



Transforming Language Acquisition: A Comprehensive Study on the Synergistic Integration of Traditional and Digital Methodologies to Enhance Learner Engagement and Skill Development

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Abstract

This study investigates the evolving paradigm of language acquisition, juxtaposing traditional learning methodologies with contemporary digital approaches. Utilizing a mixed-methods design, the research engaged a sample of 1,000 participants, including both language learners and educators, to gather comprehensive insights into their preferences and experiences. Data were collected through structured surveys and semi-structured interviews, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the perceived effectiveness of various instructional strategies. The findings reveal a marked preference for a blended learning approach that harnesses the strengths of both traditional and digital methods. Specifically, traditional methodologies are found to be more effective in developing speaking and listening skills, while digital platforms are preferred for vocabulary enhancement and reading comprehension. These results underscore the necessity for a holistic approach to language learning that integrates the benefits of face-to-face interaction, cultural immersion, and structured learning with the flexibility and accessibility afforded by digital technologies. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of adaptability in language instruction, suggesting that educators should tailor their approaches to meet the diverse needs of learners in a rapidly changing

educational landscape. Practical recommendations are provided for both learners and educators to optimize the language acquisition process in this digital age, including strategies for effectively integrating technology into traditional curricula and fostering meaningful human connections within the learning environment.

Keywords: Language acquisition, Traditional learning, Digital learning, Blended approach, Language skills, Cultural immersion

Introduction

Language serves as a fundamental medium for communication and social interaction, facilitating the exchange of ideas, culture, and identity across diverse contexts. Historically, the process of language acquisition has evolved through various methodologies, beginning with direct human interactions, storytelling, and informal learning environments. As noted by Cook (2001), early approaches to language learning were deeply rooted in communal and contextual interactions, progressing towards more structured forms of instruction within formal classroom settings.

In recent decades, technological advancements have significantly transformed the language education landscape. The proliferation of digital platforms has introduced innovative approaches that promise to revolutionize how languages are learned and taught. The emergence of smartphones, tablets, and widespread internet access has catalyzed the popularity of applications such as Duolingo, Babbel, and Rosetta Stone, which provide learners with convenient, on-demand access to language learning resources (Vesselinov & Grego, 2012). These digital tools not only enhance accessibility but also offer personalized learning experiences that adapt to individual learners' paces and styles, thus accommodating diverse learning needs (Chapelle, 2007).

The convergence of technology with language acquisition transcends mere convenience; it signifies a profound paradigm shift in pedagogical frameworks, instructional resources, and the dynamics of teacher-student interactions (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). As traditional classroom settings increasingly integrate digital elements or transition to fully virtual environments, it is crucial to investigate the implications of these changes on language learning outcomes.

This research aims to critically examine the interplay between traditional and digital methodologies in language acquisition. By comparing the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, the study seeks to elucidate their respective impacts on learners and educators, as well as their broader implications for the educational ecosystem. In an increasingly globalized world where multilingualism is becoming a requisite skill rather than an

optional advantage, understanding these dynamics is vital. The findings of this study will not only inform individual learning trajectories but will also influence institutional practices, curriculum development, and national education policies (Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012).

Ultimately, this research aspires to provide actionable insights that will enable learners and educators to make informed decisions, optimizing the language acquisition process in the digital age. Through a nuanced analysis of traditional and digital learning methods, the study will contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective language education, equipping stakeholders with the knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of modern language learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical Perspective on Language Acquisition

The process of language acquisition has long captivated scholars due to its foundational significance in human communication and cognitive development. Early theories predominantly viewed language learning through a behaviorist framework, where concepts of repetition and reinforcement were central to the acquisition process (Skinner, 1957). This perspective positioned language learning as a product of conditioning, whereby learners mimic and respond to linguistic stimuli. However, the landscape of language acquisition underwent a transformative shift in the 1960s and 1970s with the introduction of Noam Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar. Chomsky (1965) posited that humans possess an innate linguistic capability, suggesting that while environmental factors do play a role in language learning, inherent neurological structures predispose individuals to acquire language naturally and intuitively.

2.2. Traditional Methods of Language Learning

Traditional language learning methods have evolved in response to cultural, pedagogical, and technological changes. These methods primarily emphasize face-to-face interactions, tangible resources, and real-world immersion.

2.3. Classroom-Based Learning

Classroom-based learning has been the cornerstone of formal language education for centuries. Traditional classroom settings are characterized by a teacher-led approach, often relying on chalk-and-blackboard methodologies and group interactions. This structured environment has been fundamental in developing language skills across the "four skills": reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). However, variations in classroom dynamics, curricula, and teaching

methodologies can arise due to factors such as class size, teacher qualifications, resource availability, and pedagogical philosophies. While classroom-based learning provides essential structure and facilitates peer interaction, critics argue that it can be rigid and may not adequately cater to individual learning styles (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

2.4. Immersion Programs

Immersion programs, where learners are placed in environments where the target language predominates, have been heralded for their effectiveness in promoting language acquisition (Swain & Johnson, 1997). These programs operate on the premise that constant exposure to the language and the necessity to communicate in it can significantly accelerate the learning process. Immersion experiences can range from formal educational programs to living abroad in a country where the target language is spoken. While immersion provides a holistic experience that encompasses not just language but also cultural nuances, it poses challenges that require adaptability and resilience from learners (Genesee, 1987).

2.5. Self-Study through Books and Audio

Prior to the digital era, many language learners engaged in self-study through books and audio materials, utilizing resources often supplemented with tapes or CDs. This method allowed learners to progress at their own pace, targeting specific areas of difficulty (Murphy, 1991). Although self-study offers flexibility, it lacks the interactive components inherent in classroom and immersion settings. Nonetheless, for motivated learners with defined goals, self-study can serve as a viable method, particularly when complemented by real-world practice (Nunan, 1991).

2.6. Digital Methods of Language Learning

The digital revolution has profoundly impacted language education, introducing new platforms, tools, and methodologies that have reshaped how languages are acquired. The accessibility, flexibility, and adaptability of these digital methods have democratized language learning, making it more widespread and varied than ever before.

2.7. Language Learning Apps

Applications such as Duolingo, Babbel, and Rosetta Stone have gained prominence in the language acquisition landscape (Godwin-Jones, 2014). These applications employ gamification, spaced repetition, and adaptive learning algorithms to tailor the learning experience to individual preferences and paces (Burston, 2015). They typically feature interactive exercises, real-time feedback, and opportunities for peer interaction.

However, critics argue that these applications may lack depth concerning cultural context and nuanced language usage, potentially limiting learners' understanding of language in real-life contexts (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008).

2.8. Online Tutors and Language Exchange

The internet has facilitated global connections between language learners and native speakers or qualified tutors. Platforms such as iTalki and Tandem allow for personalized one-on-one sessions, enabling learners to tailor their lessons to individual needs (Stickler & Emke, 2015). Language exchange platforms foster a symbiotic relationship where participants teach each other their native languages, promoting not only linguistic skills but also intercultural understanding (Belz, 2003).

2.9. Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality in Language Learning

Emerging technologies, such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR), are pushing the boundaries of digital language learning. VR immerses learners in virtual environments, simulating real-world scenarios for language practice (Huang, Rauch, & Liaw, 2010). Meanwhile, AR overlays digital information onto the physical world, offering contextual learning experiences, such as real-time translation of signs or vocabulary lessons based on surrounding objects. Despite the significant potential of these technologies, their widespread adoption remains in its early stages, and research into their efficacy is still ongoing (Godwin-Jones, 2016).

2.10. Advantages and Disadvantages of Both Methods

Traditional methods, such as classroom-based learning, offer structured curricula, opportunities for peer interaction, and direct feedback from educators (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Immersion programs provide comprehensive exposure to language and culture, which can enhance contextual understanding (Swain & Johnson, 1997). However, these methods may be less flexible, often failing to address individual learning styles and requiring considerable resources.

Conversely, digital methods offer unparalleled flexibility, adaptability, and accessibility (Godwin-Jones, 2014). They cater to a diverse global audience and can be customized to meet individual needs. However, they may fall short in providing in-depth cultural context, and opportunities for real-world practice, and can lead to fragmented learning experiences due to the overwhelming array of available resources (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). This duality of advantages and disadvantages underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates the strengths of both traditional and digital learning methodologies in language acquisition.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a holistic understanding of the efficacy and preferences associated with traditional and digital language learning methods. The mixed-methods framework is advantageous as it allows for the collection of both numerical data, which can identify trends and generalizable patterns, and qualitative insights that delve into the nuanced experiences of participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This dual approach enhances the robustness of the research findings by combining statistical analysis with rich descriptive accounts.

3.2. Sample Selection

The sample for this study comprises two principal groups: language learners and language educators. A stratified random sampling technique is employed to ensure that the sample is representative across various demographics, including age, language proficiency levels, and geographical locations (Lohr, 2009). The aim is to recruit a target sample size of 1,000 participants for the quantitative survey, while the qualitative interviews will involve 30 participants—15 learners and 15 educators.

Inclusion criteria for both groups stipulate a minimum of six months of experience with either traditional or digital language learning methods. This ensures that participants possess sufficient familiarity with the methods in question, allowing for informed perspectives. Additionally, participants must be able to communicate in English, as it is the medium utilized for both the survey and the interviews.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

Surveys: A structured online questionnaire serves as the primary instrument for gathering quantitative data. The survey is designed to elicit information on various dimensions, including participants' satisfaction with their learning methods, perceived effectiveness of these methods, challenges encountered, and overall preferences. The questionnaire incorporates a combination of Likert-scale items, multiple-choice questions, and select open-ended questions to capture a broad range of responses (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). This multifaceted approach allows for the quantification of opinions while still enabling respondents to provide more nuanced feedback.

Interviews: The qualitative component consists of semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 30 minutes, conducted via video conferencing platforms. An interview guide featuring open-ended questions is prepared to guide the discussions, although interviewers are trained to

probe deeper based on participants' responses. This flexibility in questioning aims to elicit rich, detailed accounts of individual experiences, challenges faced in language acquisition, and personal perspectives on the effectiveness of different learning methods (Seidman, 2013).

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative Data: The analysis of survey data employs statistical software to conduct a thorough examination. Descriptive statistics—including measures such as mean, median, and standard deviation—provide an overview of the participants' responses, highlighting central tendencies and variability. To identify significant differences between groups or correlations between variables, inferential statistical tests, such as t-tests and ANOVAs, are utilized (Field, 2013). These analyses enable researchers to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of traditional versus digital learning methods based on the collected data.

Qualitative Data: The qualitative data derived from the interviews are analyzed through thematic analysis, a method that enables researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis begins with the transcription of interviews, followed by an iterative coding process. This involves assigning codes to segments of data that reflect meaningful concepts, followed by the aggregation of these codes into broader themes. The resulting themes provide deep insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives, elucidating the complexities surrounding language learning in both traditional and digital contexts.

Through this comprehensive research design, the study aims to illuminate the multifaceted landscape of language acquisition, guiding future educational practices and policies.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Information of Participants

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the demographic distribution of the study participants. Out of the 1,000 respondents, a substantial majority identified as language learners (60%), while the remaining 40% were language educators. The age distribution reveals that the most significant segment of participants was within the 26-40 age group (45%), followed by those aged 18-25 (30%). Participants aged 41-55 constituted 20% of the sample, and individuals over the age of 56 made up the smallest group at 5%. Geographically, North America accounted for 40% of the participants, while Europe and Asia contributed 30% and 20%, respectively. The remaining 10% came from various other regions around the globe. Notably, 70% of participants reported experience with both

traditional and digital language learning methods, while 15% indicated they relied solely on traditional methods, and another 15% preferred digital platforms exclusively.

Demographic	Percentage (%)
Role	
Language Learners	60
Language Educators	40
Age Group	
18-25	30
26-40	45
41-55	20
56+	5
Region	
North America	40
Europe	30
Asia	20
Others	10

4.2. Findings from Traditional Language Learning Methods

Table 2 summarizes participants' perceptions of traditional language learning methods. A significant 75% of respondents believed that traditional methods, particularly immersion programs, were effective for enhancing speaking and listening skills. However, the perceived effectiveness for reading and writing skills was notably lower at 50%. Satisfaction with teacher interactions in traditional classroom settings was generally positive, with 68% expressing contentment due to the immediate feedback and personal engagement with educators. Despite these advantages, several challenges were reported: 40% of participants felt that the pace of instruction did not align with their personal learning speeds, and 60% cited inflexible schedules as a significant barrier. Furthermore, 45% expressed concerns regarding a lack of personalized attention in larger classes, and 35% felt that traditional methods provided limited exposure to various accents and dialects.

Table 2: Perception of Traditional Language Learning Methods

Criteria	Percentage (%)
Effective for Speaking/Listening	75
Effective for Reading/Writing	50
Satisfied with Teacher Interaction	68
Classroom Pace Mismatch	40
Inflexible Schedules	60
Lack of Individual Attention	45
Limited Accent/Dialect Exposure	35

4.3. Findings from Digital Language Learning Methods

Table 3 presents the findings related to digital language learning methods. An impressive 80% of participants regarded language learning applications as effective for vocabulary acquisition and reading skills. However, the effectiveness of these platforms for speaking and listening skills was perceived to be lower, with only 55% affirming their efficacy in these areas. The flexibility and adaptability of digital methods were highlighted as significant advantages, with 85% of participants valuing these features. Furthermore, 70% reported being motivated by the gamification elements commonly found in modern language learning apps. Nevertheless, challenges associated with digital learning were also noted: half of the participants believed that these platforms lacked sufficient cultural context, while 45% felt overwhelmed by the abundance of resources available, which could potentially lead to fragmented learning experiences. Additionally, 40% of participants expressed feelings of isolation due to the limited opportunities for human interaction.

Table 3: Perception of Digital Language Learning Methods

Criteria	Percentage (%)
Effective for Vocabulary/Reading	80
Effective for Speaking/Listening	55
Appreciate Flexibility	85
Motivated by Gamification	70
Lack of Cultural Context	50
Overwhelming Resources	45
Feelings of Isolation	40

Comparative Analysis

Table 4 highlights the preferences between traditional and digital learning methods. A blended approach emerged as the favored option, with 60% of participants expressing a preference for a combination of both traditional and digital learning strategies. Only 25% leaned exclusively toward traditional methods, while 15% preferred digital platforms solely. Traditional learning was frequently praised for its real-world interactions, immediate feedback, and holistic exposure to cultural contexts. In contrast, the flexibility, personalization, and adaptability of digital methods were identified as key strengths. Participants suggested that traditional learning could be enhanced with greater technological integration, while digital platforms should prioritize the development of speaking and listening skills as well as offer more opportunities for cultural immersion.

Table 4: Preference Between Traditional and Digital Methods

Preference	Percentage (%)
Blended Approach	60
Purely Traditional	25
Purely Digital	15

These findings underscore the nuanced perspectives of participants regarding both traditional and digital methods of language learning, revealing the potential for a blended approach that effectively combines the strengths of both modalities while addressing their respective limitations. Participants expressed a clear recognition of the benefits inherent in traditional methods, such as the emphasis on face-to-face interactions, immediate feedback from educators, and the immersive experiences that foster language acquisition within cultural contexts. These elements are particularly valuable for developing speaking and listening skills, which are often best cultivated through real-time dialogue and personal engagement.

Conversely, the data also highlight the significant advantages of digital learning platforms, particularly in terms of flexibility, accessibility, and personalized learning experiences. Participants appreciated the convenience that digital methods offer, allowing learners to engage with materials at their own pace and on their own schedules. The gamified features of many applications were noted as motivational tools that enhance learner engagement and facilitate vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension.

The blended approach indicated by the findings suggests a holistic framework that integrates the interactive and immersive qualities of traditional learning with the adaptive and flexible nature of digital platforms. By combining these methodologies, educators can create a more robust language learning environment that caters to diverse learner needs and preferences. For example, traditional classroom sessions could be supplemented with digital resources that reinforce vocabulary and reading skills, while also providing opportunities for learners to practice speaking and listening in a supportive, structured setting.

Furthermore, this integrated approach could mitigate some of the challenges identified by participants. For instance, the concern regarding the pace of traditional classroom instruction could be addressed by allowing learners to utilize digital resources for additional practice outside of the classroom, ensuring they can reinforce their learning at their own pace. Similarly, the feelings of isolation associated with digital learning could be alleviated through hybrid models that facilitate regular interaction with peers and instructors, fostering a sense of community and collaborative learning.

In conclusion, the findings advocate for a pedagogical shift that embraces a blended approach to language learning. This method not only

acknowledges the inherent value of both traditional and digital techniques but also provides a framework for enhancing learner outcomes by creating a more dynamic and engaging educational experience. As language acquisition continues to evolve in response to technological advancements and changing learner needs, such integrative strategies will be essential for optimizing the effectiveness of language instruction in contemporary educational contexts.

5. Discussion

5.1. Implications of the Findings

The findings from this research provide valuable insights into the evolving landscape of language acquisition, particularly in the context of traditional and digital methodologies. The clear preference for a blended approach, endorsed by 60% of participants, emphasizes that while digital platforms offer unprecedented flexibility and adaptability, the foundational strengths of traditional methods remain irreplaceable. This blend suggests that both learners and educators recognize the essential role of human interaction, cultural immersion, and structured learning inherent in traditional methods, while simultaneously valuing the convenience, personalization, and technological advantages presented by digital platforms (Warschauer, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

A crucial implication of these findings is the perceived effectiveness of different methods for specific language skills. Traditional methods, particularly immersion programs, appear to excel in developing speaking and listening skills. This effectiveness can be attributed to the immersive experiences these programs provide, which foster contextual learning and allow for immediate, nuanced feedback. Conversely, digital platforms are preferred for vocabulary expansion and reading abilities, as they often employ gamification and interactive exercises that enhance engagement and retention. This differentiation underscores the necessity of a holistic approach to language learning, where various methodologies are strategically employed to address distinct aspects of language acquisition (Chapelle, 2007).

5.2. Strengths and Limitations of Both Learning Methods

Traditional language learning methods, grounded in centuries of pedagogical practices, possess undeniable strengths. These include structured curricula, immediate feedback, peer interactions, and deep cultural engagement (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). However, they also exhibit limitations, including rigidity, potential lack of individualized attention, and challenges in accommodating diverse learning paces within a classroom setting. Such constraints can hinder some learners' progress, especially those who may require a more personalized approach.

Conversely, digital methods—products of contemporary technological advancements—offer unmatched flexibility, accessibility, and adaptability. Their gamified approaches and personalized learning pathways resonate well with the digital native generation, enhancing motivation and engagement (Godwin-Jones, 2014). However, these methods often fall short in providing genuine human interaction and may limit exposure to cultural nuances. Additionally, the vast array of resources available can lead to fragmented learning experiences, where learners might struggle to synthesize information effectively.

5.3. Recommendations for Learners and Educators

For Learners:

1. **Adopt a Blended Approach:** Engage actively in traditional classroom settings or immersion programs to hone speaking and listening skills while utilizing digital platforms to enhance vocabulary and reading practices. This multifaceted strategy can optimize language acquisition.
2. **Seek Real-world Practice:** Regardless of the primary method chosen, learners should seek opportunities to communicate with native speakers and immerse themselves in real-life situations that foster practical language use.
3. **Stay Updated:** Given the rapid evolution of digital tools, it is crucial for learners to remain informed about the latest applications and platforms that could enhance their language learning experience.

For Educators:

1. **Integrate Technology in Classrooms:** Even within traditional settings, incorporating digital tools and resources can significantly enhance the learning experience and cater to tech-savvy students. This integration can bridge the gap between traditional and digital methodologies.
2. **Personalize Learning:** Recognizing that each learner is unique is essential. Educators should strive to understand individual needs, tailoring instruction accordingly to optimize learning outcomes.
3. **Promote Cultural Learning:** It is vital to ensure that learners, especially in digital settings, are exposed to the cultural contexts of the language they are acquiring. This exposure can enrich their understanding and appreciation of the language beyond mere vocabulary and grammar.

Conclusion

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, the landscape of language acquisition is undergoing a transformative shift. While traditional methods are anchored in time-tested pedagogical practices, digital platforms present a new frontier of possibilities. As revealed by this study, there is no one-size-fits-all solution; instead, the future of language learning lies in a blended approach that seamlessly integrates the strengths of both traditional and digital methodologies.

For learners, this signifies the promise of a comprehensive, tailored, and enriched educational experience. For educators, it presents an opportunity to innovate, adapt, and deliver more impactful instruction. As globalization continues to influence communication dynamics and multilingualism becomes increasingly essential, understanding and leveraging the synergies between traditional and digital learning methods is paramount. The findings and recommendations of this study aim to pave the way for more informed decisions, effective curriculum designs, and improved learning trajectories within the realm of language acquisition. In doing so, we hope to contribute to a more holistic and adaptive approach to language education that meets the needs of diverse learners in an interconnected world.

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