Innovation in Foreign Language Teaching and Assessment: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

In the past few decades, there has been a dynamic shift in language teaching methodologies. The teaching of foreign languages in particular has evolved from the traditional teacher-centred approaches to technology-based methodologies which promote innovation and create an autonomous and motivated learner who is able to learn language for communication. Changes in technology have taken language teaching to another level, with innovation taking centre-stage. Through a review of literature from scholarly sources, the study analyses the recent innovations that have appeared on the foreign language teaching arena to make foreign language teaching more effective than ever before. In doing this, the article reflects upon current trends in foreign language teaching, innovation in assessment and conditions that are necessary for a successful implementation of innovations in the language classroom. The article further examines the merits and challenges which go with integration of these technology-based methodologies and how the challenges can be alleviated if learners have to reap maximum benefits. However, in the course of the review of literature, it has come to our attention that while the world of foreign language education has shifted to innovative teaching methodologies, some pockets of educators are lagging behind due to diverse challenges centred around failure to embrace change and the desire to remain in the traditional realm due to fear of the unknown. Other difficulties encountered are inadequate technology infrastructure or lack of resources to acquire relevant devices and unexplained reasons for innovation. All in all, this article views language education as a revolutionalised field whose impact should have long lasting communicative and cultural experiences on the learners. Given the urgent need to take on board all foreign language teachers, the article ends with recommendations that institutions of learning should support innovation at all costs and that teachers should shift from their traditional pedagogies and embark on continuous self-training for innovation if they are to remain relevant and stay afloat in the 21st century.

Keywords: Innovation, foreign languages education, technology-based methodologies, language for communication

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, there has been a dynamic shift in language teaching methodologies. The teaching of foreign languages in particular has evolved from the traditional teacher-centred approaches to technology-based methodologies which promote innovation and create an autonomous and motivated learner who is able to learn language for communication. Changes in technology have taken language teaching to

another level, with innovation taking centre-stage.

A number of scholars have defined innovation in different ways. In the definition of Carless (2012:1), innovation is "an attempt to bring about educational improvement by doing something which is perceived by implementers as new or different.", while Rahmat & Bahasa (2020) describe it as doing things in a new or different way. According to Reinders (2016), "innovation" is a word that describes a new product that is enhanced in one way or another and aims to do better than others. Whatever definition, one thing which is clear is that innovation implies that something that did not exist or existed has been created, enhanced or modified into another thing which will yield better results. Thus, with innovation are associated such terms as change, transformation and creation. The reverse of this is 'routine', which implies conservatism and immobilism and habit.

In light of information from language teaching experts such as Carless (2012), the concept of innovation in foreign language teaching dates back as far as the last quarter of the 20th century when the use of technology began to take shape in many spheres of life. Prior to this, orthodox methods of teaching dominated the teaching of foreign languages, characterized by lectures, chorusing and memorizing among others, where the teacher was regarded as the only source of information and whose knowledge was unquestionable. However, the advent of computers and the changing needs of society in the last quarter of the 20th century necessitated a change in the way foreign languages were taught. New and more efficient approaches had to be devised to handle language teaching. These included learner centeredness, use of computers and authentic materials, among other innovations, as we shall see in the review of literature, which was guided by three research questions as follows:

(i)   What are the recent innovations in foreign language methodologies and in what ways do they promote language learning and communication?
(ii)   What are the benefits and challenges of the integration of these innovations in foreign language teaching methodologies?
(iii) What strategies and conditions are essential for effective implementation of innovative teaching methods in foreign language education?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the integration of innovation into foreign language teaching using approaches that are technology-based. The paper further investigates the extent to which these approaches can lead to the creation an autonomous and motivated learner who is able to learn language for communication and also to appreciate conditions that are necessary for innovation to succeed.

The paper aims to explore the latest developments in the teaching of foreign languages, evaluate the efficiency of technology-based methodologies and also to examine innovative assessment methods. Furthermore, the paper seeks to ascertain the challenges that foreign language teachers face as they transit from traditional approaches to innovative methods of teaching.

The significance of this paper lies in the power of innovation in the teaching of foreign languages, leading to a self-motivated and independent learner. It underscores current trends in teaching methodologies and highlights everyday challenges that teachers encounter. In a bid to improve language teaching and attain proficiency as well as communicative competence, the paper provides some recommendations to language educators and their institutions. Only then can foreign language teaching maintain its significance and remain relevant in the 21st century.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on social constructivist theory, which was developed

by Lev Vygotsky, a post-Soviet revolutionary psychologist. Social constructivism stresses the importance of social interactions and cultural context in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). It emphasises the fact that as learners interact, they construct knowledge with others and their environment, making learning a fundamentally social activity. What makes this theory pertinent to this study on foreign language teaching is the fact that these innovative methodologies often influence joint and interactive tools to improve learning. The facilities available in technology-based methodologies create an environment that favours activities such as discussions and peer assessments which enhance collaboration among learners.

Furthermore, the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP) is synonymous to the support provided by technology during the language acquisition process. Although each student may work independently, they are still within a social network of foreign language learners

The use of innovative assessment methods such as quizzes and peer assessments in the learning process exemplify social constructivism as they promote collaboration among learners.

Anchoring this study on social constructivist theory underscores the power of technology in producing a collaborative and socially revolutionalised learning atmosphere that heightens foreign language acquisition.

METHODOLOGY

The data that was used to conceive this paper was derived through a desk review process in which scholarly databases like researchgate, google scholar and JSTOR were used. Using key terms like *innovation in foreign language teaching/learning, language education, technology-based methodologies, innovative assessment* and *language for communication'*, the researchers were able to trace articles published between 2017 and 2024 to make the paper current and relevant to contemporary readers. However, where information in the specified period was not

forthcoming, an extension was made to earlier dates or to classic sources because these are widely recognised for their significant and lasting impact. This was done in order to avoid missing out on vital information. It must be mentioned that the search targeted sources written in English or French as foreign languages and excluded sources on second language teaching, with an exception of those that were highly relevant. This is with respect to the fact that the paper prioritized foreign language teaching and assessment. Furthermore, studies in languages that the authors could not proficiently read and understand, and those that solely focused on language acquisition theories without relevance to foreign language teaching methodologies were excluded from the search. From the studies that were selected and reviewed, common themes were identified, grouped, summarised and discussed, with conclusions drawn by summarizing the main findings of the review. Before we consider the review, let us reflect on the concept of foreign languages.

CONCEPT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In a multilingual society, every language spoken has its own status. Some languages may be classified as mother tongue or L1 to some individuals or second language to others. Yet in some cases a language may have the status of foreign language. A foreign language, going by the definition of IvyPanda (2022), is a language that is exotic to a given country and originates from a different country. In other words, a foreign language is a language imported from another country and is mainly meant to be taught in schools as a subject (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). This is exactly the case with French in Zambia and English in Mozambique or Democratic Republic of Congo. Taking Europe as a case in point, French is regarded as a foreign language to a Briton living in the United Kingdom. In the same vein, an Italian living in his country and learning English at school is learning it as a foreign language.

The concept of foreign language is different from that of second language. In many African states, a second language is the language of the colonial powers which is now used as the language of administration and business. In various instances, it is the official language, and medium of instruction, as is the case with English in Zambia, Portuguese in Mozambique and French in Senegal.

Whereas a second language student has a wider interaction with the language at school, with the conventional media at home, on social media, in religious gatherings and on other official business, chances of a foreign language student interacting with the target language are quite limited. To start with, the possibility of engaging in authentic communication in the foreign language is remote due to the restricted presence of the language in the community. This is an idea advanced by Kieu (2023), who further asserts that foreign language learning is mainly enhanced by the presence of the teacher and that even though the student may acquire grammatical, reading or writing skills, their communicative competence is too unstable to sustain a conversation in a real-life situation. This is rarely the case with second language learning.

It is worth noting that the teaching of foreign languages in Africa dates back to the Addis Ababa Conference of 15-25 May 1961, attended by African ministers of Education and sponsored by UNESCO and Economic Commission for Africa. The Conference brought French and English-speaking countries together in terms of culture and education. The countries recommended that French be taught as a foreign language in English-speaking countries and English be taught in French-speaking countries as a foreign language (Lumwanga, 2021). One of the reasons for this recommendation was to enhance international cooperation. Having dealt with the concept of foreign languages, let us now consider the evolution of foreign language teaching over the centuries.

TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Natural Method
Of all the methodologies used in foreign language teaching, the earliest was the natural method. This method was used during the slavery age by the servitude and maids whose duty it was to look after the European aristocracy. Naturally, members of the aristocracy were natives of the target language. The school system adopted this method because it was particularly helpful at kindergarten level in France and Germany. One of the proponents of the natural method was L. Sauveur, who believed that "a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learner's native language if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action." (Richards and Theodore, 2001:11). With the teacher being a native speaker of the foreign language and in the absence of any form of translation during the teaching and learning process, the natural method led to the acquisition of the foreign language with the help of gestures and the immediate environment of the learners. Despite the criticisms made regarding the natural method and the difficulty of its implementation in the school system, it is indisputable that this method recorded some degree of success (Seara, 2001). Notwithstanding these achievements, the method was abandoned for the grammar-translation method because it had no place reserved for the teaching of grammar and other related aspects of language.

The Grammar-Translation Method
The newly adopted method, also known as the traditional method or the bilingual method, was popular between the 16th and 19th centuries in French, German, Greek and Latin. Contrary to the earlier method, the grammar-translation method did not necessarily aim at oral competence, but at enabling the learner to access literally texts in the foreign language, a language that they would not necessarily speak.

Apart from being a native speaker of the foreign language, the teacher needed to be

bilingual, with competency in all areas of the language including grammar and translation of the texts from second language (L2) to mother tongue (L1). In the traditional method, learners were taught grammatical rules which they had to memorise, as well as vocabulary and other lexical items. Other valuable instruments in this method included the use of dictionaries but this did not give them adequate practice of spoken language (Atmaca & Atmaca, 2017) and communication was not enhanced (Eisa, 2020). As a consequence, the grammar-translation method gave way to direct method.

The Direct Method

In response to the inadequacies of the grammar-translation method, foreign language experts developed the direct method towards the end of the nineteenth century which spread in many parts of Europe and reached the United States of America. According to Ruyffelaert (2020), proponents of this method included Maximilian Berlitz, James Worman, Charles Hall Grandgent, Joseph Gaillard and John Ernst Matzke. The method was motivated by the need to embolden oral competence as a matter of priority in foreign language learning without recourse to mother tongue. As a result of focus on oral practice and fluency, students were actively involved in the learning process (Vireak and Bunrosy, 2020).

One of the challenges posed by the direct method is that it demanded that the teacher only use the target language during the process of teaching. This entailed that no mother tongue was used. Notwithstanding the benefits this practice has for language acquisition, learners who were beginners were disadvantaged because it was difficult for them to understand instruction in a foreign language (Richards and Theodore, 2001).

The Communicative Approach

The teaching of foreign languages reached a milestone with the coming of the communicative approach in the 1970s (Suemith, 2011), who further posited that its aim was to render the teaching of language responsive to the communicative and functional demands of the learners. With Dell Hymes and Michael Halliday as some of its proponents, the communicative approach defied several aspects of the traditional methods such as translation, recitation and dominance by the teacher who was indisputably the only source of knowledge. The communicative approach came to liberate the learner from over-dependence on the teacher and introduced, in foreign language teaching, the use of authentic materials such as extracts from newspapers, magazines and books. Thus, in the language classroom, the communicative approach is characterised by activities that seek to produce communication which was not only meaningful but real as well. To attain this, there was need to focus on skills and learner-centredness (Howarth, 2024). Apart from this, the communicative approach discouraged the use of L1 during the teaching and learning process and encouraged reflection rather than repetition and application of language concepts in the day-to-day encounter with language. Oxford et.al (2008) clarify four interrelated principles of the communicative approach. These are: dealing with errors and forms in a communicative way, focusing on the four language skills and dealing with meaning, context and authenticity. Above all, the approach encourages learners to take responsibility of their own learning in order for them to attain communicative competence.

CURRENT TRENDS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Over the years, the radical shift in teaching of foreign languages from traditional methodologies to revolutionalised and innovative pedagogies has seen the integration of culture, the adoption of the flipped classroom and the introduction of technology converging in the classroom to produce a learner who is easily able to acquire communicative competence through authentic interaction with the environment. Hence, below we attempt to clarify these

three dynamic forces which are at the heart of this didactic breakthrough.

Cultural Integration

It cannot be gainsaid that a comprehensive learning process should include the learning of the culture of the foreign language. This assertion is premised on the fact that language and culture are inseparable. Accordingly, language cannot be taught in isolation otherwise it is incomplete. A learner who interacts with other languages is fully immersed in the target culture (Trimwell, 2005). On this account, he or she has increased awareness and appreciates life to the fullest. This learner becomes multilingual and has self-confidence in the face of an encounter with native speakers of the target language. This kind of learning reduces the risk of cultural misunderstanding because the foreign language learner already has an idea about the target culture. Cultural integration demands that, to attain fluency, learners must learn the language in its country so that they do not only speak it but also live it (Phelipon, 2021). Hence, contemporary language learning theories have given great attention to the integration of cultural components in the language classroom. The traditional perspective that used to look at culture in terms of formality and foreign language learning in terms of priority has affected both foreign language teaching and learning from the point of view of objectives, priorities and outcomes (Mourad, 2016).

However, cultural integration should not be solely biased towards the learning of the target language culture, but should also incorporate elements of the local realities for more cultural awareness. According to Brown (n.d) as cited by Naresh (2021:74), "Language is the roadmap of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going." This fundamentally means that language and culture are interlinked and it is almost impossible to learn one of these without having a clear understanding of the other. Both language and culture play a significant role in shaping personality. Besides, Creely (2023) warns that there are concerns about the potential for homogenising language usage and endorsing narrow cultural representations through Artificial Intelligence (AI) models, as well as issues related to the dependency on technology and potential reduction in critical thinking and creativity.

Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom is a teaching approach that involves the teacher giving instructions to learners on what to do such as searching for information before coming to the next class (Mazur, 2009). In other words, in this approach, teaching and learning activities are held in a reverse order. Zaki (2015) describes the flipped classroom as a way of teaching where students' traditional work such as homework activities are done prior to the designated class time. In many cases, these materials are given in the form of online videos and slides, which helps to create time for activities of interactive nature. This essentially means that most of the necessary work is done by learners outside class and in-class time is reserved for active learning experiences and higher order thinking skills in form of critical thinking activities and problem solving skills in form of discussions, peer teaching, presentations, projects, computations, and group activities (Roehling & Bredow 2021).

A study by Vitta and Al-Hoorie (2023) revealed that flipped classrooms yield better performance than traditional classrooms because they gave better language outcomes. The approach enhances active learning as opposed to passive learning as is the case in traditional learning (Zaki, 2015) where learning is deemed to be a routine and customary activity.

Advocates of the flipped approach attest to the fact that the flipped classroom is time-economic in view of the fact that students will have interacted at home with content that was meant for learning. In this vein, Veres and Muntean (2021) assert that classroom time is used for higher order thinking skills. Arising from this kind of participation, such interactions are bound to

instill responsibility for learning in the students. Further to this, Varghese and Saravanakumer (2022) look at the advantages of the flipped classroom from the teacher's point of view where the approach affords the teacher adequate time to prepare himself or herself for the numerous activities ahead in the classroom.

Other advantages include flexibility in learning (Talbert, 2017), no loss in transferring information from the teacher to the learner (Wieman, 2007) and collaboration between students (Bergman and Sams, 2012).

Notwithstanding the abundant benefits that the flipped classroom approach may boast of, some language teaching experts, among them Milman (2012) caution against the flipped classroom being a barrier to learners who are intellectually weak. Often, due to cognitive overload, intellectually weak students may fail to handle or process on their own large volumes of content given to them in the form of videos and other pre-recorded materials. Related to this view, Taylor (n.d.) notes that this teaching strategy, apart from being somewhat time-consuming in the preparatory stages, is quite involving and students take a lot of time to complete the tasks that are given to them due to the complex nature of the tasks. While some students may genuinely fail to complete the tasks, others may fail to manage their time because of lack of motivation and self-discipline.

Technology Integration
As a result of the dynamic nature of society and because of changes in times and in the needs of the learners, changes in methodology are inevitable to suit each era and time. Today's learners in general and foreign language students in particular are digital natives. Wang et.al (2012) define digital natives as a generation of young people who were born into the digital age and are fundamentally exposed to technology because they grew up with technology in the information age. This is opposed to their older counterparts called digital immigrants, who were born before the computer era but learnt to use computers later in life as adults.

Contemporary learners, being digital natives, spend most of their youth surrounded by technology. In the context of Europe, the digital natives born between 1977 and 1995 spent most of their youth surrounded by technology and were used to media throughout their lives. As a result, they were able to source all the information they needed in a matter of seconds and were able to share it with their peers in a short time (McDermott, 2013). With this state of affairs, there was need for a radical shift in language teaching in order to usher in methodologies which would accommodate their needs if teaching language for communication and interaction in and outside the classroom was to be attained. Consequently, with technology being at the centre of almost every sphere of life, academic life inclusive, teaching of foreign languages is no longer business as usual. Unless the foreign language teacher is highly innovative in the face of these digital natives, teaching becomes a bitter pill, attaining pedagogical objectives an uphill battle and satisfying learners' needs a far-fetched dream. In other words, learners would be intensely bored under traditional methods of teaching, hence the need for innovation in teaching.

With this state of affairs, it is crystal-clear that in today's context, the teaching of foreign languages has become very complex, if fascinating, and teachers cannot respond to their call with the same old traditional and laissez-faire ways of teaching. Instead, the current status quo should be met with the zeal that it deserves by the teacher. Various technology resources are required to improve acquisition of language skills as alluded to by Koprivek and Tolj (2022). In the same vein, Chiritescu and Paunescu (2017) assert that employment of dynamic and modern methods of language teaching lead to students' independence, flexibility and critical thinking. Whatever methodology is used, of prime importance in this scenario is for the learners to have access to the

authentic use of language through creation of natural learning environment through books, magazines, radio, television and the internet. Most of these materials can be physical or computer-based. If this is well-taken care of, then we can safely discuss a 21st century that is characterized by innovation in the teaching of foreign languages.

Having established that one of the most visible indicators of innovation in foreign language teaching in the 21st century is the integration of technology, we have no choice but to start revisiting traditional trends of teaching. For this reason, Mourad (2016) opines that one way to resolve this is by implementing and integrating other modes of learning in the classrooms, ranging from interactive learning and cooperative learning to tutoring. The new challenges impose on all curriculum designers to think of promoting academic writing abilities, methodological knowledge and epistemological content to enable students attain better scores and achievements in the target language by the end of a learning phase.

Campos (2017), an English professor and creator of EnglishBlog.org, notes that digital platforms help teachers and students to interact using technology and this enhances learning. Some of the platforms referred to can host classes on the cloud and create different types of assessments. These include Facebook, Moodle Cloud, Google Classroom, Zoom, Skype and Whatsapp, accessed by electronic communication devices and they play a big role in the improvement of the linguistic skills by the learners. As Bećirović et al. (2021) state, technology-based learning accords learners access to pedagogical resources in and outside the classroom through a range of educational platforms.

One advantage of learning using technology is that, by virtue of using pre-recorded materials, it exposes foreign language learners to the voices of native speakers of the target language. Additionally, students who have incorporated the use of online learning platforms can access them at their own time to complement classroom learning or as self-learning platforms. Apart from YouTube videos, the integration of technology in language teaching embraces use of Rosetta Stone (McCormick, 2023), which offers language lessons in about 25 languages including German, Spanish, Chinese, French, Italian, Hindi and Japanese. Another indispensable too is Duolingo (Kim et al, 2023). It is available in French, German, Portuguese, Russian, English and many more up to more than 30 languages and Babbel (Kim, 2015) whose services can be accessed in 14 languages among them French, German, English, Swedish Portuguese and Turkish.

Many people have indulged themselves in creating videos with the sole purpose of offering another learning experience other than the classical experience. Teachers are therefore called upon to guide learners on their choices of platforms offering the best learning experience. This leads us to consider various options available in the innovation process which are discussed below.

Gamification

Gamification is the use of game-based applications and game principles in a non-game context in language teaching/learning, mainly through applications and online platforms (Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021). It is one of the most significant innovations in technology for interaction between people. Michos (2017) describes gamification as a pedagogical strategy which is comparatively new, with game elements and game design techniques used in an entirely non-game environment, such as classroom. Thus, Tamjehi et al. (2022) assert that gamification has been introduced in the field of education mainly to promote and sustaining engagement in class.

Gamification is also referred to as gamified learning. Gamification engages users in learning and increases motivation. According to Sailer and Homner (2019), the theory of gamified learning defines four components: instructional content, behaviors and

attitudes, game characteristics, and learning outcomes. The theory proposes that instructional content directly influences learning outcomes as well as learners' behaviour. Effective instructional content is a prerequisite for successful gamification because gamification is usually not used to replace instruction, but rather to improve it. When learners enjoy doing something (learning), they are likely to continue (learning). The Flow theory, proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), suggests that individuals experience a state of optimal engagement and enjoyment when they are fully immersed in an activity that is challenging yet manageable. In Csikszentmihalyi's words (1990:4), flow is "a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it"[1]

Stott and Neustaedter (2013) state that the underlying dynamics that make games engaging are largely already recognized and utilized in modern pedagogical practices, although under different designations. This provides some legitimacy to a practice that is sometimes dismissed as superficial, and also provides a way of formulating useful guidelines for those wishing to utilize the power of games to motivate student achievement.

Furthermore, they state that certain underlying dynamics and concepts found in game design are shown to be more consistently successful than others when applied to learning environments and these are: Freedom to Fail, Rapid Feedback, Progression and Storytelling.

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[1]

https://www.google.com/search?q=flow+theory+by+mihaly+csikszentmihalyi

Teachers of foreign language may include game-like tasks such as role-play, rewards, points and contests, the objective of which is to generate enhanced learner motivation. Gamification has potential positive outcomes and Michos (2017:1) adds that "according to the students' responses, positive results of this gamifying application would be: increase of motivation, easiness of grammar or lexical revision, better acquisition of new structures, and maybe the most important: increase of positive relations with the teaching subject."

According to operant conditioning, (Skinner, 2019) behaviour is influenced by consequences such as reinforcement and punishment. Gamification is influenced by principles of operant conditioning by providing rewards for desired behaviours, such as completing tasks or attaining milestones, and withholding rewards for undesirable behaviours.

Virtual Learning Environment
One of the most popular virtual learning environments in language teaching is Moodle. Apart from being used as a course administration tool, Moodle is used to post traditional language resources like word documents, PowerPoint presentations and other relevant content that can make teaching of languages more meaningful. In a study by Kol and Scholnik (2008) students demonstrated their interactive competence and social skills by completing forms that were posted on Moodle. They were required to provide personal details and cultural information in the target language.

Notwithstanding all the good things that come with innovation, innovation comes with constraints for the teaching and learning process. For any undertaking to be successful, it has to be carefully planned. The same applies to innovation, it has to meet some conditions.

Artificial Intelligence and Foreign Language Learning
The past few years have seen many developments in foreign language learning. The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

systems has brought about interesting radical changes in institutions of learning, with teaching, learning and assessment reaching new horizons like increased flexibility and access. However, concerns have been raised that unleashing powerful AI tools such as ChatGPT on an education system which is not prepared for this change may distort and damage a fragile system (Murgatroyd, 2023).

With the availability of AI systems, teachers of foreign languages cannot remain in the traditional mode of teaching if they are to remain relevant to their vocation. AI offers possibilities of their mode of delivery at all levels with features like personalised learning, support for multi-language learning through instant translation, active learning environments using multimedia, simulations, gamification and increased access to learning (Navarro, 2024).

Citing Rankin (2020), Murgatroyd (2023) notes the inclination of AI to technification of education with trendy yet non-transformative technology such as digital whiteboards rather than investing in people and training, and further argues that technification is linked to the idea that the quality of education is measured through high-stakes testing. An example of technification is of rankings that can then be created of students, schools, regions, and nations as is often the case of ranking institutions of higher education globally, regionally and nationally. Thus, the more technified an institution is, the better the ranking. Besides, Murgartroyd (2023) suggests that what AI systems and applications could be used for is to refocus education away from technification and towards a more humanistic, creative, and compassionate form of education which empowers and engages students to have agency for their learning. He further notes that, apart from being an enabler, AI can facilitate innovation in foreign language learning and equip learners with 21st century skills.

Moreover, Wedell (2009) insists on the need to put people and contexts at the core of the innovation process, and similarly Carless (2011) emphasises pedagogic innovations that are contextually grounded. In addition, Serdyukov (2017) states that in drawing too much attention to technology innovations, it is vital not to neglect teachers and learners in the process.

Students may produce faultless work in take-away assessment tasks when they use AI. Nevertheless, in the absence of their gadgets, they may not produce such faultless work in examinations. This indicates that a lot of plagiarism is taking place when students have access to AI. Despite this situation, the integration of technology in foreign language education remains unavoidable.

Project-Based Learning
Project-Based Learning in Foreign language education promotes practical application of knowledge in everyday life. It emphasises interaction through language with the real world as opposed to memorization of language elements. It is connected to experiential learning or 'learning by doing' as alluded to by Fragoulis and Tsiplakides (2009). Project-based learning is known for enhancement of the learner's participation in the learning process, with other benefits accruing such as confidence and improved self-esteem, heightened learner autonomy and augmented social skills. All these factors combine to produce a learner whose language skills are irrefutably enhanced.

INNOVATION IN ASSESSMENT

The Council of Europe (2024) defines assessment as an activity which is intended to measure learners' ability or the degree to which the learners have attained their learning goals. This can take place during the course of teaching and learning in order to inform the learner and the teacher regarding the progress of the former (formative assessment). However, it can also come at the end of a programme if the intention is to measure overall attainment of objectives (summative assessment). In the earlier case, the teacher is able to adjust the

teaching depending on the feedback received and this improves learning whereas in the second case, the objective falls short of this gesture, given that the major objectives are certification and decision-making.

In most teaching and learning processes, including foreign language education, assessment is essential. Innovative ways of assessing are important in the current dispensation. These could include automated assessment (Skalka et.al, 2019), portfolio assessment (Listiana et.al, 2020) and peer assessment (Brkic et.al, 2024) The objective of such innovative assessment should be to provide assessments that are precise, significant and reflect diversity of language learning. Innovative assessments should deal with the limitations of traditional assessment methods and provide more accurate, comprehensive, and meaningful assessments of learners' language skills.

Automated Assessment

Automated assessment is that assessment which uses computer-based tools and procedures to evaluate students' language proficiency, skills, and knowledge. There is minimal if any, direct human intervention. According to Centre for Teaching and Learning (2024), automated assessment employs technology in administering assessments, analyze learners' responses, and provide feedback or scores automatically. It can include online tests and quizzes among others. These are assessments that are administered using online platforms. Candidates answer language-based questions that are randomised by the computer software being used. The questions could be multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blank exercises, or short answer questions.

Remote Proctoring

With online assessment, the foreign language teacher does not need to be pre-occupied with the security of the assessment process given that remote proctoring tools can be used to monitor students regardless of where they are taking the examination from. Remote proctoring (RP) in foreign language

education refers to a practice of monitoring students' language assessments remotely using technology, namely proctoring software. Students and invigilators are typically in different geographical locations at the time of the assessment. Remote proctoring allows invigilators to supervise exams and ensure academic integrity. The students take the assessments from a location of their choice. And Tweissi, et.al (2022:421) note that "proctors monitor students through the process to ensure that there are no cases of impersonation during the exam and to detect any suspicious behaviors." Remote proctoring can be conducted in two main ways, namely live proctoring and automated proctoring. Live proctoring often involves a human proctor observing students in real-time by use of a webcam. Automated proctoring depends entirely on software algorithms or processes to detect suspicious behaviour, such as eye movement or background noise. Further, Tweissi, et.al (2022:421), citing Raman et.al.(2021) reported that "automated proctoring is fast growing as many educational institutions are adopting it because it saves time and allows individual candidate supervision." Additionally, automated proctoring provides a detailed report about any examination malpractices and fraud. Therefore, device applications like cameras help in monitoring students as they take exams virtually. Automated proctoring allows learners to take their examinations without location restrictions. Raman et al. (2021) found automated proctoring to be the most effective way of conducting remote examinations. Remote proctoring concentrates on ensuring the integrity and security of the assessment process, while automated assessment is concerned with the efficient evaluating and grading of a candidate's performance. Both employ appropriate software.

RP is useful in maintaining the integrity of the assessment process. This is done by monitoring students' behavior during examinations. The Proctoring software can detect cheating behaviours, such as consulting unauthorized materials.

Suspicious activities by a student are flagged by the proctoring software for further review. Live proctors can intervene in real-time once irregularities are observed. When using proctoring systems, it is important that they comply with applicable privacy laws and guidelines in those jurisdictions or countries. This should be communicated timely with students. Some advantages of RP, as advanced by Patael, et al (2022) include reduced paper consumption and minimalised security concerns during the movement of examination papers. The examination can be written from any venue, with a wide range of questions to be selected from. On the whole, as regards conducting examinations, RP is not only cost-effective but it also presents efficiency with regards to time and effort.

Interactive Exercises
Interactive exercises are techniques that are employed in language education that engage students actively in the learning process and provide opportunities for practice, application, and reinforcement of language skills. These exercises offer a number of benefits including active engagement, real-world application of language being learnt, and promotion of communication skills. They also encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Some of these exercises are role-plays, pair and group activities and Interactive multimedia resources. The London College for professional training[2] (LCPT) notes that the advantages of interactive learning are numerous and impactful and lead to, among others, enhanced engagement and participation, improved retention and understanding, development of critical thinking skills, promotion of collaboration and communication, personalized learning experience and preparation for the digital age. These can enhance linguistic competence of the student.

Portfolio Assessment
This assessment type involves collecting and evaluating samples of learners' work over a

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[2] https://londoncollegept.co.uk/the-advantages-of-interactive-learning

period of time to assess their language development and proficiency. Portfolios may include a variety of artifacts such as written compositions, audio recordings, projects, reflections, and self-assessments. As Pappas (2023) observed, 'educators can monitor the progress of students and observe their understanding of a topic's different aspects. For instance, in a language learning class, students can create a portfolio of assignments like essays, reports, and presentations, all written in the language they are learning, showcasing how they can apply it in various contexts.

While Goçtü (2012:43) observe that "though traditional and portfolio assessment both have advantages and disadvantages, application of portfolio is more advantageous", Miller et. al. (2009) distinguish between portfolio assessment and the traditional mode of assessment and say that traditional assessment procedures are inclined to testing and strengthening the ability of the students to recall, reorganize and comprehend content. However, these assessment procedures do not reveal the students' true progress of what they can do with the knowledge they have acquired. They also only deal with lower level thinking skills such as remembering and understanding. On the other hand, portfolio assessment procedures test students' strengths and ability to reason, analyse, and apply the knowledge acquired. Students' higher levels of cognitive skills and abilities such as applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating are measured in a number of ways. By compiling evidence of learners' language use and progress, portfolio assessment therefore provides a more comprehensive picture of the students' language learning journey with ongoing feedback and reflection.

Performance-based Assessment
Performance-based assessment is a type of assessment that puts emphasis on evaluating a learners' ability to use the target language in real-life contexts. It can also assess students' cultural competence and intercultural communication skills. Instead of depending entirely on written

assessments, performance-based assessment emphasises performance on given foreign language tasks. These tasks may include role-plays, presentations and debates. Such tasks allow the learners to demonstrate their language proficiency in meaningful communication situations. This provides a more accurate and holistic measure of a learner's language skills. As such, performance-based assessment tends to promote active engagement in language learning. According to Pappas, (2023), the focus of Performance-based assessment is not solely on testing the acquisition of knowledge; rather it is mainly on measuring the ability of the learner to apply their knowledge in the real world. Ibid further postulates that this type of assessment calls for students to analyze information and find a suitable approach to tackle the presented problems. This evokes in the learner the skills of critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity.

Computer-Adaptive Testing (CAT)

Another innovative way of assessment is the computer-adaptive testing (CAT) in foreign language education. This type of assessment is one where the difficulty level of the test items automatically adjusts dynamically based on the test-taker's responses on test items answered up to that point. CAT systems use algorithms to select subsequent items based on the performance. The objective is to efficiently and accurately determine the test-taker's proficiency level in the foreign language. The adaptive nature of the CAT ensures that test items are matched to the test-taker's ability, thereby providing a more accurate and efficient measure of their language skills and ensuring individualised and objective assessment. Compared to traditional tests, CAT tends to be more engaging and motivating for test-takers. The adaptive nature of CAT "adapts or tailors exam questions in real time to the ability of each test taker. This eventually results in a different set of test questions for each person. The test adapts based on how well the test taker answers earlier questions." https://blog.caveon.com/computer-adaptive-test-meaning

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment in foreign language education is a technique where peers evaluate the language ability or performance of each other. This could be according to some agreed criteria. The peers provide each other with constructive feedback on how they have performed on a given language task. Liu et al. (2016) make the observation that peer assessment is likely to enhance feedback among learners, as peers are bound to use similar and more accessible language to one another. In addition, peers assessing one another tends to lessen adverse state of mind of being evaluated by an authority figure. This technique therefore encourages active engagement, collaboration, (Bergman & Sams, 2012) and self-reflection among peers. It can also lead to a better understanding and improvement of language skills. Peer assessment also enhances the learning experience by promoting learner autonomy.

Task-Based Assessment

Task-based assessment is another form of assessment that departs from the traditional way of assessment. Norris (2016) considers Task-based Assessment as a form of assessment that has over the years embraced major innovations in the teaching of languages. Task-based assessment entails that tasks are introduced into the assessment pattern. Task-based assessment can also be viewed as focusing on evaluating learners' language proficiency through completion of authentic and meaningful tasks. These tasks approximate real-life communication situations and also require learners to use language to accomplish specific language learning goals. Task-based Assessment focuses on assessing the ability of learners to communicate effectively, solve communicative challenges or problems, and perform language functions within context and in line with the task.

Dynamic Assessment

Dynamic Assessment (DA) in foreign language education is an interactive approach to assessment that focuses on

evaluating students' learning potential and their ability to benefit from instruction. Malmir (2020:283-4) asserts that this is a "perspective that seeks to appraise learners' progress and achievement through a rather longitudinal and ongoing evaluation that is mostly concurrent with the learning experiences and instructional activities". Dynamic assessment is strong on helping students to move towards higher levels of proficiency through guided instruction and feedback by identifying gaps and providing support that can enable the student to advance. Unlike traditional assessments, which measure students' current proficiency level, dynamic assessment considers their responsiveness to instruction and the support being provided. In apparent agreement, Malmir (2020) adds that this type of "assessment enjoys many other robust features that help L2 learners develop effective pragmatic comprehension of the speech acts which are the building blocks of interactions in social exchanges." Dynamic assessment is a comprehensive and learner-centered approach to assessment.

Multimodal Assessment

Multimodal assessment is a form of assessment that enables learners to exhibit their skills and knowledge in a new way by presenting them in various forms (Leary and Stines, 2024). Often digital, multimodal assessment is another innovative way of checking on the progress that foreign language learners are making. This type of assessment involves the use of multiple modes of assessment as opposed to one. In language learning, the assessment could include writing, speaking, listening, reading and even non-verbal communicative modes like body language. As such, this mode of assessment offers a more inclusive and dependable measure of learners' language achievement in as much as the body language could include other modalities that convey meaning during the communication process.

Conditions for Innovation

As An African proverb states, "Life is like a bicycle. If it stops moving, it loses balance."

Hence, innovation remains a continuous process. To innovate is to look beyond what is being done at the present and advance a novel idea that helps us to do our job in a modern way. In this process, three major steps are involved: the first one is an idea, followed by its implementation, and this ends with the outcome that results from the implementation of the idea and produces a change. However, it must be mentioned that innovation also requires rapid dissemination and large-scale implementation (Serdyukov, 2017). As mentioned by Carless (2012); Wedell and Grassick (2020), conditions that act as facilitating factors include bringing teachers on board early enough so that they feel part of the innovation process and introducing an innovation that promotes contextually and culturally acceptable values. Further, the innovation should not be over-ambitious and there should be a professional development plan at institutional level to support it.

The outbreak of COVID-19 brought about uncertainties about the future of education, especially in third-world countries and threatened the closure of learning institutions. Governments saw it better not to discontinue the learning process and suggested the use of available alternatives. Teachers and learners had no other option than to embrace this change. Online learning became unarguably an innovation for most developing countries. The use of these online facilities may not be considered as innovation for the Western world as they have already been in use for some time. In the same vein, Reinders (2016) points out that what may be innovative in a rural primary school in a developing country may not be so in a university laboratory because innovation is context specific.

BARRIERS TO INNOVATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING/LEARNING

A useful distinction exists between primary innovations (changes to teaching materials or pedagogy) and secondary innovations (organizational changes which provide enabling support for the primary innovation).

One of the reasons for lack of success in implementing change is failure to promote secondary innovations (Markee, 1997; Wedell, and Grassick, 2020). According to the scholars, the main barriers facing innovation can be broadly grouped into three categories. These are teacher-related, system-related and school-related.

Teacher-related
The teacher-related category is characterized chiefly by teachers' failure to understand what innovation is about in addition to teachers being comfortable with current practices. It is also a question of teachers being afraid of change. Relative advantage (Rogers, 2003) is one of the attributes of innovation. Hence, Guthrie (2011) supports the idea that teachers should not be seen as resistors of change but as rational decision-makers concerned with factors that could limit successful implementation, weighing the practicality of innovations in the classroom, their congruence with prevailing conditions, and professional costs. (Ibid) further says that the failure of teachers to innovate may be rational, reasoned responses to complex progressive reforms that offer no relative advantage in the classroom, are not compatible with existing methods and offer no observable outcomes for clients such as parents who are more concerned with examination results.

System-related
The system-related category arises from, among others, issues of poor communication and trust between the agents of change and the implementers. Besides this, there is more emphasis on details of innovation than on implementation, inadequate resources and support for teachers.

School-related
At the level of the school, barriers comprise a lack of a change-supporting environment and opposition from traditional factions. Apart from this, the innovation may have insufficient backing from senior management or limited school resources may hinder its implementation. Finally, students could have challenges in bending to teacher changes if the rationale for change is not clearly spelt out.

Aziz et al (2021) found that, in the Pakistani context, EFL teachers encounter numerous challenges, among them lack of computers, electricity shortages and inadequate computer education. Furthermore, not only do senior teachers lack interest in computer learning but there is also insufficient time for Computer-Assisted Language Instruction.

CONCLUSION

This paper has tackled many facades of innovation in the teaching and assessment of foreign languages. What has come out clearly in the course of discussion is that innovation in foreign language teaching/learning is unavoidable and unstoppable and that for any teacher of language to stay afloat in the profession, they have to stop dwelling in the comfort zone of their daily routine. In essence, this means that they should let go of traditional methods that they may be clinging to and book themselves, as a matter of urgency, a place among innovative teachers who are fit enough to survive in the 21st century. Therefore, institutions of learning have no choice but to render support by putting in place infrastructure and training programmes that will sustain the innovation. When this is done, we can guarantee that foreign language teaching will no longer be business as usual. Only then can we rest assured that we can create an autonomous and motivated learner who is able to learn a foreign language for communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to sustain innovation, the study wishes to make the following recommendations:

- Teachers should be encouraged to use modern approaches of foreign language teaching;
- Teachers should embrace continuous self-training to adapt to the needs

and requirements of this ever-changing world;
- Institutions of learning should be proactive in providing all that it takes for innovation to be attained and sustained.

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