FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN KISANGANI

KAWAYU MOSEKA BÉATRICE
B1/Unikis
+243851780817/+243811871042

ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of language teaching and learning depends on a complex interaction of pedagogical, psychological, sociocultural, technological, and institutional factors. Understanding these variables is essential for designing learning environments that promote successful language acquisition. This article examines key factors that influence language teaching and learning and highlights implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers.

Language teaching and learning constitute essential pillars for academic success, social mobility, and cultural integration, particularly in multilingual societies such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In Kisangani, where French functions as the official language of instruction while Lingala and Swahili dominate everyday interactions, learners navigate a complex linguistic environment that directly shapes their acquisition processes. This article examines the diverse factors that influence the effectiveness of language teaching and learning in this unique context, drawing on established theoretical frameworks as well as empirical observations from selected educational institutions in Kisangani.

The study explores pedagogical factors such as teacher training, instructional methodologies, classroom interaction patterns, and assessment practices. It also investigates sociolinguistic influences, including translanguaging practices, language attitudes, and the role of multilingual identity. Institutional and policy-related challenges—such as outdated curricula, insufficient instructional materials, and limited technological resources—are analyzed to highlight their impact on learning outcomes. Furthermore, learner-related characteristics, including motivation, self-efficacy, socioeconomic background, and exposure to media, are examined for their contribution to proficiency development.

To bridge theory and practice, the article incorporates three case studies from secondary schools and the University of Kisangani. These cases reveal discrepancies between policy ambitions and classroom realities, such as predominant use of teacher-centered methods, lack of oral practice opportunities, and inconsistent integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Nevertheless, innovative initiatives—such as pilot language laboratories—demonstrate promising improvements in learners' pronunciation, listening skills, and engagement.

Overall, the findings underscore that effective language education in Kisangani depends on addressing interconnected pedagogical, sociolinguistic, institutional, and technological factors. The study offers concrete recommendations for enhancing teacher training, modernizing

curricula, investing in language laboratories, and valuing students' multilingual repertoires as learning resources. This expanded analysis provides a foundation for future research and policy reforms aimed at strengthening language education in multilingual African contexts.

Keywords: Factors, Effectiveness, Language Teaching, and Language Learning

1. Factors

Factors are the various conditions, elements, or variables that influence a process, situation, or outcome. In education and linguistics, factors may be internal (such as motivation or aptitude) or external (such as teaching methods, learning environment, or institutional policies) and collectively shape teaching and learning results.

2. Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the degree to which an action, method, or process successfully achieves its intended objectives. In language education, effectiveness measures how well teaching strategies or learning practices lead to desired language outcomes, such as communicative competence, accuracy, and fluency.

3. Language Teaching

Language teaching is the systematic and purposeful process of facilitating the acquisition of a language through planned instruction. It involves the selection of content, methods, materials, and assessment techniques aimed at developing learners' linguistic skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as well as grammatical and communicative competence.

4. Language Learning

Language learning is the process by which individuals acquire knowledge and use of a language through exposure, practice, interaction, and cognitive engagement. It may occur in formal settings, such as classrooms, or informal contexts, and results in the gradual development of linguistic competence and communicative ability.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language teaching and learning remain at the heart of educational development globally, playing a crucial role in cognitive growth, academic achievement, and sociocultural integration. In multilingual African cities such as Kisangani in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), these processes become even more complex. Kisangani is characterized by rich linguistic diversity, where French serves as the official language of instruction and administration, Lingala dominates in public and military domains, and Swahili is spoken widely in commercial and community interactions. Additionally, dozens of local languages spoken by various ethnic communities contribute to the vibrancy of the linguistic landscape.

This multilingual situation creates a dynamic but challenging environment for language teaching and learning. Whereas French is the expected medium of instruction from primary to university level, many learners enter school with little exposure to French. Instead, they bring

linguistic repertoires dominated by Lingala, Swahili, or a combination of both. This mismatch between home language environments and school expectations has significant effects on comprehension, participation, and academic performance.

The effectiveness of language education in such environments depends on multiple factors: learner backgrounds, pedagogical strategies, teacher training, classroom interaction, curriculum relevance, institutional capacity, and access to technological tools. Furthermore, sociopolitical and economic factors shape both teaching practices and learning outcomes, making language education a multidimensional phenomenon rather than a purely academic exercise.

This article aims to provide a holistic, research-driven analysis of these factors, with specific reference to empirical observations conducted in Kisangani between 2022 and 2024. Through classroom observations, interviews, and institutional reviews, we document challenges, innovations, and contextual realities that shape students' linguistic development.

The analysis reveals that language teaching in Kisangani is affected by insufficient teacher training in communicative approaches, limited access to teaching materials, outdated curricula, inconsistent policy implementation, and a lack of language laboratories or digital learning tools. At the same time, learners demonstrate strong motivation, interest in multilingualism, and adaptive strategies such as translanguaging. This article argues that policy reform, investment in language technology, and context-responsive pedagogies are necessary to improve language learning outcomes.

2.0 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

Language acquisition has been studied extensively across disciplines such as psychology, linguistics, education, anthropology, and neurology. Several theories offer insights relevant to the linguistic context of Kisangani:

2.1 Behaviorist Theory (Skinner, 1957)

The behaviorist view posits that language learning occurs through imitation, repetition, and reinforcement. In many Congolese classrooms where teacher-centered pedagogy dominates, remnants of behaviorism persist through grammar drills, dictation, and memorization. While useful for basic structures, behaviorism fails to support communicative competence.

2.2 Innatist Theory (Chomsky, 1965)

Chomsky's concept of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) argues that humans have innate linguistic capabilities. While relevant for first language learning, innatism offers limited explanations for second-language acquisition in multilingual societies like Kisangani, where social dynamics heavily influence learning.

2.3 Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985)

Krashen argues that learners progress when exposed to comprehensible input (i+1). In Kisangani, however, exposure to French is often limited to the classroom, reducing

opportunities for natural input. Learners therefore rely on textbooks that may not reflect authentic language use.

2.4 Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978)

Vygotsky emphasizes interaction, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This theory aligns well with Kisangani's multilingual environment where learners constantly negotiate meaning using Lingala, Swahili, and French. Teachers who integrate collaborative learning often achieve better results.

2.5 Translanguaging Theory (García, 2009)

Translanguaging describes how multilingual individuals use their full linguistic repertoire to learn. In Kisangani classrooms where rigid monolingual policies still exist, embracing translanguaging could improve comprehension and student participation.

3.0 PEDAGOGICAL FACTORS

Pedagogical factors are central to the effectiveness of language teaching and learning, as they determine how instructional content is delivered, practiced, and assessed. Teaching methods, teacher competence, feedback mechanisms, and classroom interaction patterns collectively shape learners' opportunities to develop communicative competence. In contexts such as Kisangani, these factors often reflect broader systemic and institutional constraints.

3.1 Teaching Methods and Approaches

The choice of teaching methodology significantly influences learner engagement and learning outcomes. Approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) emphasize meaningful communication and real-world language use, making them particularly effective for developing communicative competence. These approaches encourage authentic interaction, integrate the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and promote the functional use of language rather than rote memorization.

In contrast, traditional methods such as the Grammar Translation Method and audio-lingual practices focus primarily on grammatical accuracy, memorization, and repetition. While these approaches may develop knowledge about the language, they often fail to prepare learners for real-life communication. In many classrooms in Kisangani, grammar translation continues to dominate instructional practices, largely due to examination requirements, large class sizes, and limited teacher training. As a result, communicative and task-based approaches remain underutilized, and learners have few opportunities to use the target language meaningfully.

3.2 Teacher Competence

Teacher competence is a critical determinant of instructional quality and learner success. It encompasses language proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management skills, and the ability to adapt instruction to learners' needs. Effective language teachers employ a variety

of teaching techniques, provide timely and constructive feedback, differentiate instruction, and create a positive emotional climate that encourages learner participation.

However, in Kisangani, many language teachers lack formal training in second language pedagogy and rely on outdated methodologies. Communicative Language Teaching is rarely applied, Task-Based Learning is nearly absent, and group work or pair activities are infrequently used. These limitations reduce opportunities for interaction and learner autonomy, thereby constraining communicative development. Continuous professional development and targeted teacher training are therefore essential for improving pedagogical effectiveness.

3.3 Feedback and Assessment

Feedback and assessment practices play a vital role in guiding language development. Constructive, ongoing, and formative feedback helps learners identify strengths and weaknesses, adjust learning strategies, and improve performance. Assessment approaches that emphasize progress rather than punishment contribute to the development of accuracy, fluency, and learner confidence.

In many educational contexts in the DRC, assessment remains heavily focused on written examinations, such as dictation and grammar exercises. Oral proficiency, listening comprehension, and interactive skills are often neglected, despite their importance for communicative competence. This imbalance discourages oral participation and reinforces teacher-centered instruction. A shift toward more balanced and performance-based assessment would better support holistic language development.

3.4 Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction patterns significantly affect learners' opportunities to practice the target language. In many classrooms, instruction follows a teacher-talk–dominant model, where learners assume a largely passive role. This structure limits student–student interaction and reduces opportunities for negotiation of meaning and spontaneous language use. Learner-centered classrooms that promote pair work, group discussions, and collaborative tasks create richer interactional environments and enhance language acquisition. Encouraging such interaction requires both methodological change and institutional support.

4.0 LEARNER-RELATED FACTORS

Learner-related factors constitute a central dimension in understanding differences in language learning outcomes. Individual learners bring distinct psychological, cognitive, and experiential characteristics that directly influence how they engage with language instruction. These factors interact with pedagogical and sociocultural conditions to shape overall learning effectiveness.

4.1 Motivation

Motivation is widely recognized as one of the strongest predictors of success in language learning. It may be intrinsic, arising from personal interest or enjoyment of the language, or extrinsic, driven by external rewards such as academic success, employment opportunities, or social recognition. Learners who possess clear personal goals—such as travel, career

advancement, or identity construction—tend to invest more time and effort in learning activities. They participate more actively in classroom interactions and demonstrate greater persistence when faced with challenging tasks. Conversely, low motivation often results in disengagement, limited practice, and slower progress. Teachers therefore play a crucial role in sustaining motivation by setting meaningful goals, providing positive feedback, and creating relevant learning tasks.

4.2 Learning Styles and Preferences

Learners differ in the ways they process and retain information, leading to varied learning styles and preferences. Some learners respond more effectively to visual input such as images, charts, and diagrams, while others benefit from auditory activities including listening exercises and oral explanations. Kinesthetic learners prefer hands-on practice, role-plays, and physical involvement, whereas social learners thrive in collaborative settings that involve group interaction and peer discussion. Effective language teaching acknowledges these differences through differentiated instruction, combining multiple modalities and activity types. By doing so, teachers increase learner engagement and ensure that instruction addresses diverse needs within the classroom.

4.3 Age and Cognitive Development

Age and cognitive development also influence language learning processes. Children often acquire languages more naturally through exposure and interaction, particularly in terms of pronunciation and accent. Adults, on the other hand, benefit from more developed cognitive and metacognitive abilities, enabling them to analyze grammatical rules, reflect on learning strategies, and monitor their own progress. Age affects key aspects of language acquisition, including pronunciation mastery, grammatical accuracy, and learning speed. As a result, instructional strategies must be adapted to different age groups: young learners require interactive, play-based approaches, while adolescents and adults benefit from explicit instruction, strategy training, and goal-oriented learning.

5.0 SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS

Sociocultural factors play a fundamental role in language teaching and learning, as language is not acquired in isolation but through social interaction and cultural participation. Learners' identities, social relationships, and community environments strongly influence how languages are used, valued, and learned. In multilingual contexts such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sociocultural dimensions are particularly significant in shaping classroom practices and learning outcomes.

5.1 Classroom Culture and Social Interaction

Language development emerges primarily through meaningful social interaction. Classrooms that promote an inclusive and participatory culture provide learners with opportunities to engage in authentic communication. When teachers encourage dialogue, group work, role-plays, and peer collaboration, learners are more likely to negotiate meaning, test hypotheses about language use, and develop communicative competence. A supportive classroom environment also reduces anxiety and fear of making mistakes, which are major barriers to oral

participation. Conversely, teacher-centered classrooms that emphasize rote learning and error correction limit interaction and restrict learners' opportunities to use the language actively.

5.2 Learners' Linguistic Background

Learners' linguistic backgrounds constitute valuable resources rather than obstacles to learning. Multilingual learners possess complex linguistic repertoires that can support comprehension and meaning-making through translanguaging practices. When home languages are recognized and valued in the classroom, learners benefit from increased confidence, enhanced metalinguistic awareness, and improved understanding of new linguistic structures. Drawing connections between known languages and the target language facilitates vocabulary acquisition and grammatical awareness. In contrast, the suppression or stigmatization of learners' home languages may lead to insecurity, reduced participation, and slower language development.

5.3 Community and Environmental Influence

Language learning is reinforced by exposure beyond the classroom. Interaction with family members, peers, media, religious institutions, and community activities provides learners with real-life contexts in which to practice and consolidate their language skills. Access to radio, television, music, social media, and travel experiences increases exposure to authentic language input and diverse communicative situations. Communities that offer frequent contact with the target language create favorable conditions for sustained language development. Where such exposure is limited, learners often depend solely on classroom instruction, which may not be sufficient for achieving high levels of proficiency.

6.0 TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS

Technological factors have become increasingly important in shaping the effectiveness of language teaching and learning. The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) offers new opportunities for exposure, interaction, and autonomous learning. However, the benefits of technology in language education depend largely on access, teacher competence, and infrastructure, particularly in developing contexts such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6.1 Access to ICT Tools

Access to ICT tools plays a fundamental role in modern language education. Language laboratories, mobile applications, computers, projectors, and digital audio resources significantly enhance the development of pronunciation accuracy and listening comprehension. These tools allow learners to engage with native or near-native speech models and to practice at their own pace. Mobile applications, in particular, support autonomous practice beyond the classroom by offering vocabulary exercises, grammar drills, and interactive speaking activities. In contexts where traditional language laboratories are unavailable, smartphones often serve as alternative learning tools. Nevertheless, unequal access to devices and limited institutional investment continue to create a digital divide among learners.

6.2 Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) refers to the use of computers and digital technologies to support and enhance language instruction. CALL environments provide interactive exercises, multimedia input, instant feedback, and recording functions that enable learners to monitor and evaluate their own progress. These features promote learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. When effectively integrated into classroom instruction, CALL increases learner motivation, engagement, and learning speed by transforming passive learning into active participation. However, the successful implementation of CALL requires teachers who are adequately trained in both pedagogical and technological skills. In many schools in the DRC, insufficient training limits the pedagogical use of available technologies.

6.3 Internet Connectivity

Reliable Internet connectivity is essential for accessing authentic language materials and facilitating real-world communication. Through online videos, podcasts, virtual exchanges, and participation in online communities, learners can be exposed to diverse accents, cultural contexts, and communicative practices. Internet access also supports collaborative learning through discussion forums and video conferencing. However, in many developing contexts, including Kisangani, Internet connectivity remains unstable, expensive, or unavailable in schools. These limitations reduce opportunities for sustained practice and meaningful interaction, thereby restricting the full potential of technology-enhanced language learning.

7.0 SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXT OF KISANGANI

Kisangani presents a highly complex and dynamic sociolinguistic environment characterized by multilingualism and constant language contact. As a major urban center in the northeastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the city functions as a linguistic crossroads where official, national, and local languages coexist and interact in everyday communication as well as in educational settings. This multilingual reality has a significant influence on language teaching and learning processes in schools.

7.1 Coexistence of French, Lingala, and Swahili

French occupies the status of the official language and serves as the principal language of administration and formal education. It is the mandated medium of instruction in most secondary and higher education institutions, despite the fact that it is not the first language for the majority of learners. Lingala and Swahili, recognized as national languages, dominate informal communication and daily interactions. In Kisangani, Swahili is widely used in markets, neighborhoods, and interethnic communication, while Lingala plays an important role in urban youth culture, media, music, and religious contexts. The coexistence of these languages creates a diglossic situation in which French is associated with formality and academic prestige, whereas Lingala and Swahili are perceived as languages of everyday life.

7.2 Code-Switching as a Learning Strategy

Code-switching—the alternating use of two or more languages within a single interaction—is a common and natural practice in Kisangani classrooms. Teachers and learners frequently switch between French, Lingala, and Swahili to facilitate comprehension, clarify complex concepts, manage classroom interactions, or express social solidarity. Rather than being merely

a sign of linguistic deficiency, code-switching can function as an effective pedagogical strategy that supports meaning-making and scaffolding, particularly for learners with limited proficiency in French. When used strategically, code-switching and translanguaging practices help bridge the gap between learners' home languages and the school language, thereby enhancing participation and reducing anxiety.

7.3 Language Attitudes of Families, Teachers, and Students

Language attitudes play a crucial role in shaping educational practices and learning outcomes. In many families, French is perceived as the language of social mobility, academic success, and employment opportunities, leading parents to encourage its use at school. However, Lingala and Swahili are often valued for their cultural identity, solidarity, and communicative efficiency in everyday life. Teachers' attitudes toward national languages vary: some view their use as a necessary support for learning, while others perceive it as an obstacle to mastering French. Students themselves often adopt pragmatic attitudes, using French in formal academic contexts and national languages for peer interaction. These differing attitudes can either facilitate or hinder effective language learning, depending on how they are managed within the school environment.

7.4 Urban Linguistic Practices and Their Influence on School Language

Urban linguistic practices in Kisangani, such as youth slang, mixed codes, and hybrid varieties, strongly influence language use within schools. Learners are exposed to multiple linguistic inputs through social networks, music, social media, religious gatherings, and street interactions. These practices shape students' linguistic repertoires and often enter the classroom, sometimes in conflict with standardized school norms. While educational institutions tend to promote a prescriptive model of French, students' everyday linguistic realities reflect fluid and adaptive language use. Recognizing and integrating these urban linguistic practices into teaching approaches can help make instruction more relevant and culturally responsive.

8.0 INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Institutional and policy-related factors play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of language teaching and learning. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly in urban centers such as Kisangani, challenges related to curriculum design, resource availability, class size, and educational policy significantly influence learning outcomes.

8.1 Curriculum Quality

Curriculum quality is a central determinant of effective language education. Curricula that are outdated, rigid, or excessively theoretical tend to hinder meaningful learning and fail to respond to learners' communicative needs. An effective language curriculum should align learning objectives with real-life communication demands, enabling learners to use language in authentic social and professional contexts. Furthermore, it should integrate cultural knowledge and pragmatic competence to support appropriate language use. Clear progression stages are also essential, ensuring that learners move systematically from basic to advanced levels of

proficiency. In the DRC, curriculum misalignment often results in a gap between instructional goals and actual language use outside the classroom.

8.2 Availability of Resources

The quality of language teaching is closely linked to the availability and adequacy of educational resources. Effective instruction depends on access to relevant textbooks, audiovisual and digital tools, well-trained teachers, and appropriate classroom infrastructure. In many Congolese schools, resource shortages remain a major challenge, limiting teachers' ability to implement communicative and learner-centered approaches. The absence of modern teaching materials and overcrowded or poorly equipped classrooms further constrains the learning process.

8.3 Class Size

Class size is another critical factor influencing language learning effectiveness. Large classes significantly reduce opportunities for learner interaction, oral practice, and individualized feedback, which are essential for developing communicative competence. In contrast, small to medium-sized classes allow for greater teacher–student interaction and facilitate participatory activities such as discussions, role-plays, and group work. In the DRC, excessive class sizes remain common due to teacher deployment issues and insufficient infrastructure.

8.4 Educational Policy

Educational policies at the national level strongly shape language teaching practices by determining teacher training standards, language status (official versus national or minority languages), and allocated instructional time. Inconsistent or unclear policy frameworks often lead to contradictions between declared language policies and actual classroom practices. In the DRC, policy inconsistency and language policy contradictions—particularly regarding the use of French and national languages—pose significant challenges. Supportive and coherent policy frameworks are essential to encourage pedagogical innovation, continuous professional development, and effective language planning.

9.0 SOME CASE STUDIES

9.1 Case Study 1: Institut Mapendano- Pedagogical Dynamics and Challenges in a Multilingual Urban Environment

Institut Mapendano, one of the long-standing secondary schools in the central commune of Kisangani, provides a valuable example of how multilingual realities intersect with classroom practices in language education. The school enrolls students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, primarily speakers of Lingala, Swahili, and various local languages such as Lokele, Olombo, or Topoke. French, however, remains the official language of instruction and the primary subject evaluated in national exams. This linguistic configuration makes the school an ideal site for examining the key factors that shape the effectiveness of language teaching and learning.

Observations conducted during four classroom visits revealed that teacher-centered instruction remains the dominant pedagogical approach. Lessons are typically structured around grammar explanations, vocabulary lists, and translation exercises. Although these methods align with the national curriculum, they often limit student interaction and reduce opportunities for meaningful communication in the target language. Many students expressed that they rarely practice English orally except when answering short questions in class, which significantly restricts the development of communicative competence.

Teachers at Institut Mapendano highlighted large class sizes—often exceeding 60 learners— as a major obstacle to effective language teaching. With limited physical space and insufficient teaching aids, instructors struggle to implement interactive or task-based methods that require small-group work or individual feedback. Additionally, the school's library resources are outdated, and access to digital tools such as projectors or language-learning software is minimal. These infrastructural constraints reinforce a reliance on textbooks and rote memorization rather than on learner-centered approaches.

Despite these challenges, the school displays interesting translanguaging practices. In less formal moments of the lesson, students frequently rely on Lingala or Swahili to negotiate meaning, clarify instructions, or support peers. Teachers also switch briefly into these languages when explaining complex grammatical concepts. Although translanguaging is not officially recognized in the curriculum, its spontaneous use demonstrates students' dependence on their multilingual repertoires as cognitive resources. Nevertheless, many teachers express concerns that excessive use of local languages may hinder immersion in English.

To further understand the learning process, interviews were conducted with twelve students from the final cycle. Several learners indicated that their motivation to master English is linked to broader social aspirations, such as travelling abroad, mainly in English speaking countries or pursuing administrative careers. However, they also mentioned that their exposure to English outside school is limited, as most communication at home and in the community occurs in Lingala, Swahili or French. This mismatch between school and social environment often results in slower progress in oral expression and listening comprehension.

Interestingly, Institut Mapendano has recently attempted to enhance language learning by initiating a pilot language laboratory project, although the equipment is still incomplete. The initiative aims to provide students with controlled listening environments, pronunciation training, and audio-based comprehension exercises. Early feedback shows that learners appreciate the novelty and find audio materials particularly helpful in improving their accents and intonation. Teachers involved in the project noted an increase in student engagement and recommended expanding the program.

Overall, the case of Institut Mapendano illustrates how pedagogical practices, infrastructural limitations, sociolinguistic realities, and student motivation interact to shape the quality of language education. While the school faces structural and methodological challenges, its multilingual environment also offers unique opportunities to adopt more inclusive and innovative approaches. Strengthening teacher training, completing the language lab, and encouraging structured translanguaging strategies could significantly enhance the effectiveness of language instruction in this context.

9.2 Case Study 2: Lycée Faradje — Curriculum Constraints, Teacher Agency, and Learner Motivation

Lycée Faradje, located in the commune Makiso, is one of the most academically reputable public schools in Kisangani. Its student population is socioeconomically diverse, with learners coming from both urban neighborhoods and peri-urban areas. The linguistic ecology mirrors that of the city: French is the formal language of instruction, while Lingala, Swahili, and tribal languages circulate widely in peer interactions. This case illustrates how curriculum rigidity, teacher initiative, and student motivation shape the effectiveness of language teaching.

Classroom observations showed that teachers generally follow the national curriculum for English, which emphasizes grammar, dictation, text analysis, and literary history. However, the curriculum provides limited room for oral communication and creative language use. Teachers reported that because national examinations prioritize grammar and text interpretation, they feel pressured to "teach to the test," often sacrificing interactive and communicative approaches.

Interestingly, one of the French teachers demonstrated a high level of teacher agency. Despite curriculum constraints, she incorporated short debates, pair-work dialogues, and role-playing activities to encourage students' oral expression. Her classes were noticeably more dynamic, and student participation levels were visibly higher. Interviews with students confirmed that they found these activities more engaging and helpful for improving their confidence in speaking French.

However, other teachers—particularly those with fewer years of experience—admitted that they felt less comfortable implementing interactive methods. They attributed this to a lack of training and to the physical setup of classrooms, which are overcrowded and filled with old, fixed benches that restrict movement. They also noted insufficient access to teaching materials such as flashcards, audio texts, or visual aids.

One striking finding at Lycée Faradje concerns learner motivation. Many students expressed strong personal and academic motivations to master French, which they associate with higher education opportunities and social advancement. Yet, several of them also observed that French is "a school language," while Lingala and Swahili dominate their social lives. This creates a form of functional bilingualism, where French becomes associated with formal, academic identity, and local languages serve social and cultural functions.

A notable challenge identified is the school's lack of technological resources. There is no functioning language laboratory, no projectors, and unreliable electricity. Teachers rely heavily on chalkboards and textbooks. During interviews, students stated that exposure to French media—videos, films, tutorials—could greatly improve their listening and speaking skills, but such exposure is rarely incorporated into lessons.

Nevertheless, Lycée Faradje has recently begun a partnership with local NGOs to introduce ICT-supported learning modules. Preliminary sessions using donated tablets have shown that students engage more actively with audio-visual learning materials. Teachers also reported that learners with lower proficiency benefited most from these tools.

Overall, the case of Lycée Faradje highlights how national curriculum design, teacher initiative, and learner motivation influence language-learning outcomes. It shows that while structural limitations persist, strategic pedagogical interventions and technological innovations hold strong potential to improve language learning in Kisangani schools.

9.3 Case Study 3: University of Kisangani (UNIKIS) — Higher Education Realities and Advanced Language Learning

The University of Kisangani (UNIKIS) represents a very different learning environment compared to secondary schools. Students enrolled in the Faculties of Letters, Education, and Social Sciences often require advanced language skills for academic reading, research writing, and professional communication. Case Study 3 focuses on how institutional constraints, academic expectations, and students' multilingual identities affect language education at the tertiary level.

The university officially uses French for instruction and academic production, but student interactions are predominantly multilingual. Lingala and Swahili are widely spoken on campus, and many students code-switch fluidly depending on context. This multilingualism influences how students engage with course materials and academic texts.

A key challenge observed at UNIKIS is academic literacy, particularly in reading comprehension and academic writing. Many first-year students struggle with extended French texts, including scholarly articles and theoretical works. Lecturers noted that these difficulties stem partly from students' weak foundations in secondary school and partly from the sudden shift from everyday French to highly specialized academic French.

The Faculty of Letters operates a Language Practice Unit, but its resources remain limited. Classroom visits revealed that instruction is primarily theoretical, with little hands-on practice in writing workshops, oral presentations, or pronunciation training. Students themselves expressed a desire for more practical sessions, especially on academic writing, referencing styles, and oral communication.

A recurrent theme emerging from interviews is the lack of language laboratories at the university level. Although proposals for establishing a modern language lab exist, they have not yet been funded. As a result, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and oral fluency are rarely taught systematically. Lecturers often rely on photocopied texts, personal notes, and traditional lecturing.

Despite these constraints, UNIKIS exhibits examples of innovation. Some lecturers encourage translanguaging strategies during discussions, allowing students to use Lingala or Swahili to explain complex concepts before reformulating them in French. This practice has been observed to reduce anxiety, increase participation, and enhance comprehension. Students reported that translanguaging made academic content "less intimidating" and helped bridge the gap between prior knowledge and new concepts.

Another positive aspect is the emergence of student-led learning communities. Several clubs—including reading clubs, English practice groups, and debate associations—provide spaces for

voluntary language practice. These initiatives demonstrate strong learner autonomy and peer support mechanisms, which compensate partially for institutional limitations.

Overall, UNIKIS exemplifies how higher education language learning is shaped by academic demands, multilingual identities, and limited institutional resources. While challenges remain significant, the university's student initiatives and lecturer innovations show potential pathways for improving language-learning outcomes.

10.0 CONCLUSION

Language teaching and learning are influenced by a wide range of factors that interact at multiple levels, encompassing pedagogical, psychological, sociocultural, technological, and institutional dimensions. Research has consistently shown that effective language instruction depends on the integration of multiple interacting elements, rather than on any single factor alone (e.g., motivation, teacher competence, sociocultural context, institutional support, and technology use).

Competent and adaptable teachers are central to successful language education, as they shape learners' experiences through their pedagogical knowledge, attitudes, and ability to foster supportive learning environments. Teachers serve not only as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators, motivators, and designers of meaningful learning tasks, which strongly influence learners' engagement and outcomes (Mihaljević Djigunović & Nikolov, 2019; Pinter, 2017; see also research on teacher effectiveness factors).

Learner motivation is another critical determinant of language acquisition success. Motivation influences learners' effort, persistence, and willingness to engage with challenging language tasks. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational components, such as integrative and instrumental motivation, have been linked to higher levels of language achievement and sustained learning behavior. Without sufficient motivation, learners are less likely to persevere through the effortful process of acquiring a new language.

Supportive sociocultural environments, including social interaction, community attitudes, and cultural contexts, significantly shape learners' experiences and attitudes toward language learning. Sociocultural theory highlights that language acquisition is not merely a cognitive process but also a social one, where interaction with peers, communities, and cultural norms provides essential opportunities for meaningful practice and identity negotiation.

Meaningful integration of technology can enhance language teaching and learning by providing access to diverse resources, adaptive learning paths, and interactive environments. However, successful technology integration depends on teachers' attitudes, competencies, and the institutional support available to overcome adoption barriers and ensure pedagogically sound use of digital tools.

Adequate institutional frameworks — including policy support, resource allocation, teacher training, and community involvement — further strengthen the conditions under which effective language instruction can occur. Institutional factors shape curriculum design, professional development opportunities, and the broader learning culture, all of which influence teaching practices and learner experiences.

Addressing these factors holistically allows educators, administrators, and policymakers to design learning environments that not only foster linguistic fluency and confidence but also promote critical thinking, intercultural competence, and lifelong learning. Future research should continue to explore how these factors interact across diverse educational contexts and how adaptive, culturally responsive strategies can be operationalized to support inclusive and sustainable language education systems.

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