Social Media: A Way Forward in Students' Perception of French Language in Junior Secondary Schools in Benin Metropolis

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Abstract: **Over the years, the lackadaisical way in which students, parents and the society in general treat French language in Nigeria is very worrisome. Thus, this study is geared towards investigating the place of social media in students' learning abilities in French. The simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 100 JSS 3 students in 5 private junior secondary schools in Benin metropolis, Edo State. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. A four point Likert type rating scale questionnaire was adopted for the study. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage were used to analyse the demographic data while chi-square statistics was used in testing the research hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the JSS 3 students use social media wrongly and that social media can be used to enhance students' perception of French. Based on the findings, it was recommended that social media should be used by French language teachers to enhance students' perception of the subject. In addition, social networking sites should be expanded to enhance academic activities.**

Keywords: **Social media, students' perception, French language.**

I. INTRODUCTION

French is described as a foreign language in Nigeria. The language is one of the most recognized international languages in the world. In fact, it is regarded as one of the most important foreign languages spoken by most countries (Bariki, 1999). Thus, French language is both a foreign and as well an international language spoken by a vast section of the human race. Its importance spreads across the area of economic, technological, social and political development. For Nigeria to effectively interact and communicate with her neighbours for developmental purposes there is need for its citizens to learn and speak the French language. The reason why it is very important and necessary for Nigerians to speak French is because she is surrounded by four Francophone countries. She is bounded on the northwest by Niger, on the northeast by Chad republic, on the east by Cameroon and on the west by Benin Republic. Accordance to Emordi (1998), Nigeria needs French Language to communicate with the large number of other francophone countries in Africa and the world over. From the foregoing, Nigerian's ability to communicate with French language will go a long way to enhance the growth and development of the nation. According to Abah (2016) quoting Francois Hollands 2015 in Dakar, Senegal declared that "La langue Françoise n'est plus une langue de la France ou une langue parlée par les anciennes colonies de la France mais c'est une langue de humanité. (French language is no longer a language for only the French people and those people colonized by France, but it is now a language for all mankind). This declaration is very correct as French language may be declared as the 6th most utilized or widely spoken language in the world. Therefore, it is not a language that any nation can sweep under the carpet. Language has been described as a veritable tool for social development. It is in this direction that Danladi (2013) declared that, to learn a language is not only reaching out to others but to maintain a variety of social bond, a shared sense of values and communal awareness

It is pertinent to mention that the importance of French was brought to the fore front when the Late President Abacha in 1996 declared French by official fiat as a second official language in Nigeria. In realization of this official status, the Federal Government of Nigeria thus, recognized French as next to English as the most important foreign language to be taught in schools. Thus, section l paragraph 10 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) states that "..... French should be the second official language in Nigeria and it should be compulsory in primary and junior secondary schools.'' .Despite this laudable declaration and policy statement, French language teaching and learning is seen as a difficult subject as most students do not have interest in the subject. In fact, hardly do students offer French as a subject at the senior secondary school level in Nigeria. One of the reasons is that the students can hardly communicate with the language even after years of exposure to it. It is against this backdrop that this researcher decided to find out if social media can enhance students' interest in the subject?

Social media is one of the tools of science that facilitate communication and interaction in the universe. Social media has been described as the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Simply put, they are forms of electronic communication through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other contents such as videos. Social media has been described as a vast platform of communication that is used by people around the globe. In this era of globalization, social networking sites are utilized today by both adults and

youths especially. This is true because this time and age has been described as the digital age. It is a digital age because there are about 5.11 billion unique mobile phone users in the world currently, with about 4 billion internet users as at January 2019, while social media users are 3.48 billion. About 3.26 billion of these internet users are connected to social media on their mobile devices. This escalated quickly especially with today's digital natives generation using SNS as a daily routine in their lives (Sukri, Mustapha,,Othman, Aralas and Ismail 2018). SNS is seen as a medium that allows every individual to share information, opinion and thoughts efficiently as it exists in every tablet, mobile phones, computers and laptops which makes it easier for people to connect with people around the world.

Social media helps individual to maintain and strengthen societies, which can be of benefit to social and academic groups. Social networking sites encourages users to generate content and share experiences and opinions which has provided foreign language teachers with a unique opportunity to tap into an authentic environment for their students. However, these sites can be detrimental to students if precautionary measures are overlooked. Interestingly, social media platforms provide vast and flexible opportunities for contact, communication and cooperation (Omekwu 2019). This assertion was earlier made by Paliwala (2001) who declared that digital systems have become "an integral part of contemporary life and work experience and is therefore, in itself, relevant to the academic enterprise. In fact, social media has become an important/integral part of the teaching and learning process. According to Omekwu (2019) the application of ICT gadgets that have internet connection such as mobile phones, laptops and tabs made it easier for students to gain access to information from the internet. According to this scholar, these devices enable students and teachers have all the information they need about any kind of topic they want to know about. In fact, Omweku proposed what he called 'smart school'. Smart School according to Omidinia, Masrom and Selamat (2013) in Omweku (2019) "is a technology-based teaching learning institution for preparing children for the information age". Thus, advanced equipment and technology are used in the teaching and learning process. The teaching-learning involves a lot of demonstrations and illustrations, digital gadgets and these, make learning interactive and creative which to a very large extent is needed for the effective cultivation of the French language as a subject. The ability of interacting and communicating in the target language will certainly go a long way to boost students' interest in the subject (French). This idea is in line with Omweku (2019), who declared that a smart school is a learning environment that encourages students' digital technology (mass media) and systems as means of enhancing learning.

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to mention that literature abounds on the impact of social media on the academic achievement of students. However, in the area of French language MC Dermott (2013) declared that the utilization of social media in the teaching and learning of French language is rare. He however, declared that one of the objectives of teaching the foreign language is to facilitate communication, thus, the utilization of social media will facilitate the speaking of French language. Khan (2010) declared in his studies that media help students to ameliorate their studies. To reiterate Khan's findings, Jain, Verma, Verma and Tiwari (2012) declared that students benefit from chatting with other students, teachers and external sources to acquire knowledge. In the same vain, Yumus and Salehi (2012) opined that students gained more vocabulary, improved their writing skills and reduced their spelling mistakes through social media usage. In a study titled pedagogical implication of the use of multimedia in teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools carried out by Gbaye (2015) on 128 JSS students, it was revealed that students who had a hard copy text supported by visual materials such as pictures, or video file played during class or carton or a map in French language performed better than those who were limited to the hard copy text or written notes only. In another study, carried out in Japan on the use of educational social networking site for English language learning beyond the classroom by Kumuraj (2016), it was revealed that educational social networking called "Edmodo" enhanced the development of the students' communicative competence.

However, despite all the positive effects or impact revealed in the findings of scholars. There is literature which revealed the negative impact of social networking sites on students' academic achievements. For instance, Rithika and Selvaraj (2013) revealed that social networking sties like Facebook, Twitter, Orkut etc divert students from their studies. In line with Rithika and Selvaraj (2013), Talue, Alsaad, Alrushaidan, Alhugail and Alfahhad (2018) Opine that social media which is an integral part of the student's full life, took up most of his (student) spare time, stressing that social media has negative impact on students' academic achievement. It is against this backdrop that Benard and Dzandza (2018) described social media in their studies as a useful servant, but a dangerous master and a two edge sword which showed that despite the benefits that students can harness from social media network, there is to some extent addiction and distraction of attention caused by the use of social media. Still on the negative impact of social media on the academic achievement of students, Asemah, OKpanachi and Edegoh (2013), carried out a research on some undergraduate students in Kogi state university and concluded that exposure to social media by the students has negative effect of their academic performance.

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the use of social media and academic achievement in French.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted survey design. According to Alli (2006), a survey is a descriptive study which seeks or uses the sample

data in an investigation to describe and explain what is existent, on the present status or phenomenon being investigated. In surveys, views and facts are collected, analysed and used for answering research questions.

The population for the study comprises of all the 1964 private Junior Secondary Class III students of Benin Metropolis.

The simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 students from 5 schools in Benin City. The instrument for the study was a self-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections – A and B.

Section A was used to collect demographic data of the students while section B was on the variable selected from the study. The questionnaire was designed in Likert type which was scored in the order of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D)

The data collected was analysed using the percentage and chi-square (x^2)

III. RESULTS

To test the hypothesis for the study, a contingency table was used in scoring the respondents' opinion.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the use of social media and academic achievement of students in French Language.

DF = 12, LS = 0.05, x^2 cal = 69.81, x^2 tab = 21.03. Decision: Reject the hypothesis.

From the above, the calculated value is greater than the tabulated chi-square value, that is, x^2 Cal (69.81), x^2 tab (21.03). Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between the use of social media and students' academic achievement in French.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A%	SD%	D%
1.	Social media can be used to enhance better understanding of French in class	44	36	02	18
2.	Teacher can reveal to student through social media the simple ways of developing the speaking skills of French	11	71	10	08
3.	Social media can be used to enhance students reading and writing skills in French	49	36	4	11
4.	Social media can be used for group learning and interaction to improve communicative competency of French	56	31	2	11
5.	Negative use of social media distract students attention from learning	48	27	05	20

IV. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The result of the findings for the hypothesis for the study revealed that the use of social media improves academic achievement of students in French. From the table above, 44%

of the respondents strongly agreed and 36% agreed that social media can be used to enhance better understanding of French in the classroom. Furthermore, 56% strongly agreed and 31% agreed that social media can be used for group learning and interaction which can improve students' communicative competency in French. This finding is in line with MC Dermot (2013) who declared that the utilization of social media in the teaching and learning of French language will facilitate the speaking of French. This same assertion was earlier made by Jain, Verma, Verma and Tiwari (2012) who asserted that students benefits from chatting with each other, teachers and external sources to acquire knowledge. In line with this finding also is that of Kumura (2016) who declared that educational social networking enhanced the development of students' communicative competence.

On the other hand, the findings of the study also revealed that if social media is not properly or fitly used, it can destroy students' seriousness in academics. This was revealed in the table which showed that 48% of the respondents strongly agreed while 27% agreed that if social media is not properly used it can lead to negative tendencies or poor learning outcomes. This findings is in consonance with the findings of Rithika and Selvaraji (2013) and Talue, Alsaad, Alhugail and Alfahhad (2018) who declared that social media has negative impact on students learning. Furthermore, Bernard and Dzanda (2018) also agrees with this study. In fact, Bernard and Dzandza (2018) aptly described social media as a useful servant but a dangerous master and a two edge sword which showed that despite the benefits of social media utilization on students' academic achievement, if not properly monitored by teachers and parents can lead to distractions which will eventually lead to poor performance of students. A cursory look at the findings of this study therefore, reveal that social media has both "beautiful" and "ugly" sides which makes it two sides of a coin. A proper utilization of it can enhance the academic achievement of students whereas, improper/ wrong utilization of it can destroy the academic achievement of students, not only in French language but in all school subjects.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study. Social media can be described as "two sides of a coin", with good and bad sides. However, though it (social media) can have negative effect on students if not well used its positive effect or impart far more out weights its negative effect if properly and appropriately utilized. The content of the language syllabus is made up of the four language skills (that is listening, speaking, reading and writing) and lexis and structure. These skills and structure can be effectively learnt with students' interaction with each other and their teachers via the social media which can lead to their acquisition of both the linguistic and communicative competencies of French Language.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Since social media platforms provide vast and flexible opportunities for contact, communication and cooperation, students should be exposed to its use from primary school level. Therefore, teachers must endeavor to introduce students at the primary school level on the use of computer and smart phones in carrying out assignments.
2. Schools should encourage parents to get their children or ward smart phones or computers as soon as they are admitted into secondary schools.
3. Schools should on a monthly basis organize lectures, on how to use social media.
4. Teachers and parents must enlighten the students on the danger of over indulging or utilization of social media.
5. The use of social media by students must be monitored by teachers in school and parents at home.
6. Schools must expose students to different networking sites and educate them on the dangers of using some of these sites.
7. Schools should strive to organize train-the-trainer course for the teachers from time to time as to be abreast with the happenings and use of social media.
8. In this era of digital age, parents should strive to know about social media so as to serve as a guide to their children. The reason is that you can only give what you have; you cannot give what you do not have .

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