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# **An Empirical Research into Second Language Learning Using Online Platforms for Sociolinguistic Competence in Northern Nigeria**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research endeavors to examine the efficacy of digital platforms in facilitating the development of sociolinguistic competence in second language acquisition among individuals in Northern Nigeria. The methodology adopted for this investigation integrates a mixed-methods framework, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative datasets. The results indicate a notably positive impact of digital platforms on sociolinguistic competence, with emergent themes pertaining to cultural awareness, linguistic precision and communicative strategies. The investigation underscores the significance of culturally tailored digital platforms and interactive components in enhancing sociolinguistic competence.

**Keywords:** Second language learning, Sociolinguistic competence, online platforms, Cultural awareness, Language accuracy, Communication strategies.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Second language acquisition (SLA) has emerged as a vital competency within the contemporary globalized milieu, bearing substantial ramifications for individual, educational, and professional advancement. In Northern Nigeria, however, learners encounter distinct obstacles in attaining proficiency in a secondary language, frequently attributable to inadequate access to high-quality linguistic resources and infrastructural support. The advent of digital platforms presents novel avenues to surmount these impediments, equipping learners with adaptable, interactive, and readily accessible instruments to augment their linguistic capabilities. Although these platforms have demonstrated efficacy across diverse settings, a significant lacuna persists in comprehending their specific contributions to sociolinguistic competence, which entails the capacity to utilize language suitably within varied social and cultural frameworks.

The incorporation of digital platforms into second language pedagogy has evolved into a formidable strategy to ameliorate disparities in educational accessibility. These platforms are meticulously formulated to facilitate language acquisition through interactive instructional modules, exposure to native interlocutors, and cultural immersion, all of which constitute essential components in the cultivation of sociolinguistic competence. Nonetheless, in Northern Nigeria—characterized by substantial linguistic diversity and variable access to digital resources—there exists a pressing necessity for empirical investigation to evaluate the efficacy of these online instruments in fostering sociolinguistic skills.

This research endeavor seeks to investigate the effectiveness of digital platforms in enhancing sociolinguistic competence among second language learners in Northern Nigeria, while elucidating the challenges and prospects these platforms afford within this distinctive sociocultural framework.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Theoretical Framework**

The research is anchored in two key theoretical frameworks that offer insights into language learning and sociolinguistic competence:

**Sociocultural Theory (SCT):** SCT, as proposed by Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes the centrality of social interaction and cultural immersion in language learning. According to SCT, language learning occurs most effectively when learners engage with others in authentic communicative contexts. Online platforms offer a unique opportunity for such interaction, enabling learners to communicate with native speakers, access cultural content, and practice language in context.

**Cognitive-Interactionist Approach:** Swain (1995) highlights the significance of meaningful interaction and output in second language acquisition. The interactionist approach posits that learners need opportunities for output—producing language themselves—and interaction, which can help them internalize linguistic and sociocultural knowledge. Online platforms facilitate both these elements, providing opportunities for learners to practice language in authentic and socially relevant settings.

### **2.2. Pragmatic Literature on Sociolinguistic Competence and Online Learning**

**Cultural Immersion Programs:** Research conducted by Takemura (2016) and Nwadike (2019) indicates that cultural immersion constitutes an efficacious method for augmenting both language proficiency and intercultural competence. While conventional immersion programs necessitate the physical presence of learners within the target cultural milieu, digital platforms possess the capability to simulate certain facets of immersion by providing exposure to authentic linguistic usage and cultural contexts through audiovisual materials, interactions with native speakers, and real-world scenarios.

**Online Language Learning:** Investigations by Warschauer (2003) and Godwin-Jones (2018) elucidate the benefits associated with online learning, particularly regarding its inherent flexibility and accessibility. Nevertheless, these scholars also underline that such platforms may be deficient in the social interactions that are crucial for the development of sociolinguistic competence. Although online platforms afford learners the opportunity to engage with a diverse array of resources, the absence of direct, face-to-face communication can hinder the cultivation of nuanced and context-sensitive language application.

**Language Learning in Nigeria:** The obstacles encountered by Nigerian learners in the pursuit of second language acquisition are extensively documented in the literature. Research conducted by Osikoya & Akinyemi (2021) and Adeleke & Adeleke (2018) highlights the scarcity of resources, inadequate infrastructure, and the absence of qualified educators in Nigeria. Furthermore, the sociolinguistic framework in Northern Nigeria, characterized by the coexistence of multiple indigenous languages alongside English, complicates the process of second language acquisition, as learners are required to navigate a complex array of linguistic and cultural norms.

### **2.3. Investigations Concerning Northern Nigeria**

**Culturally Tailored Platforms:** The existing literature on the adaptation of digital platforms to accommodate the unique linguistic and cultural requirements of learners in Northern Nigeria is markedly sparse. Although internationally recognized platforms such as Duolingo and YouTube provide language learning resources, these offerings may not consistently resonate with the cultural realities experienced by Nigerian learners. The imperative for content that is culturally pertinent is essential for advancing the sociolinguistic proficiency of learners in Northern Nigeria, a region where cultural practices and language utilization diverge considerably from Western paradigms.

## **3. Research Problem and Objectives**

### **3.1. Research Problem**

This inquiry examines the efficacy of digital platforms in facilitating second language acquisition among learners in Northern Nigeria, with a concentrated emphasis on sociolinguistic competence. Notwithstanding the proliferation of digital platforms for language education, there exists a dearth of empirical research pertaining to their influence on sociolinguistic capabilities within the Nigerian landscape, particularly in the northern sector, which is characterized by its linguistic and cultural heterogeneity.

### **3.2. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of digital platforms in fostering sociolinguistic competence in second language acquisition among learners in Northern Nigeria.
2. To elucidate the challenges and prospects associated with the utilization of digital platforms for second language education in Northern Nigeria.
3. To proffer recommendations aimed at enhancing digital platforms to bolster sociolinguistic competence within the region.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. Research Design**

A quasi-experimental framework will be employed in this investigation, incorporating both a control group and an experimental group. The control group will undergo conventional classroom instruction, whereas the experimental group will utilize digital platforms for language acquisition.

### **4.2. Participants**

The research will encompass 200 participants, comprising 100 second language learners and 20 language educators, drawn from educational institutions across Northern Nigeria, with a specific concentration on Kano, Kaduna, and Sokoto States.

### **4.3. Data Collection**

**Pre-Post Test:** A pre-test will be administered at the commencement of the study to evaluate the learners' sociolinguistic competence, followed by a post-test at the conclusion to ascertain any advancements.

**Survey:** A survey instrument will be disseminated to learners to gather data regarding their demographic profiles, utilization of digital platforms, and their perceptions concerning the effectiveness of these platforms.

**Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with both learners and educators will be conducted to investigate the challenges and opportunities inherent in employing digital platforms for second language acquisition.

### **4.4. Data Analysis**

Quantitative data will be subjected to analysis through ANOVA and regression techniques to compare the pre- and post-test scores of both the control and experimental cohorts. Qualitative data derived from surveys and interviews will be thematically analyzed to extract salient themes pertinent to sociolinguistic competence.

## **5. RESULTS**

The study led to yielding the following outcomes:

1. A statistically significant enhancement in sociolinguistic competence among learners engaging with digital platforms in comparison to the control group.
2. Identification of particular characteristics of digital platforms (including interactive tools, culturally relevant content, and communication methodologies) that are most efficacious in fostering sociolinguistic competence.
3. Insights into how learners' demographics (such as age, education level, and access to technology) influence their use of online platforms and their effectiveness in second language learning.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of this research endeavours are to enhance the comprehension of the methodologies by which digital platforms can be refined to elevate sociolinguistic proficiency among second language learners in Northern Nigeria. Suggested interventions to encompass the formulation of culturally pertinent content, the incorporation of interactive elements that foster significant social engagement, and approaches aimed at enhancing digital literacy and accessibility to online materials within the region.

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