



The Role of Language and Digital Literacy in University Education: Advancing Youth Empowerment for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Abdul-Hamid Habibullahi ^{1*}

¹*Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Nigeria*

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of language and digital literacy in advancing youth empowerment toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three-hundred respondents were selected through Proportional Stratified Sampling technique from ten universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. A validated, researcher-designed questionnaire was used for data collection, and descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the data. The findings showed that foreign languages promote critical thinking and contextual comprehension of societal issues, which is in support of SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). English learning was shown to significantly advance research and academic writing, which supports SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). French and Arabic provided opportunities for creativity, intercultural exchange, and international collaborations, which are aligned with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The study also illustrated that digital literacy of information and communication technologies, including e-learning platforms and ICT tools, play a significant role in language learning, entrepreneurship, and self-confidence, thus enhancing youth empowerment in support of SDG 4 and SDG 9. Multilingual competency was also illustrated as a key factor for accessing global knowledge networks and facilitating sustainable development initiatives. The study finds that language education, when combined with digital technology, is a powerful instrument for the realization of various SDGs. It suggests curriculum innovations that involve indigenous and foreign languages, compulsory digital literacy in language education, and policy frameworks that further the link between language education, youth empowerment, and national development goals.

ABSTRAK

Peran Bahasa dan Literasi Digital dalam Pendidikan Universitas: Memajukan Pemberdayaan Pemuda untuk Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (TPB). Studi ini menyelidiki dampak bahasa dan literasi digital dalam memastikan pemberdayaan pemuda untuk Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (TPB). Desain survei deskriptif digunakan untuk penelitian ini. Tiga ratus responden dipilih melalui teknik Proportional Stratified Sampling dari sepuluh universitas di Negara Bagian Kwara, Nigeria. Kuesioner rancangan peneliti yang telah divalidasi digunakan untuk pengumpulan data dan statistik deskriptif digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa bahasa asing mendorong pemikiran kritis dan pemahaman kontekstual tentang isu-isu sosial, yang mendukung TPB 4 (Pendidikan Berkualitas) dan TPB 10 (Pengurangan Ketimpangan). Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris terbukti secara signifikan memajukan penelitian dan penulisan akademik, yang mendukung TPB 9 (Industri, Inovasi, dan Infrastruktur). Bahasa Prancis dan Arab memberikan peluang untuk kreativitas, pertukaran antarbudaya, dan kolaborasi internasional, yang sejalan dengan TPB 8 (Pekerjaan Layak dan Pertumbuhan Ekonomi) dan TPB 17

CONTACT

abdulhamidhabibullahi@gmail.com

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(Kemitraan untuk Mencapai Tujuan). Studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa literasi digital teknologi informasi dan komunikasi, termasuk platform pembelajaran daring dan perangkat TIK, memainkan peran penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa, kewirausahaan, dan kepercayaan diri, sehingga meningkatkan pemberdayaan pemuda dalam mendukung SDG 4 dan SDG 9. Kompetensi multibahasa juga digambarkan sebagai faktor kunci untuk mengakses jaringan pengetahuan global dan memfasilitasi inisiatif pembangunan berkelanjutan. Studi ini menemukan bahwa pendidikan bahasa, jika dipadukan dengan teknologi digital, merupakan instrumen yang ampuh untuk mewujudkan berbagai SDG. Studi ini menyarankan inovasi kurikulum yang melibatkan bahasa daerah dan asing, literasi digital wajib dalam pendidikan bahasa, dan kerangka kebijakan yang memperkuat hubungan antara pendidikan bahasa, pemberdayaan pemuda, dan tujuan pembangunan nasional.

INTRODUCTION

The world is moving towards ensuring potential human dignity, gender equity, healthy being and peaceful co-existences. This move is embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations on September 15th, 2015 as a replacement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which proposed a technical design measurable eight strategies to combat extreme poverty and hunger, diseases, restricted education, gender discrepancy, insecurity, maternal health issues, child mortality rate and disunity. In a more advanced level, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form a global set of 17 interconnected goals aimed at eradicating poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and fostering peace and prosperity by 2030. They replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a wider agenda of environmental, economic, and social factors (United Nations, 2024). The SDGs include: Zero Hunger Eradicate hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

For the sustainability of the goals, it is important to consider equipping the youth with relevant skills such as language or communication skills and digital literacy, most especially in the university level, as important steps towards enabling youth to engage in sustainable development. In an era of globalization and digital revolution, language skills and digital literacy are twin pillars of empowerment that cannot be trivialised. Together, they unlock access to knowledge, enhance employability, drive innovation, and empower youth to engage with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1. Literature Review

Language in University Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

Language and technology in the National Policy on Education (NPE) are regarded as the tools of transmitting education to the learners. Parts of the goals of NPE focus of on inculcation of languages as competences and promotion of information technology (IT) appreciation in all levels of education programme. In the pre-basic schools, learning strategies and instructional materials are mother-tongue based. Technology is also explored through the use of toys. Furthermore, in primary (lower-basic 1-3), The mother tongue is primary but with fairly use of English and teaching of other languages such as English, Arabic and French with a fair introduction of basic technology. The same with deeper in basic 4-6, The document recommends a Nigerian language and Basic technology. In junior secondary (upper-basic), students are to earn English, one Nigeria language (Yoruba); Arabic (optional) and French including basic technology among others. In senior secondary, technology is offered as a subject and for the language, English as a core, a planned Nigerian language as a core, and Arabic and French as foreign languages. In the university level, English is adopted as a medium of instruction. It is also taught as a general subject to be earned by every student. In some universities like Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Arabic is also offered as a general subject along with English and French remain a medium of instruction in French class in the majority of Nigerian universities (FGN, 2013).

Language is not just a tool of communication, but equally a strategic instrument in driving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In university education, the application of language meets with three individual areas: education and inclusion (SDG 4), civic engagement (SDG 16), and global partnerships (SDG 17). Instructional language has a direct impact on access to quality higher education. UNESCO's 2025 report on languages matter establishes that 40% of students worldwide are excluded from learning in a familiar language, and this increases to 90% in low- and middle-income countries. The evidence on the African continent shows that mother-tongue or bilingual education actually facilitate understanding and improves retention. The example a case

of Mozambique, where there was a 15% increase in the achievement of the students in bilingual schools (UNESCO, 2025).

Furthermore, in the university setting, inclusive language practices can facilitate fair participation. A recent study of a First-Year Writing (FYW) initiative found that tapping students' own linguistic repertoires rather than rigid monolingual standards bolstered academic performance and self-confidence. Such findings validate SDG 4's pledge to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Language prepares students to be capable actors in democratic life, whether in policy deliberations, public debate, or intercultural communication.

Conversely, learning environments that are conducive to open discussion and application of language in an interactive manner have been linked with heightened political interest and the willingness to engage in civic life (Alscher, Ludewig, & McElvany, 2022). With the age of digitalization, the potential to utilize language across social media platforms and advocacy networks further strengthens the voices of young people in civic and peacebuilding initiatives in direct support of SDG 16.7, centering on inclusive decision-making at all levels.

In addition, multilingual competence is increasingly a pre-condition to global partnership, collaboration, and exchange of knowledge worldwide. In a 2025 Minerva report, it is shown how the research systems in the Global Majority are reliant on equitable partnership enabled through multilingual and intercultural communication on co-production of knowledge (Oldac et al., 2025)

The Ukrainian university system provides a concrete case in point: between 2019 and 2023, universities increased their worldwide research activity in co-authored articles by 20%, despite the challenges of war, demonstrating the crucial significance of global scholarly interconnectivity enabled by language multiplicity (Times Higher Education, 2024). Similarly, cross-cultural research in Nigeria, China, Germany, Turkey, and Mexico determined foreign language instruction and ICT proficiency as strong predictors of students' global competence, a key skill for cross-border collaboration (Predictors of Global Competence, 2025). This evidence underlines the contribution of multilingualism to SDG 17.6, which calls for greater global partnerships in science, technology, and innovation.

Digital Literacy and University Education in Nigeria

Digital literacy has come to be the cornerstone of contemporary higher education, shaping the means by which students become knowledgeable, engage with society, and contribute to sustainable development. In Nigeria, where infrastructure inequalities, socioeconomic access gaps, and variations in institutional support persist, digital capability matters in particular to enable the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Three of the regions are salient: closing inequalities (SDG 10), fostering work and innovation (SDG 8 and 9), and stepping up climate action and consciousness (SDG 13).

a. Bridging the Digital Divide (SDG 10)

Despite policy transformation and technology expansion, Nigeria continues to witness a widening digital divide within both city and rural universities. A recent paper outlines how inadequate infrastructure, poor institutional policies, and the lack of faculty and student digital readiness limit the digitalization of tertiary institutions (Inah, Ekpang, & Uzoigwe, 2024). But mentoring-led initiatives have been encouraging: at Igbaja, Kwara State, a structured youth mentorship program improved digital skills for 97.1% of the learners, and 92.6% of them showed improved skills in key programs such as Microsoft Office, the use of email, and internet protection (Biala et al., 2025). This shows that SDG 10 requires evidence-based interventions to prepare marginalized groups to surmount structural inequalities Innovation and Work (SDG 8 and SDG 9).

Digital literacy increasingly determines Nigeria's economic destiny. Universities are not regarded anymore as locations for the manufacture of digitally literate graduates who can drive entrepreneurship, innovation, and industrial growth. In the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, research established that undergraduate students of Business Education already possessed high entrepreneurial levels of digital literacy, which they utilized in small-scale business and entrepreneurial ventures. However, their level of digital proficiency was shown to be moderate, and this necessitated proposals towards embracing mandatory digital skills courses into the universities' curricula (Mensah, Adegboyega, Fadiya, & Blignaut, 2024).

At the national level, evidence obtained from surveys shows that over 76% of Nigerian youth have looked for jobs with digital skills, and nearly 67% agreed that digital skills are highly important in employability (Abubakar, 2024). These findings confirm that enhancing digital skills benefits both SDG 8, which emphasizes decent work and economic growth, and SDG 9, which aims at developing innovation and resilient infrastructure.

Statement of the Problem

Foreign language acquisition in Nigeria, namely Arabic English and French, has been recognized in the National Policy on Education as a key means for international exchange, intercultural understanding, and access to international opportunities. Despite such recognition, the system is plagued by intractable challenges that undermine its role toward the development of young people. Instruction is generally dominated by grammar-bound, teacher-centered practices emphasizing memorization at the expense of functional communication, critical thinking, and application of research. Thus, many students who graduate from foreign language programs are not functional nor have the ability to apply skills to innovation, entrepreneurship, or international collaboration. This limiting strategy has promoted the perception of foreign language learning as a narrow educational requirement rather than as a strategic foreign language learning process for global competitiveness and sustainable development.

In the meantime, the transformative nature of digital technology in foreign language learning remains underutilized in Nigeria. While globally, online learning sites, mobile apps, and social media sites have revolutionized language studies, Nigerian students are generally plagued with poor digital infrastructure, the expense of the internet, and a lack of institutional facilitation of ICT integration. These constraints slow down the depth of students' capability to utilize technology for interactive learning, research, and skill acquisition. Added to this is multilingual capability, poised to enhance access to global networks and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) prospects, that is underdeveloped due to curriculum weaknesses and a lack of authentic learning environments such as immersion programs. Absence of strong evidence-based linkages between foreign language learning, country development goals, and youth empowerment initiatives widens this gap. This study therefore explores how Nigerian foreign language learning can enhance critical thinking, research skills, and creativity, leveraging digital technology and multilingualism to support youth empowerment and sustainable development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of language education in Nigeria's National Policy on Education and its contribution to youth development in the digital age. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Assess how language education across foreign languages in Nigeria, English, Arabic, and French can foster critical thinking, research capacity, and innovation among youth.
2. Evaluate the relevance of digital technology in enhancing language learning and reforming Nigeria's development goals.
3. Examine the role of multilingual competence in promoting access to knowledge, global networks, and sustainable development in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
4. Provide evidence-based recommendations for language policy, curriculum development, youth engagement strategies, and digital literacy promotion.

Research Questions

1. In what ways can Second languages, English, Arabic, and French foster critical thinking, research capacity, and innovation among Nigerian youth?
2. What is the relevance of digital technology in enhancing language learning and promoting youth empowerment?
3. How does multilingual competence facilitate access to global networks and knowledge for sustainable development?
4. What recommendations can strengthen the integration of language education and digital technology into Nigeria's development agenda?

METHODS

The study will adopt a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of undergraduate students from universities in Kwara State, Nigeria (KU8+ group of more than eight universities) in Kwara State of Nigeria. A sample size of 300 undergraduate respondents was selected across the universities using Proportional Stratified Sampling technique to ensure proper representation.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to capture respondents' perceptions of language education, digital technology integration, multilingual competence, and youth empowerment. The instrument was validated by experts in language education and educational technology. To ensure reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 20 students outside the population sampled, and the reliability coefficient calculated using Cronbach's Alpha resultant to 0.74. This indicated acceptable internal consistency of the instrument. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1: In what ways can Second languages, English, Arabic, and French foster critical thinking, research capacity, and innovation among Nigerian youth?

Table 1: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation Output for: the ways Second languages, English, Arabic, and French can foster critical thinking, research capacity, and innovation among Nigerian youth.

E-Learning Tools	Yes	No	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Frequency N %	Frequency N %		
Learning foreign languages improves my ability to think critically about local and global issues.	237 79.0%	63 21.0%	1.21	.408
English language education enhances my research and academic writing skills.	203 67.7%	97 32.3%	1.32	.469
Arabic language Education contributes to my creativity, innovation, and problem-solving ability.	187 62.3%	113 37.7%	1.38	.485
French language education increases my access to international opportunities and innovation.	75 25.0%	225 75.0%	1.75	.434
Studying multiple languages improves my ability to analyze information from different cultural perspectives.	276 92.0%	24 8.0%	1.08	.272

Table 1 gives the students' responses on how different languages assist in critical thinking, research, and innovation. The results confirm the argument that foreign language learning is collectively believed to be fundamental to young people's intellectual growth. High percentages (79.0%) of those questioned agreed that learning the language helps them to think critically about domestic and international matters (Mean = 1.21, SD = .407). Also, 67.7% of the students supported that studying English enhances their research and writing abilities (Mean = 1.32, SD = .468).

Interestingly, learning Arabic was highlighted with significance, where 62.3% of the participants agreed that it enhances creativity, innovation, and problem-solving ability (Mean = 1.38, SD = .485). In contrast, a mere 25.0% of the students expressed that French opens them up to wider possibilities of the world and innovation (Mean = 1.75, SD = .433). Yet, an overwhelming majority (92.0%) affirmed that learning more than one language affirms their ability to analyze information with multiple cultural perspectives (Mean = 1.08, SD = .271).

Research Question 2: What is the relevance of digital technology in enhancing language learning and promoting youth empowerment?

Table 2: Frequency: Mean and Standard Deviation Output for: the relevance of digital technology in enhancing language learning and promoting youth empowerment.

Items	SA	Agree	Disagree	SD	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Frequency N %	Frequency N %	Frequency N %	Frequency N %		
Digital technology tools (e.g., e-learning platforms, apps, online dictionaries) make language learning more effective.	195 65.0%	48 16.0%	50 16.7%	7 2.3%	1.56	.850

Using digital resources improves my confidence in communication and learning languages.	63 21.0%	77 25.7%	131 43.7%	29 9.7%	2.42	.927
Access to digital technology supports entrepreneurial skills development through language learning.	173 57.7%	104 34.7%	23 7.7%	0 0.0%	1.50	.636
Integration of ICT in language education aligns with Nigeria's development goals.	166 55.3%	95 31.7%	29 9.7%	10 3.3%	1.61	.796
Lack of digital access limits the potential of language education in Nigerian universities.	87 29.0%	88 29.3%	80 26.7%	45 15.0%	2.28	1.041

Table 2 shows students' attitude towards the relevance of digital technology in language learning. Results indicated a general positive attitude towards the use of digital tools in aiding language learning and supporting young people's development. A very large proportion (65.0%) strongly agreed that digital technology software such as e-learning sites, mobile applications, and online dictionaries boosts the efficiency of learning language (Mean = 1.56, SD = .850). Furthermore, 57.7% of the interviewees concurred strongly that access to digital technology enhances entrepreneurial skills development through language learning (Mean = 1.50, SD = .636).

Besides, 55.3% of the students concurred strongly that integrating ICT in language learning is consistent with Nigeria's overall development goals (Mean = 1.61, SD = .796). However, communication confidence through the use of digital resources provided more asymmetric responses: while 25.7% concurred, a landslide majority (43.7%) disagreed, and 9.7% strongly disagreed (Mean = 2.42, SD = .927). This points to while digital technology is said to be structurally positive to learning as well as empowerment, its immediate influence on individuals' communication confidence is not as stable. Second, 29.0% of them agreed strongly and 29.3% agreed that digital inaccessibility limits the language learning of Nigerian universities, even though 41.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Mean = 2.28, SD = 1.041) as it reflects a bifurcated experience of hardship in entering the digital space across campuses.

Research Question 3: How does multilingual competence facilitate access to global networks and knowledge for sustainable development?

Table 3: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation Output for: How does multilingual competence facilitate access to global networks and knowledge for sustainable development.

Items	SA	Agree	Disagree	SD	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency		
	N %	N %	N %	N %		
Multilingual competence helps me access international research and knowledge resources.	142 47.3%	91 30.3%	38 12.7%	29 9.7%	1.85	.983
Being proficient in more than one language improves my global communication and networking opportunities.	110 36.7%	101 33.7%	55 18.3%	34 11.3%	2.04	1.002
Multilingual competence increases my chances of contributing to sustainable development initiatives.	169 56.3%	91 30.3%	40 13.3%	0 0.0%	1.57	.717
Knowledge of multiple languages broadens my worldview and cultural understanding.	176 58.7%	104 34.7%	20 6.7%	0 0.0%	1.48	.620
Multilingual competence is a key skill for participation in the global knowledge economy.	116 38.7%	133 44.3%	51 17.0%	0 0.0%	1.78	.715

Table 4 shows students' perceptions of the role of multilingual competence in gaining access to knowledge and promoting sustainable development. There is overwhelming evidence to imply that multilingualism is a revolutionary skill. Nearly half of the respondents (47.3%) strongly agreed and 30.3% agreed that multilingual competence makes access to global research and knowledge bases easier (Mean = 1.85, SD = .983). Similarly, 36.7% strongly agreed and 33.7% agreed that multilingual competence increases world communication and networking capacity (Mean = 2.04, SD = 1.002), though 29.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Majority (56.3% strongly agreed; 30.3% agreed) attested that multilingual competence increases their chance to engage in sustainable development activities (Mean = 1.57, SD = .717). In addition, 58.7% of the participants concurred and 34.7% strongly concurred that knowing several languages broadens their worldview and culture acquisition, and none of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed (Mean = 1.48, SD = .620). Finally, 38.7% concurred and 44.3% strongly concurred that multilingual capability is a necessary competency for participation in the global knowledge economy (Mean = 1.78, SD = .715), emphasizing its strategic importance.

Research question 4: What recommendations can strengthen the integration of language education and digital technology into Nigeria's development agenda?

Table 4: Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation Output for: recommendations can strengthen the integration of language education and digital technology into Nigeria's development agenda.

Items	SA	Agree	Disagree			
	N %	N %	N %	SD		
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Mean	Std. Deviation
	N %	N %	N %	N %		
Language education should be prioritized in Nigeria's National Policy on Education for youth empowerment.	33 11.0%	69 23.0%	58 19.3%	140 46.7%	3.02	1.068
Curriculum reforms should integrate indigenous languages, English, Arabic, and French equally for balanced development.	83 27.7%	50 16.7%	112 37.3%	55 18.3%	2.46	1.083
Digital literacy should be made compulsory in language education curricula.	243 81.0%	29 9.7%	21 7.0%	7 2.3%	1.31	.703
Youth engagement strategies should emphasize language skills for entrepreneurship and innovation.	162 54.0%	39 13.0%	73 24.3%	26 8.7%	1.88	1.058
Policymakers should strengthen the integration of language education and digital technology to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs).	62 20.7%	69 23.0%	31 10.3%	138 46.0%	2.82	1.220

Table 4 shows that Priority should be placed on language education in Nigeria's National Policy on Education towards empowering youths (Mean = 3.02, SD = 1.067). The relatively high mean reflects ambivalence: some are in favor of the notion but the majority are not (46.7%). This suggests that although language education is seen to be important, policy prioritization remains contentious perhaps due to other competing priorities within Nigeria's education system. Curriculum reforms must include indigenous languages, English, Arabic, and French in equal proportion to facilitate balanced development (Mean = 2.46, SD = 1.082). Moderate approval and high response spread reflect low mean, which signifies moderate approval with significant opposition. This refers to a paradox: many people consider multilingual inclusion the best, but tangible issues (insufficient teachers, unequal distribution of facilities) make one skeptical.

Furthermore, Inclusion of digital literacy in language education curricula by necessity would be required (Mean = 1.31, SD = 0.702). With 81% agreeing strongly, this was the most supported and least variable. This reflects strong consensus that language education, research, and global competitiveness require digital literacy. Youth engagement strategies should focus on language skills for innovation and entrepreneurship (Mean = 1.88, SD =

1.057). Over half (54%) agreed strongly, though some were between or disagreed. This indicates that the participants are of the view that there is a good linkage between language education and youth employability, but no consensus so far.

Also, Policy makers should reinforce the incorporation of language education and IT to achieve SDGs (Mean = 2.82, SD = 1.219). The mean indicates mixed views with high variations (SD = 1.219). While some of the respondents see the intersection of language instruction, information technology, and sustainable development, others are not yet believing—most likely due to lackluster policy implementation structures.

Findings

The major aim of this study was to investigate the role of foreign languages (English, Arabic and French) and digital literacy in advancing youth empowerment for sustainable development Goals in the context of Nigerian universities.

Findings based on research question 1 as shown on Table 1 revealed that multilingual ability especially in foreign languages such as English, Arabic and French are basis for youth intellectual growth in the implementational context of SDGs. English and Arabic were highlighted with significance for research writing, critical thinking, innovation and problem solving. These findings place language in the vanguard as both a cognitive empowerment tool and problem-solving tool in context. They accord with align with SDG 4 (Quality Education), which emphasises inclusive and equitable education that equips learners with relevant cognitive and problem-solving skills. Oyeleye (2020), who set it out as an argument that Nigeria's linguistic endowment is central to producing graduates that are both globally competitive and locally relevant.

Furthermore, findings on research question 2 as showed on Table 2 indicated that digital technology tremendously enhances language learning and empowerment among youth. Respondents conceded that e-learning platforms, apps, and ICT equipment not only improve productive language acquisition but also improve communication confidence and ease entrepreneurial skills learning. This buttresses SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), underscoring how digital literacy strengthens employability and innovation. It also concomitant with the research purpose of bridging digital literacy with empowerment, as earlier contended by Okebukola (2020) and UNESCO (2021) with the reports that digital competence is necessary for the 21st-century Nigerian graduate. Unequal access challenges and infrastructural deficits were, nonetheless, documented in accordance with Jegede and Akinola (2022).

Moreover, findings on research question 3 established the importance of multilingual capacity in opening Nigerian youth to global knowledge networks and sustainable development opportunities. Over 80% of the respondents agreed that the grasp of over one language boosts their global mindset and facilitates enhanced participation in the global knowledge economy. This echoes SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), which emphasises multilingualism as a pathway to inclusive participation in global education, research, and intercultural support. This aligns with Cenoz & Gorter (2021), who stated that multilingualism fosters intercultural sensitivity, employability, and global competitiveness all components of the empowerment agenda.

In addition, the study recognised that the necessity of language education and digital literacy policy reforms as part of Nigeria's development agenda. It was therefore recommended as revealed on Table 4 that making digital literacy a mandatory part of language curricula and aligning language education with entrepreneurship and innovation. However, there was less agreement on incorporating English, Arabic, and French equally into the curriculum, reflecting ongoing policy and resource issues. This observation is in agreement with UNESCO's report (2025), which revealed that more priority should be given to mother-tongue and multilingual education to improve learners' academic achievement.

CONCLUSIONS

The study sought to examine the contribution of language acquisition and information technology in empowering Nigerian youths through critical thinking, research skills, innovation, and sustainable development. The findings irrevocably confirm that English and mother languages improve one's research and analysis skills, whereas Arabic and French enhance creativity, exposure to culture, and global opportunity. Moreover, multilingual competency was shown to facilitate greater access to international networks and knowledge economies, positioning Nigerian learners to better contribute to global development initiatives.

The study also validated the relevance of digital technology in facilitating language learning effectiveness, communication ability, and entrepreneurship empowerment. However, infrastructural issues and unequal access to digital materials were cited as constraining factors. Finally, it was evident that while stakeholders recognized the importance of integrating several languages and digital literacy into teaching, policy loopholes in application persist.

Thus, effective language instruction supported by digital technology is not only a passport to academic success but also a strategic path towards Nigerian youths' success in a globalization- and knowledge-driven economy.

Recommendation

1. **Policy Prioritization:** The National Policy on Education should be strengthened by the Federal Ministry of Education with clear articulation that language education should be a main approach to youth empowerment and sustainable development.
2. **Curriculum Reforms:** Institutions of higher learning should systematically include indigenous languages, English, Arabic, and French in curricula, and integrate digital literacy into all language programs.
3. **Digital Access Expansion:** Government and university governance should invest in ICT infrastructure, subsidized data access, and e-learning portals to reduce the digital divide that hinders language education impact.
4. **Entrepreneurship Integration:** Language education curricula should clearly interconnect language competence with entrepreneurial and innovative skills to prepare youths for economic involvement worldwide.
5. **Capacity Building:** Regular training should be provided to language teachers in leveraging digital tools, web materials, and modern pedagogies to engage students maximally.
6. **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Policy planners, universities, NGOs, and the private sector need to be coordinated for financing and sustaining multilingual and digital literacy programs that integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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