

A STUDY ON TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING OF FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract:

The education system worldwide had to make ad hoc adjustments and adaptations in teaching and learning methodologies to bring about standard levels in teaching methods, especially during the pandemic. We witnessed a paradigm shift in education systems as all academic institutions switched to technology-oriented teaching-learning using online, hybrid or blended modes, thus creating a stress-free virtual learning platform for students during these turbulent times. The changing teaching/learning trends did include foreign language learning too. The current study aims to find the impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching/learning of French as a Foreign Language (FFL) in the Indian higher education and the extensive challenges teachers and students face in the present teaching scenario. Task-based learning, Quizzes (using digital tools), presentations, discussions/ debates, role plays, and simulations are some of the activities given to students using information technology. From this, we can infer that technology-embedded foreign language education aids students to acquire not only French foreign language skills but also helps Indian students develop self-learning and lifelong learning competencies. The study also reveals that technology-based teaching/learning promotes a positive effect on the development of students' motivation and encourages passion for learning a foreign language.

Keywords:

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), French as a Foreign Language (FFL), motivation, Language Learning skills, self-learning, Lifelong learning.

Introduction:

Nowadays, educational technology is fast spreading worldwide, and we find the use of technology in teaching and learning foreign languages is also growing rapidly. Many studies have been carried out on the effect of technology on students' achievement and attitudes (Nahed.E, 2016). Stepp-Greany studied the technology benefits in the foreign language

classroom: “increased motivation, improvement in self-concept and mastery of basic skills, more student-centered learning and engagement in the learning process, and more active processing, resulting in higher-order thinking skills and better recall”. (Stepp-Greany, 2002)

In the Indian educational scenario, English is the first foreign language, almost the mother tongue and French is one of the foreign languages studied. French is taught in most private schools, colleges, and universities in the cities or metros. Lately, a rise in demand for French at the university level has been noticed. It has been subjectively observed that there are difficulties in teaching French at Indian schools and universities. The most important problem is the teaching methodology. Previous research has indicated that methodologies and educational resources used in India are mainly traditional (Jeevaratnam G, 2019). The present descriptive study focuses on the subsequent question: Do students prefer the use of technology in teaching-learning French this research aims also, to investigate to what extent students and professors use information technology in teaching and learning French at the Indian Higher Education level. Now, as education is paramount on corporate and academic grounds, we find education is geared towards motivation: building inquisitiveness in students' intellects and self-learning. Educators believe that this acquisition problem can be solved with the use of technology. Finally, the findings of this research should be useful in improving the methods of French teaching/learning in India. They also help in preparing training programs for professors in the field of technology and syllabus design.

Education & Technology in the Present Era:

Today, technological innovation simply makes life easy and smooth, the younger generation is in a way dependent on technology. Students today can use technology in the following ways

- **Internet & education:** Over the decade, the Internet has achieved dominance, and its stature in education can no longer be undervalued. Today, like air, water, food, and shelter, the Internet also became very vital in everything we use. In most inventions from our televisions to our smartphones, the internet is indeed ubiquitous. The use of the internet permits students to gain knowledge wherever they are, whenever they require it, and within seconds. They can encounter also a wide variety of reinforcement, tutorials, and different kinds of supporting materials that can be used to enhance and improve their learning.
- **Audio-Visuals for better learning:** Illustrated images consistently hold a more assertive appeal than phrases. Another significant benefit of technology is the usage of projectors and images to facilitate French foreign language learning: The learners get to see and hear authentic French. The use of good-looking PowerPoint presentations and projections keeps learning interactive and amusing and improves engagement and interest and also enhances motivation. Students like to glimpse something that makes them think instead of reading phrases. The understanding component furthermore evolves effectively when technology is applied.
- **Digital education:** The penetration of digital media in the education sector has currently extended. This enables the students to get connected with different forums that are open for diverse categories of assignments or assistance. With the influence of digital education mushrooming, there are and there will be better applications that will

help students in development and learning. The finest establishments propose online programs with the use of eclectic apps and the internet and certify them. Online degree systems worldwide stand more favored among laboring students who are looking for adaptable study schedules and enhanced career opportunities.

Methodology:

The methodology used here is descriptive survey methods. The sample size is 35 and these students are learning French for one year or more. First, the student's attitude to learning French as a foreign language with technology was observed during the study period (two weeks). They were also administered questionnaires with 13 questions. The responses to these questionnaires were scrutinized and analyzed for primary data. Task-based learning, Quizzes (using digital tools), presentations, discussions/ debates, role plays, and simulations are some of the activities given to students using information technology and for reinforcement they were asked to do more self-study with the Duolingo app.

Analysis & Observations:

Observations: The French class was always interactive with ICT assisted teaching learning atmosphere. The students were encouraged to practice, repeat and ask questions. This motivated the students and they found French classes to be fun and learning was faster and more permanent. The responses of 35 students are analyzed regarding the user-friendliness and the impact of technology in learning french.

User-friendliness of technology in teaching-learning French: The analysis drawn from the questionnaire, the question on the user-friendliness of IT in learning French, 21 respondents agree, 7 respondents chose maybe, and 7 disagreed with the question.

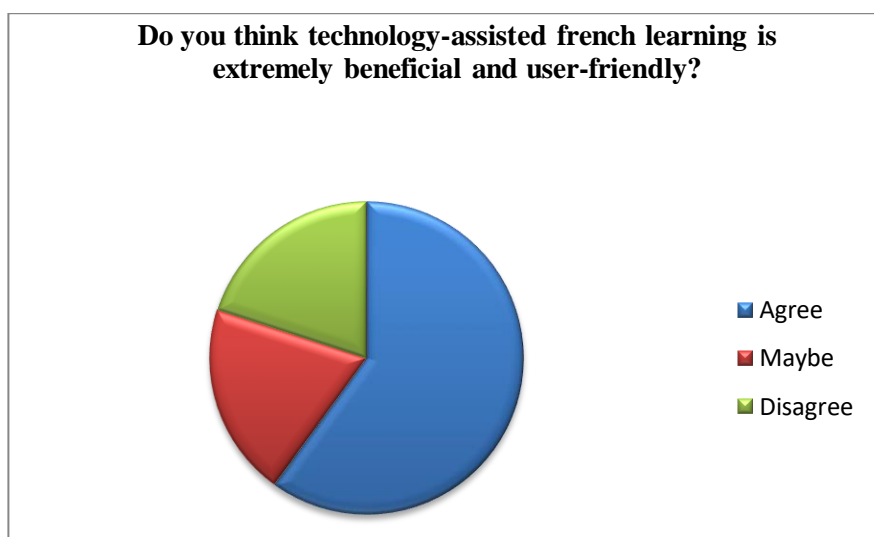


Figure 1: Image showing the user-friendliness of learning French through technology

Impact of teaching-learning French with technology:

On an academic front, ICT has the potential to improve education its relevancy and quality. Tinio (2002) affirmed that ICT has an enormous influence on education in terms of the acquisition and absorption of knowledge to both teachers and students through the promotion of Active learning, Collaborative and Cooperative learning, Creative Learning, Integrative learning, and Evaluative learning (Raja. R, Nagasubramani. P. C 2018). In the previous decades, task-based approaches have emphasized the accurate usage of the target language via tasks that concatenate the language to real-life activities. The concept of structures was trained; that is integrated through a “teaching strategy consisting of episodes, sequences of actions, and interactions which are partly planned and partly improvised”. (Van Lier, 1996: 100). Studies in the area of CALL has explored the disposition of tasks that might be operated in any language interaction like French, interceded by technology. A contemporary pedagogical methods and recent techniques for CALL task-based language education were oriented to the classrooms (Guichon, 2012)

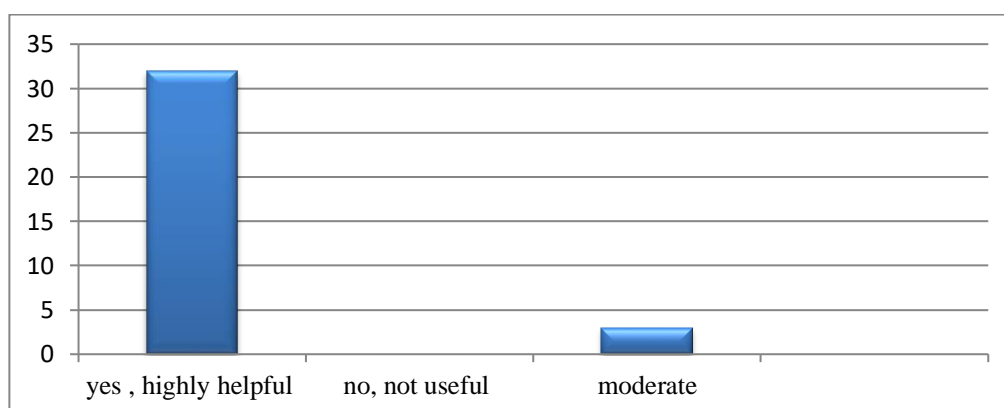


Figure 2: Image showing the usage of e-books and online materials for learning French

Out of 35 responses 33 students replied positively and 3 found the usage moderate.

The favorable consequence of teaching-learning French with technology

Promotes and Facilitates Teaching and Learning:

Technological evolutions become incredible sources for instructors to help French learners capture a concept easily and efficiently. When the French students were questioned on the various forms they use technology for learning French, their reply was:

- For using French e-dictionaries,
- Viewing the course contents in the form of ppts, AV modes posted by the teacher,
- Searching for self-study materials, referring to information related to their studies
- To accomplish the given task or assignments either in speaking or, in writing,
- Sharing the available resources and contents with others-groups

Learn French Anywhere Anytime:

When the institutes are in other regions of the state, the students can “meet” their peers online without the classroom presence. There are many sites available online to assist students to learn the French language. They can do a self-study course at their convenient time or learn online via video-conferencing with different groups of students with an instructor from different countries.

The unfavorable consequence of teaching-learning French with technology

Reducing Writing Mastery:

Because of the outrageous use of online texting, digital communication and shortcuts, the script mastery of students has sloped tremendously.

The students forget:

- The French spelling of most of the words,
- Use grammar suitably
- To have good handwriting.

Absence of Focus and trustworthiness:

Students are noticed using and playing with cell phones, very frequently even between lectures. As they are always linked with the virtual world they lose focus not only on their studies but also on other extension activities which will affect their mental and physical health undoubtedly.

Technical growths like graphic calculators, AI-based timepieces, etc have become sumptuous media to trick exams. Students can feed the answers into these e-devices that are permitted in the hall which reduces the chance of not being caught. To avoid these drawbacks there is a need for a proper rulebook for the best use of technology in the classroom and the students need to be strictly oriented about the dos and don'ts by the instructors.

Discussions & Results:

It has been revealed that with the use of technology and tools, students' proficiency to learn and interact in French will increase. The students felt that learning the French language online with ICT tools is much more interactive, and creates an interesting atmosphere for learning.

The understanding becomes absolutely easy and convenient at the same time quite efficient. This signifies that our minds tend to perform faster when assisted by the service of modern technology, in any part of life especially talking about French teaching-learning:

Benefits:

- Promotes motivation and enthusiasm in students to acquire French.
- Support students with engaged timetables and space to function at home for their own duration.
- Prepare students to discover the latest technology skills they can employ in the workplace. Technology can replace a native French speaker which helps students to improve French accents and pronunciation better.

Most French textbooks and materials even though available in book shops and libraries, the updated version is little expensive. The digital French books and materials lower document and photocopying expenses, encouraging the notion of “Go green”.

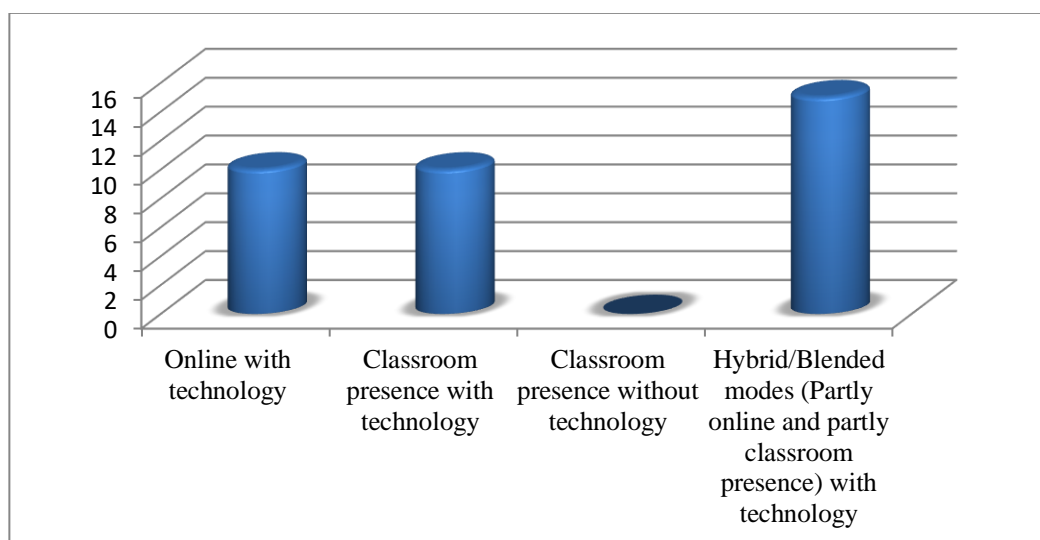


Figure 3: Image showing the preference of students in class environment

Out of 35 students, 10 students preferred online classes with technology, 10 students preferred physical classroom presence with technology and the remaining 15 students preferred to be taught in hybrid/blended modes for effective learning French.

Drawbacks:

- Lack of awareness among our Indian students regarding the effective use of technology-embedded French language learning.
- Numerous professionals and skilled people declare that with the integration of technology in education, students' creativity is dissembled, and their thinking capability is decreased.
- It is relatively expensive to install technological software and applications. Certain students can't afford current technologies.
- Over usage could cause health problems.

Conclusion:

Technology promotes an optimistic influence on education even in learning a new foreign language. Students and teachers use technology for communication, socialization, and entertainment. Information technology is an integral part of the lives of all, young and old people alike in India, therefore, the use of technology by students of French is quite an in order. Not using it for educational purposes would be an anomaly that would require explanation. This research shows that teachers and students of French are utilizing technology to its full potential and are also enjoying the learning process. At the same time, as it is mentioned in the paper, several constraints prevent them from using technology to the fullest: for example - the lack of classrooms equipped with technology and the lack of ongoing training for our teachers to integrate the new media in the teaching process. The huge variety of purposes in technology used to improve the learning/teaching of a language should be introduced by providing training courses to both students and professors that could be organized by the faculty. The teachers and students should take benefit of this in a sound manner and annihilate the disadvantages which are pulling back many students as well as institutes from reaching eminence. Hence, it is time for every nation to introduce and develop a more technologically equipped education sector in the coming near future (Raja. R, Nagasubramani. P. C 2018).

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