Whatsapp, Facebook, 2go, Google, Yahoo, Badoo etc. can be adopted in a language class in order to make it more lively and innovative.
- Finally, a whatsappian interactive group was recently created by a French scholar, in person of Dr Alani Souleymane at the University of Ibadan, which encompasses some Universities French students, French lecturers as well as all Francophiles. Meanwhile, the door is still open to those who are willing to join the group.

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