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# **Innovations in English Language Education: New Issues and Trends**

Edited by Bronwen Hughes and Margaret Rasulo



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Via Nuova Marina, 59 - 80133, Napoli  
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DIANGHA ANTHONY YUH\*

## Digitalization of the Post-pandemic Language Classroom in Cameroon and the Use of Technology in Teaching: Rethinking Local Policy on Classroom Praxis

### Abstract

*The digitalization of the language classroom in Cameroon has predominantly been confined to the utilization of the distance learning platform facilitated by the Ministry of Secondary Education. However, this research paper endeavours to transcend the limitations of this narrow perspective by presenting a comprehensive and expansive view of digitalization in the context of language teaching. By exploring the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and other technological innovations, this study critically examines the prevailing local policy in the West Region of Cameroon, which imposes restrictions on the use of technology in traditional language classrooms. In doing so, it advocates for a paradigm shift towards a more innovative and forward-thinking approach to language pedagogy that aligns with the expectations and demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By broadening the understanding of digitalization in the language classroom, this research paper seeks to inspire educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to uphold transformative practices that harness the potential of technology to revolutionize language teaching and learning across all regions in Cameroon.*

**Keywords:** Digitalization, language classroom, Cameroon, ICT tools, technological innovations, language pedagogy

### 1. Introduction

The digital transformation of education has become imperative in our rapidly changing global landscape, and the language classroom is no exception. In Cameroon, as in many countries, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in education through the development of distance learning platforms by the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC). However, conceptualizations of digitalization in Cameroonian language pedagogy have often been narrowly constrained, primarily focusing on the implementation of these online platforms (Yuh 2023). This narrowed conceptualization is obviously not aligned with what the Cameroon minister of secondary education might have in mind as

\* DIANGHA ANTHONY YUH, Université de Dschang, yuhantoine@hotmail.com.

she advocates for the digitalization of the language classroom. The limited perspective on digitalization fails to acknowledge the fuller potential of integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) and other technological innovations into language teaching methodology.

Scholarly discussions have increasingly recognized the need for a more comprehensive understanding of digitalization in language education. Scholars emphasize that digital transformation extends beyond mere virtual delivery of lessons to encompass utilizing digital technologies and ICTs within classroom instruction. Likewise, Yuh (2023) argues technological advancements have necessarily transformed language teaching practices, requiring innovative approaches aligned with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Similarly, Morley *et al.* (2018) advocate integrating ICT tools into language pedagogy to enhance learning outcomes. Within Cameroon's linguistically diverse secondary education system, comprising both anglophone and francophone streams, the language classroom faces multiple challenges. These include overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, and criticism of curricula lacking emphasis on higher-order thinking and problem-solving (Gavach 2016). Furthermore, local policies in regions like the West Region restrict using ICTs such as laptops, phones and tablets in language instruction (Yuh 2023). While research from other contexts highlights benefits of technological integration (Kassie *et al.* 2002) Cameroon's policy at local level in some regions perpetuates a kind of methodological atavism inhibiting digital transformation.

This paper aims to examine current local directives concerning praxis in Cameroonian secondary language classrooms, particularly in the West Region. Drawing on constructivist and situated learning theories, I argue that the careful integration of technology and digital tools into traditional pedagogy should be non-optional in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This aims to diversify learning experiences and promote communicative competency aligned with Cameroon's Competency Based language teaching model. The research seeks fuller conceptualizations of digitalization to strategically leverage technological affordances for both online and physical classroom contexts where possible in Cameroon.

## **2. The concept of digitalization in language teaching**

### *2.1. Definition and scope of digitalization*

Digitalization in the context of language pedagogy refers to the holistic integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs)

and evolving technological innovations into the language learning process. It encompasses more than mere utilization of online distance learning platforms or tools for virtual lesson delivery. Broadly conceived, digitalization involves strategically leveraging a diverse array of digital tools – including laptops, tablets, mobile phones, multimedia applications and interactive software – to cultivate an immersive, collaborative and engaging learning environment (Chun *et al.* 2016).

The scope of digitalization also extends beyond the physical bounds of the traditional classroom to encompass blended learning approaches that skilfully combine in-person instruction with online components to diversify learning modalities (Morley *et al.* 2018). Digitalization, thus, is not confined to virtual spaces but aims to optimize technology's potential to facilitate dynamic teacher-student interactions, provide enriched access to authentic target language resources, and foster situated communicative competence through collaborative digital projects. So, by systematically integrating advanced technologies, digitalization seeks to reimagine conventional language classrooms as vibrantly learner-centred environments attentive to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills development. It transforms pedagogical praxis from the solely theoretical transmission of knowledge toward interactive, project-based modes of experiential learning that actively prepare students for an increasingly digitalized global society (Reinders / Hubbard 2013). Comprehensively conceptualized, digitalization promotes innovative methodologies attentive to diverse learning styles while cultivating digital literacy and its social, cognitive benefits for language acquisition.

## *2.2. Integration of ICT tools in the language classroom*

The strategic integration of information and communication technology (ICT) tools represents a core facet of meaningful digitalization efforts in language education. ICTs encompass a wide array of hardware, software and networked platforms – including computers, tablets, smartphones, digital projectors, interactive whiteboards, bespoke language learning applications, and online collaborative platforms. These diverse technologies provide rich opportunities to transform language teaching practices. ICT tools empower educators to design dynamic multimedia lessons facilitating interactive engagement and immediate formative feedback (Morley *et al.*

2018). They allow immersive language use through virtual exchanges, simulations and digital stories. Moreover, ICTs facilitate access to an abundant pool of authentic target language resources, such as online texts, audiovisual media and virtual language communities.

ICT integration also personalizes the learning experience. Tools like adaptive software, e-books and mobile applications support differentiated instruction aligned with diverse learning preferences and styles. They provide multimedia scaffolding and allow self-paced study. Furthermore, ICTs foster collaborative learning through online discussion forums, collaborative writing tools, and group projects employing multimedia. Such platforms promote higher-order communication and cooperation skills crucial for success in an interconnected world. In sum, purposefully leveraging ICTs as an integral component of reimagined language pedagogy can transform conventional classrooms into vibrant hubs of personalized, interactive and situated language development attentive to 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies.

### *2.3. The role of digital technologies in language pedagogy*

While infrastructure barriers hampering widespread technology access persist across Cameroon's varied landscape, the potential of digital tools in reimagining pedagogy should not be discounted. Despite connectivity constraints, committed language educators continue striving to leverage low-cost solutions maximizing available affordances to enrich instruction. As the literature underscores, innovative technologies play a pivotal role in cultivating engaging, student-centred learning environments supportive of communicative competency development when judiciously applied (Morley *et al.* 2018).

Even within Cameroon's prevailing infrastructural constraints, the strategic integration of fundamental technological tools and platforms enables the promotion of immersive, experiential learning opportunities. Offline, mobile-based applications and resources facilitate the design of dynamic, multimedia-enriched, project-based activities that foster authentic language use and cultivate global cultural awareness and exchange in diverse formats. Additionally, through collaborative authoring interfaces and dialogical virtual forums, educators can leverage such technologies to nourish ongoing professional development, sharing strategically curated Open Educational Resources and instructional materials optimized for alignment with the

national language curriculum. Though institutional challenges persist, harnessing available technological affordances holds transformative potential for reimagining pedagogy and elevating language learning outcomes.

Digital tools moreover catalyse dynamic paradigm shifts supporting self-directed language acquisition beyond physical classrooms. Mobile applications and formative assessments can provide personalized feedback and differentiated scaffolding for independent skill development catering to diverse contexts nationwide. With sustained governmental commitment to infrastructure expansion and specialized training, Cameroonian classrooms can increasingly leverage technological innovations to reimagine traditionally taught competencies for global participation, using the Competency Based model being applied in language classrooms across the country. Though challenges persist, the potential of strategically applied technologies in nurturing engaged, student-centred pedagogy warrants continued experimentation and support, especially as this move aligns with the vision of the Minister of Secondary Education in Cameroon.

### **3. The current state of language teaching in Cameroon**

#### *3.1. Overview of Cameroon's education system and language instruction*

Cameroon maintains a bilingual approach to education with English and French serving as the country's dual official languages prescribed by the Constitution (Gavach 2016), and contextually used as mediums of instruction across Cameroon. The national education system comprises two parallel sub-systems reflective of Cameroon's linguistic duality – the anglophone stream primarily utilized in the Northwest and Southwest regions, and the predominant francophone stream across the remaining provinces (Gavach 2016). Within each subsystem, a primary objective of language education centres on developing balanced proficiency in both English and French amongst students. In the anglophone system, English functions as the primary medium of instruction (MOI), while French is taught formally as a second language (FSL) through dedicated classes/ subjects from Form one to Upper Sixths. Conversely, in francophone schools or Francophone sections of Bilingual secondary schools French assumes the role of MOI with English instruction allocated as the secondary EFL, conventionally labelled 'Anglais' as a subject or sub discipline within the secondary school system.

Cameroon's ambitious bilingual language education initiative has come under significant scrutiny in recent years. Critiques from education experts and stakeholders have highlighted a range of persistent issues that undermine the effective implementation of the country's bilingual policy. Chief amongst these concerns are the widespread inadequacies in teacher qualifications, with many instructors lacking the specialized training and language proficiency required to deliver high-quality bilingual instruction. Additionally, the lack of appropriate, research-based teaching methodologies tailored to the unique needs of bilingual learners has been cited as a major impediment. The shortage of well-designed, contextually relevant bilingual instructional materials further compounds the challenges faced by both teachers and students in the classroom context. Furthermore, the problem of overcrowded classrooms, where students struggle to receive the individualized attention necessary for developing balanced proficiency in both the English and French languages, has been a significant obstacle to the policy's aim of promoting true biliteracy. Perhaps most concerning, assessments have revealed highly variable mastery of the target languages amongst graduates, with many exhibiting uneven levels of proficiency that fail to meet the standards envisioned by the bilingual education programme. Collectively, these challenges serve to undermine the overarching goal of the bilingual policy – to cultivate a foundation of English-French biliteracy that can support national cohesion and meaningful participation in regional integration efforts across Cameroon.

### *3.2. Challenges faced by the language classroom in Cameroon*

The language classroom setting across Cameroon confronts an array of persistent obstacles that significantly impede the efficacy of teaching and learning processes. Firstly, the endemic issue of overcrowded classrooms (Fontem/Oyetade 2008) poses a major challenge, making it exceedingly difficult for educators to provide the necessary individualized attention and interactive language practice opportunities required for cultivating student competencies (Gavach 2016). These large class sizes inherently limit meaningful student-teacher interactions and markedly hinder the development of learners' communicative language skills and real-world application of target linguistic abilities.

Secondly, the dearth of adequate infrastructure and constrained access to essential educational resources pose challenges impeding effective language teaching and learning across the Cameroonian context (Gavach 2016). Numerous schools, particularly in underserved areas, lack access to fundamental facilities such as well-equipped language laboratories, libraries, and up-to-date language learning materials. This scarcity of vital resources substantially limits students' opportunities to engage in authentic, immersive language use and precludes their ability to readily access high-quality linguistic resources necessary for fostering communicative competencies aligned with pedagogical objectives.

Additionally, the prevailing curriculum framework implemented across Cameroon's education system has faced substantial criticism for its disproportionate emphasis on rote memorization and grammar-centric instruction, which ultimately neglects the crucial development of communicative competence and higher-order critical thinking skills amongst learners (Gavach 2016). However, the introduction of the Competency-Based language teaching model aims to address these shortcomings by promoting more interactive, student-centred pedagogies. The challenge lies in ensuring teachers consistently apply this innovative curricular approach, as the traditional teaching methodologies typical of language classrooms often prioritize decontextualised grammar drills and translation exercises, which may prove insufficient in cultivating students' capacity for meaningful communication and authentic language use within real-world scenarios.

### *3.3. Policy restrictions on the use of technology in traditional classrooms*

Within certain regions of Cameroon such as the West Region, bureaucratic directives place constraints curtailing purposeful incorporation of educational technologies and ICT tools into conventional classroom contexts (Yuh 2023). Specifically, established guidelines proscribe utilizing laptops, tablets and mobile phones to supplement language instruction. Such restrictions ostensibly originate from concerns pertaining to potential distractions from academic objectives and prudent device usage, as well as deficiencies in pedagogical understanding of technologies' affordances. While the Ministry of Secondary Education has laudably introduced digital distance learning platforms amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, governing policy restrictive of

technology implementation within traditional classrooms remains largely unchanged (Yuh 2023).

These longstanding constraints imposed by restrictive policy directives inhibit the full realization of the well-documented academic, social-emotional, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skill benefits that the strategic integration of technological tools and platforms can confer upon language acquisition processes when methodologically implemented. In light of such entrenched challenges perpetuating the inhibition of systemic digital transformation and the evolving societal demands for technologically adept graduates, the urgent need to re-envision these dated policy directives has become increasingly apparent. Thoughtfully harnessing the transformative potential of diverse technologies, including mobile phones, tablets, and laptops, can align curricula with international best practices promoting engaged, interactive learning and better prepare learners for navigating an increasingly technology-mediated world.

#### **4. The potential of ICTs in the language classroom**

##### *4.1. Review of scholarly literature on the use of ICTs in education*

The strategic use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as pedagogical tools in educational contexts, including second/foreign language teaching and learning, has garnered substantial attention within academic research. A wealth of empirical studies and review articles have explored the affordances, implementation challenges, and learning outcomes associated with purposefully integrating technologies across diverse instructional settings.

In their seminal review, Kozma and Anderson (2002) synthesized a sizeable body of evidence highlighting ICTs' positive influence on cultivating student engagement, intrinsic motivation, and achievement through interactive, collaborative learning experiences. Similarly, analyzing contextual factors shaping technology adoption, Warschauer (2004) underscored how deploying ICTs judiciously could help bridge prevailing digital access divides and facilitate equitable provision of rich educational resources, particularly within underserved communities. But beyond these foundational contributions, extensive research has also investigated various technology tools and platforms. For example, multiple meta-analyses corroborate that one-to-one computing initiatives boost academic

performance across disciplines when leveraged to enhance authentic, project-based learning (Zheng *et al.* 2016; Varier *et al.* 2017). Blended and online learning environments were found to promote cognitive presence and higher-order critical thinking when designed according to connected pedagogical principles (Akyol/Garrison 2011; Borup *et al.* 2014). At the same time, numerous qualitative explorations have uncovered attitudinal, sociocultural and implementation factors shaping technology use (Ifenthaler/Schweinbenz 2013). Institutional support structures, professional development quality, and pedagogical expertise dimensions have emerged as key determinants of successful, sustained integration efforts.

#### *4.2. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and its impact on language skills*

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), defined as the strategic leveraging of portable digital devices like smartphones and tablets to supplement and enrich language instruction, has emerged as a particularly compelling subset of ICT integration given the widespread proliferation and adoption of mobile technologies across diverse contexts (Burston 2014; Kukulska-Hulme/Shield 2008). Numerous empirical studies have documented MALL's promising affordances for enabling ubiquitous, contextualized language practice aligned with social-constructivist pedagogical models, offering significant potential to enhance language acquisition outcomes (Keskin/Metcalfe 2011).

Empirical investigations across diverse contexts have furnished compelling evidence of MALL's ability to positively impact the development of varied language proficiencies. For instance, Thornton and Houser's (2005) study incorporating mobile vocabulary applications with undergraduate Spanish learners observed sizeable gains in lexical retention and recall compared to traditional approaches. Similarly, experiments integrating multimedia-enriched resources accessed via mobile phones to enhance English listening skills found significantly improved comprehension outcomes amongst test groups relative to control cohorts (Stockwell 2007; Wu *et al.* 2012). Such findings highlight MALL's transformative potential for language teaching and learning. Additional research highlights MALL's capacity to advance oral communication abilities. Several studies reported benefits such as increased willingness to communicate verbally through recorded speaking exercises accessible on phones (Lu 2008). Mobile language exchange

applications connecting learners internationally also showed efficacy for fostering speaking fluency via authentic informal conversations (Jauregi *et al.* 2011; Thornton / Houser 2005). Surveys further indicate learners perceive MALL as lending a stronger sense of autonomy and control over personalized learning experiences

In summary, the thoughtful integration of well-designed mobile technologies affords compelling opportunities to make language study more situative, engaging, and effective at developing overall proficiency amongst learners when leveraged strategically for supplemental practice and reinforcement (Huang *et al.* 2010; Kukulska-Hulme/Shield, 2008; Zurita/Nussbaum 2004).

#### *4.3. Benefits of technology integration for teachers and learners*

The strategic integration of instructional technologies in language education provides multifaceted advantages for both instructors and students when leveraged judiciously. To begin, digital tools empower educators to design immersive, participatory lessons through interactive multimedia platforms. For instance, technologies like interactive whiteboards and educational software enable incorporation of enriched audiovisual elements, collaborative activities, and formative assessments to heighten engagement (Levy 2009; Morley *et al.* 2018).

Furthermore, advanced technologies facilitate the implementation of differentiated pedagogical approaches, tailored to accommodate the diverse learning profiles prevalent in modern classrooms. Through the strategic utilization of digital platforms, educators can personalize content delivery and provide scaffolding via customized assignments, thereby offering targeted support while simultaneously presenting appropriately challenging tasks (Pegrum 2014). This nuanced diversification of instructional methods not only caters to individual learning needs but also fosters learner autonomy through student-paced, self-directed practice. Such an approach aligns seamlessly with constructivist theories of education, emphasizing active engagement and knowledge construction (Bax 2003).

Also, technologies afford equitable access to authentic language resources through online repositories and collaborative platforms (Hubbard 2013). Language learners can gain exposure to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts via interactive multimedia exercises, gamified activities and communicative

exchanges with international peers (Chapelle/Jamieson 2008). These contextualized experiences optimize skill development (Kessler/Hubbard 2017). Digital tools have been found to promote collaboration through student-centred, cooperative learning modalities. Project-based assignments conducted via virtual classrooms, discussion forums and collaborative authoring tools develop higher-order communication competencies essential for global competency.

In Cameroonian classrooms navigating infrastructure constraints, project-based learning cultivated via basic technologies remains impactful for developing higher-order communication. With sustained commitment to specialized training and expanding connectivity, classrooms can increasingly leverage strategic technology integration shown to promote engaging, personalized pedagogies supporting proficiency-based outcomes. Though challenges remain, committed educators continue striving to maximize available affordances enriching adaptive, student-centred instruction.

## **5. Rethinking local policy on classroom praxis**

### *5.1. Critique of the methodological atavism in some Cameroon's language classrooms*

A discerning analysis of the prevailing pedagogical climate characterizing Cameroon's language classrooms reveals deeply entrenched patterns of methodological atavism that contradict evidence-based advances, and even goes against the aspirations of the present minister of Secondary Education. The stubborn clinging to obsolete practices rooted in bygone eras presents an impediment to progress, innovation and positive reform. Specifically, the perpetuation of teacher-centred, rote instructional styles privileging grammatical rules and mechanical exercises over meaningful communicative experiences fails to optimize student-centred constructs that should emphasize experiential learning through social interaction (Gavach 2016). Such rigid, archaic methodologies stifle creative and critical thinking through an overdependence on mindless recitation and drills disconnected from authentic language usage contexts. Though this pedagogical praxis may operate in contradistinction to the intentions of the hierarchy, insistence on traditional methods of lesson delivery can be misconstrued as a call to shun the integration of technology into language pedagogy.

Moreover, limited attention allocated to developing higher-order competencies like cooperation, negotiation of meaning, and literacy

proficiencies through collaborative project-based learning impedes learners' aptitudes for navigating today's globally connected societies (Katz 2020; Yuh 2023). Without targeted reforms, this entrenched methodological atavism will continue obstructing the holistic development of communicative and intercultural competencies sought through Cameroon's bilingual vision statement. To forbid the use of technological tools, thus, is to forbid access to a wide array of resources, some of which could be instantly sought to address situations that might arise in the language classroom.

In summary, urgent redress is needed to modernize the pedagogical landscape in Cameroon through systematic professional development on constructivist, sociocultural approaches, particularly in the west region. This will go a long way to harness strategic integration of technological affordances for engaging, interactive language learning conducive to 21<sup>st</sup> century demands (Blattner/Fiori 2009; Gavach 2016).

### *5.2. The need for innovative approaches to language pedagogy*

Considering the pressing need to modernize practices underscored in the preceding critique, an imperative emerges to embrace transformative change redirecting the course of language education. To optimize student outcomes amidst globalization, pedagogical landscapes must transition beyond convention, instead pioneering innovative methods situated at the vanguard of evidence-based practice. The exigency lies in cultivating pedagogies that ignite passion for perpetual learning through engagement in authentic, experiential activities. Strategically harnessing novel constructs like experiential education, social constructivism and multidimensional assessments can re-envision pedagogy and optimize the development of higher-order capacities for communication, collaboration, problem-solving and intercultural competence.

Moreover, the judicious incorporation of emerging technologies at the forefront of educational innovation – such as blended learning models, mobile-integrated ePortfolios, and virtual collaborative communities – can serve as a catalyst for this paradigmatic shift in pedagogical practice. When thoughtfully integrated within sociocultural frameworks, these innovative technological tools have the potential to nurture highly interactive, student-centred learning environments. Such environments are particularly conducive to cultivating essential 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, including intellectual curiosity,

creative problem-solving, and critical reflexivity. This synergistic fusion of cutting-edge technology and established educational theories not only enhances engagement but also promotes deeper, more meaningful learning experiences that prepare students for the rapidly evolving global landscape.

In a nutshell, embracing pioneering pedagogical reform through theory-driven technology integration presents a timely opportunity to transform obsolete models and forge new instructional paths that maximize learners' potential to thrive in a globally connected future through proficient linguistic media. Thus, if language pedagogy in Cameroon (particularly in the West Region) is to instil 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into the learners, it goes without saying that the integration of technology into language teaching becomes nonoptional.

### *5.3. Supporting arguments based on learning theories and models*

The call to rethink local policy on classroom praxis within the Cameroonian context, particularly in the West Region, finds resolute support within esteemed sociocultural learning theories. Constructivism, as espoused by Vygotsky and Piaget, underscores the vital role of engaged social learning and authentic experiences in knowledge construction (Kalina/Powell 2009; Ültanir 2012). By embracing collaborative, technology-supported pedagogies, educators can cultivate vibrant communities where meaningful interactions flourish and critical thinking blossoms (Falloon 2020).

Moreover, cognitive load theory posits that effective instruction optimizes cognitive resources by presenting multi-modal, personalized materials calibrated to learner capacities (Sweller 2011). By leveraging technology to deliver scaffolded, experiential learning tailored for diverse styles, educators can facilitate optimal language acquisition (Clark/Mayer 2016; Moreno/Mayer 2007). In tandem, the Community of Inquiry framework outlines social, cognitive and teaching presences essential for productive online exchanges (Akyol/Garrison 2011). Purposefully integrating virtual exchanges cultivates engaged communities supporting quality interaction, knowledge-building and shared understanding, but to arrive there, familiarity with basic use of technology in the language classroom must be encouraged in Cameroon.

Additionally, transformative learning theory advocates for perspective-shifting experiences promoting self-reflection and autonomy (Mezirow 1997). In the Cameroonian context, where differences exist across diverse

linguistic, ethnic, and regional communities, transformative learning theory provides an impactful framework. Collaborative projects conducted through technology-mediated instruction that connects learners across these divides can nurture willingness to negotiate varied viewpoints and gain sociocultural competence. Such experiences exploring perspectives outside one's immediate community are particularly beneficial in Cameroon, helping to foster cultural awareness, empathy, and national unity. By facilitating transformative learning among language students through virtual exchange projects, educators can help prepare learners for an increasingly interconnected yet diverse world.

In summation, modern theories collectively confirm innovative, sociocultural pedagogies as optimally supportive of language learning aims. By drawing on such proven frameworks to inform strategic policy modernization, Cameroon can transform obsolete models into vibrant, inclusive learning communities responsive to 21<sup>st</sup> century demands. Educational policymakers in the West Region could align with the minister's aspirations by promoting classroom praxes that purposefully integrate digital technologies into language pedagogy.

## **6. Recommendations for digitalization in the language classroom**

### *6.1. Strategies for incorporating ICT tools and technological innovations*

To realize the vast potential of digital transformation in language education, strategic and thoughtful integration of emerging technologies is paramount. Educators must first conduct comprehensive needs analyses to discern clear instructional objectives and intended learning outcomes. Only then can appropriate tools and platforms be selected in alignment with pedagogical goals. A diverse toolkit may include interactive virtual learning environments, open educational linguistic resources from around the globe, collaborative digital authoring spaces conducive to project-based learning, and adaptive artificial intelligence assistants tailored for personalized competency development.

Rather than relying solely on traditional in-person modalities, innovative blended, hybrid, and situated learning models combining strategic classroom face-to-face interactions with extended online and mobile components can enhance authentic language acquisition. Learning management systems allow efficient distribution of interactive multimedia

lessons that transcend temporal and spatial barriers. Videoconferencing nurtures synchronous global exchanges for intercultural understanding. Asynchronous discussion forums cultivate continued reflection and higher-order thinking beyond bell schedules.

To ignite intrinsic motivation amongst diverse learners, educators should infuse language pedagogy with motivational affordances like adaptive gamification elements, interactive quizzes and situated collaborative problem-solving scenarios. Immersive virtual worlds provide autonomy to experience authentic language and cultural scenarios. Digital rewards systems promote a growth mindset. Situated tasks necessitate negotiation of meaning and cooperation across linguistic and cultural divides.

Formative assessment of effectiveness and iterative refinements guided by emergent needs are indispensable for sustained impact. Technology-mediated tools like evidence-based digital portfolios and competency e-maps empower self-monitoring and benchmarked progression. Continued professional development according to periodic evaluation ensures strategic synchronization between technological affordances and evolving pedagogical objectives. Through research-driven selection and purposeful integration of fit-for-purpose technologies, transformative hybrid instructional models can realize the ambitious vision of optimizing 21<sup>st</sup> century language proficiency for all learners.

## *6.2. Overcoming challenges and barriers to implementation*

Effectively addressing predicted challenges surrounding the digital transformation of language pedagogy demands prudent mitigation strategies formulated through a lens of research-informed change management. As the literature consistently denotes, equitable access to suitable technological infrastructure presents the foremost hurdle inhibiting widespread adoption. Proactive advocacy is therefore required from educational stakeholders to rally necessary funding support towards expansive network development initiatives and provision of internet-enabled learning devices targeted within underserved rural regions where connectivity gaps persist. Long-term partnerships forged between policymakers, community organizations, and equipped with strategic planning outlooks considering contextual nuances can help oversee sustainable infrastructure projects to gradually bridge digital access divides.

In tandem, specialized professional learning models must be devised to purposefully build educator capacities aligned with evolving digital pedagogical praxis. Curated in-service programmes, mentorship pairings with early adopters, and online collaboratives can collectively nurture ongoing development of technology-mediated instructional design competencies alongside growth mindsets receptive to paradigm recalibrations. Targeted capabilities encompass not only fundamental computer literacy but also competence operating available educational tools and confidence facilitating emergent blended and mobile learning modalities. Supportive communities of sharing best practices further foster reflexivity and collaborative iterations informed by systematic evaluation feedback.

Perhaps most critically, transformational shifts towards student-centred, active construction of knowledge demand judicious change management through instructive coaching, leadership modelling, and customized demonstration of transformed praxis. Optimal synchronized progression requires navigating pedagogical transitions skilfully via ongoing mentorship while also cultivating broader institutional buy-in through prudent strategic planning attuned to contextual realities. Perpetual progress monitoring then serves to ensure sustainability and refinement according to emergent needs. With infrastructure demands prioritized and systematic capacity building coalesced under a phased change management vision, the aforementioned roadblocks threatening digital transformation in language education can be navigated purposefully through collaborative mitigation over time.

### *6.3. Implications for teacher training and professional development*

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of purposeful digital transformation initiatives within Cameroon's language education landscape necessitates strategic prioritization of customized educator capacity building ventures. Despite recent curriculum updates embracing technology integration, persistent challenges like inadequate infrastructure and limited practitioner competencies still impede widespread adoption.

From the outset, pre-service teacher training programmes at higher teacher training colleges across Cameroon should emphasize the development of foundational digital literacies and technological competencies that are particularly suited to the country's unique contextual

constraints, as hinted on by Muñoz-Cristóbal *et al.* (2015) in the context of Spain, and Kessler *et al.* (2012) in the context of the United States. Given the prevailing infrastructure challenges, a crucial emphasis is needed on equipping prospective educators with proficiency in leveraging low-cost, offline-operable mobile technologies that are ubiquitous nationwide. This targeted approach aims to imbue new teachers with heightened awareness of affordable technological affordances and confidence in experimenting with place-based, context-sensitive pedagogical methodologies.

However, competence must also be regarded as an ongoing process rather than singular event. Cameroonian educators accordingly require proactive support engaging in lifelong professional growth navigating technological advances. Opportunities including regional seminars, participation in local professional networks, and online courses tailored to the national curriculum strengthen pedagogical expertise within means. Communities of practice formed through collaborative reflection additionally nourish contextual understanding of implementation realities throughout diverse linguistically and economically varied settings nationwide (Borup/Evmenova 2019). With long-term governmental commitment to capacity building standardized yet customized for local needs, language educators can drive inclusive, sustainable transformation from grassroots. Most critically, learners across Cameroon will graduate equipped with demand-driven competencies.

## **7. Conclusion**

Throughout this discussion, several key findings and arguments have emerged regarding digitalization in the language classroom. Strategies for incorporating ICT tools and technological innovations have been highlighted, including the thoughtful selection of tools, the implementation of blended learning models, and the use of gamification and interactive approaches. Overcoming challenges and barriers to implementation has been identified as crucial, such as ensuring access and infrastructure, enhancing technological competence amongst educators, and embracing pedagogical shifts. Additionally, the implications for teacher training and professional development have been underscored, emphasizing the need for digital literacy, ongoing professional development, and mentorship and support systems. Thus, the importance of embracing digitalization in the

language classroom cannot be overstated. Digital tools and technological innovations offer numerous advantages for language learning, including increased engagement, personalized learning experiences, access to authentic resources, and opportunities for collaboration and communication. By integrating ICT tools strategically, educators can create dynamic and immersive learning environments that foster language acquisition, fluency, and cultural competence. Embracing digitalization also aligns with the demands of the digital age, equipping learners with the necessary skills to thrive in an interconnected world. As digitalization continues to evolve, there are several promising directions for future research and practice in the language classroom.

First, further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of specific ICT tools and technological innovations in different language learning contexts. Comparative studies can shed light on the most effective strategies for incorporating digital resources and their impact on language proficiency outcomes. Also, research, especially in the Cameroonian context, can examine the optimal blend of online and in-person instruction in blended learning models, as well as the role of gamification and interactive approaches in enhancing motivation and engagement amongst learners. Also, research could address the evolving needs of language educators in terms of digital literacy and pedagogical training. It is essential to continue investigating effective approaches for providing ongoing professional development that equips educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully integrate digital tools into their teaching practices. Additionally, exploring the impact of mentorship and support systems on educators' adoption of digitalization can provide valuable insights into effective strategies for facilitating technology integration.

In a nutshell, embracing digitalization in the language classroom offers exciting possibilities for transforming language learning experiences. Through strategic integration of ICT tools, addressing implementation challenges, and prioritizing teacher training and professional development, educators can create dynamic and engaging learning environments that empower students to thrive in the digital age. Continued research and exploration of best practices will further enhance the effective use of digital resources and contribute to the evolution of language education.

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