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# MODERN TECHNIQUES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: FRENCH EXAMPLE

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## **Abstract**

*The act of teaching a language cannot be achieved without a given technique being adopted. The techniques, the methods or approaches in language teaching and especially French language depend much on the teacher who is the curriculum implementer. In teaching French, a lot of techniques had been used in the past which did not actually make the specific objectives to be achieved as desired. Advancement in technology has made the teaching and learning of foreign languages very easy especially French language. The application or the usage of the following techniques cannot be overstressed: the Radio Cassette, the Television, Computer and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), etc. The application of these modern techniques go a long way in enhancing language education more especially the teaching of French language which is the second international language spoken in Nigeria.*

The ability to impact or to teach foreign language follows carefully planned method. This has been so because it follows a procedure which is actually systematic. The aim of foreign language teaching is to achieve as the specific objectives the ability to realize the four competencies in language studies. The competencies are:

- The ability to read
- The ability to write
- The ability to speak; and
- The ability to understand.

In order to realize these objectives in a foreign language teaching, the techniques of teaching foreign language come to mind. The act of teaching French as a foreign language is not an exemption. This is so because what one intends to achieve in teaching French, goes beyond ordinary sounds and discourse. In other words, the teaching of a language is more complex than simply delivering content.

This paper cannot be complete without mentioning the previous techniques employed in teaching foreign languages including French language. These are:

- ❖ Picture reading
- ❖ The use of dramatization

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- ❖ The use of audio-visual
- ❖ The use of drills
- ❖ The use of songs, etc.

Okenwa (1997:45) stated that: “Techniques in teaching are the ways or skills used in teaching and learning to achieve both the specific and the broad objectives in human learning.

In the recent time, the teaching techniques of foreign languages have gone beyond picture readings, dramatization, the use of audio-visual, the use of drill, etc. The advancement in technology has further improved the techniques in teaching and learning most especially that of a foreign language like French. These new or modern techniques include the use of the following: Radio-cassette, the Television, Computer and ICT. Under ICT, the following techniques are realizable: the Power Point Presentation, electronic learning (e-learning), Blended learning, Open and Distant learning.

### **What is a Technique?**

BBC English Dictionary (1992:1205) stated; “technique is a particular method of doing something”. The definition of “Technique” by BBC English Dictionary therefore makes clearer the topic of this paper and its contents.

### **Former Techniques in Teaching French Language**

As the name indicates, former techniques in teaching French language do not go a long way these days in achieving the desirable objectives. The usefulness of these techniques can still be felt but in a little measure. This paper will be incomplete without talking a little about some techniques or methods used in teaching a foreign language before the usage of ICT in teaching and learning the same language class. These techniques include the following:

- ❖ Picture reading
- ❖ Use of dramatization
- ❖ Audio-visual
- ❖ Use of drills
- ❖ Use of songs

### **Picture Reading**

This is the foremost technique of teaching a foreign language like French. The absence of power or electricity to energize electrical gadgets needed in teaching the language, encouraged the technique of picture reading. The picture reading comprises of images and words associated to them. Okenwa (1997:54) stated that “picture reading is a technique in teaching French language which enables the learners to associate the words with the pictures. This enables memorization to be achieved in reading”.

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### **Use of Dramatization**

This is a technique where the learners are expected to dramatize in the class to internalize the teaching and learning of the day. The class is divided into two groups or smaller groups to accommodate the learners to participate in the dramatization of the lesson or topic in the class.

Anukam (1999:36) maintained that:

*Drama is doing and when learners act or are involved in the class activities, there is greater mastery and attention of those activities. By the process of dramatization, vague impressions are brought into sharp focus, puzzling impressions are understood, fragmentary ones are completed and alarming ones are faced so that fear is overcome.*

### **Use of Drills**

Drills as a technique of teaching French, requires constant repetitions of what had been learnt. According to Anukam (1999:40 – 41):

*For example in French, if the teacher wants the learners to acquire the application of “Y” as a pronoun, he can use drill such as:  
Je vais a l’ecole - J’ Y vas  
il est ici - il Y est.*

Drills also make for active participation in class activities. Drills can be mechanical or contextual.

### **The Use of Songs**

This is as well a teaching technique in teaching French language. Anukam (1999:44) stressed:

Songs and music are useful resources in language teaching. They can be applied in teaching any aspect of a language. Singing is an aid to pronunciation lesson. It gives the learner a great deal of repetition of sound patterns which are contained in the words of the songs. It also fixes the words and patterns in the mind of the learners.

The issue here is not that we can’t find the above stressed techniques useful in teaching French language, but at times, they do not encourage faster comprehension and understanding of the foreign language. The above techniques do not evoke or arouse the motivation of the learners the way it should be. As a result of the deficiencies in them in teaching foreign language, the application of the modern techniques in foreign language teaching is now encouraged.

## **Modern Techniques in Foreign Language Teaching**

### **❖ Power Point Presentation**

The power point presentation cannot be overemphasized. This, as a technique, makes presentations easy by directly using a computer screen or data projector. The lesson is prepared in slides of the Power Point Microsoft Word (MSWord). The font size of words in the slide are normally thirty to thirty two. The words in the slides are given

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the needed transition and animation to make the teaching and learning more captivating. It is also worthy to note that lessons or topics prepared in Power Point MSWord could be directly saved in the computer, in a CD or in Flash Drive. ICT provides the language teacher the serene environment to deliver his teaching since he controls the computer effectively. The relevance of Power Point presentation in a language class could be viewed under the idea that what is to be taught or learnt is prepared in slide and presented through the computer and the projector. Illustrations and explanation are made by the teacher.

### ❖ **Electronic Learning (e-learning)**

E-learning is an electronic learning, where what is to be learnt or taught is posted in the subject's website. The address of the website is made known to students to log into for appropriate use.

This form of learning is mostly associated with higher education. Smith (2006:160) stated that:

*E-Learning is associated with higher education and corporate training. E-learning encompasses learning at all levels, both formal and non-formal, that use an information network – the internet. This could cover local area network (LAN) or wider area network (WAN) whether wholly or in part for course delivery, interaction and or facilitation.*

To others, e-learning could be referred to as online learning, web-based learning, etc. This technique therefore facilitates in a great deal teaching and learning of French language. Also language topics could be prepared and posted into the website for students' exploration and studies.

### ❖ **Open and Distance Learning**

This is another modern technique in teaching a foreign language. This provides teaching and learning which is characterized by the separation of the teacher and the learner. Dolphe (2002:68) explained that:

*Open and distance learning is a technique of providing learning opportunity that is characterized by the separation of the teacher and the learner in time or place or both time and place. It involves the use of a variety of media including print and electronic: two-way communication that allows learners and teachers or tutors to interact. The possibility of occasional face-to-face meeting is allowed.*

It is also obtainable to teach and learn foreign language this way. Proper explanations by the teacher could be obtained or made possible at face-to-face meeting with students.

### ❖ **Blended Learning**

This is a teaching and learning technique that combines traditional classroom practice with e-learning solutions. For example, students in a traditional class can be assigned both print-based and online materials. Here, the learners have online mentoring sessions

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with their teachers through chats and they are subscribed to a class e-mail list or a web-based training course which encourages teaching and learning of the language.

### ❖ **Radio-Cassette**

The use of radio-cassette is also a teaching technique. A cassette tape with the instructions or the topic dubbed in it is inserted in the radio-cassette. The cassette is played in the class for the audience of the learners. The teacher's presence is also needed for certain explanations in the class. This technique enables the learners to have a copy of the tapped cassette which they play repeatedly at home for the mastery of the topic. What this technique encourages is the possession of a radio-cassette by the learners.

### ❖ **Audio-Visual**

This technique is a combination of sound and images. In this case, a video tape is inserted in a machine which transmits the images and sounds through a projector. This form of teaching technique enables the learners to see the activities being associated with the sounds. Igwe (1980:70) stated that; "Audio-visual is a technique which makes the teaching of a language to look real. This exposes the second language learners to acquaint themselves with the phonetical sounds of the language".

Among the mentioned modern techniques in foreign language teaching, the power point presentation is recommended because of its high motivation on both the teachers and learners.

## **Conclusion**

It's obvious that the act of teaching follows a defined procedure. Techniques in teaching therefore, are these defined and systematic approaches to teaching. The hope of achieving desirable and specific objectives in any teaching and learning depends largely on the techniques. The application of the above varied forms of techniques depends on the teachers' disposition in using the ones that are very convenient to the teacher or the language topic or lesson to be taught..

The reason for the avoidance of the former techniques in teaching foreign languages has been its inability to arouse and motivate both the learners and the teachers. Modern techniques therefore propel the desire to be taught the language. It is more fascinating and has made teaching very interesting. It is the wish of this paper to support the application of modern techniques in teaching foreign languages: the French example.

## **Recommendations**

The modern techniques in foreign language teaching are achievable with the presence of constant power supply. This enables the uses and safe keep of the equipment needed in the language teaching. The procurement of computer and ICT

facilitates should be made available for the teachers of foreign languages. Finally, a good knowledge of computer usage, should be displayed by both teachers and learners.

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