

Transforming Language Learning In The Digital Era: The Impact Of Mobile Technologies And Hedonic Content On Autonomous French Language Acquisition Through Youtube

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a significant shift in educational paradigms, compelling a rapid transition to digital platforms for knowledge acquisition and dissemination. This study explores the efficacy of technology-enhanced learning, specifically through YouTube, in facilitating autonomous foreign language learning. Through an analytical lens focused on content analysis from YouTube videos across five French teaching channels for Brazilian audiences, this research unveils critical insights into learner preferences and the dynamics of utilizing digital platforms for language acquisition. The findings highlight the pivotal role of ludic didactics, schedule flexibility, and mobile technology accessibility in enhancing the learning experience. Engaging content, coupled with the convenience of learning adapted to individual schedules and the ubiquity of mobile technologies, emerges as instrumental in promoting effective and enjoyable language learning. This study identifies the indispensability of integrating interactive, accessible, and adaptable learning solutions to meet the contemporary demands of learners. It underscores the need for further research into the nuanced aspects of technological pedagogy and its implications for foreign language education. By delineating the factors that contribute to successful language learning in a digital age, this research offers valuable insights for educators, content creators, and language education professionals, aiming to optimize online learning environments and pedagogical strategies. This contribution not only enriches the academic discourse on digital education but also serves as a guide for future endeavors in the realm of technology-enhanced language learning.

Keywords: Online Language Learning, YouTube Education, Autonomous Learning, Ludic Didactics, Mobile Learning.

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I. Introduction

In an era where the global landscape is perpetually reshaped by technological advances and unforeseen challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic has served as a catalytic force, accelerating the digitization of numerous sectors, including education. The advent of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has precipitated unprecedented social and economic challenges, profoundly altering social structures worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommended a suite of agile containment measures, including quarantine and social isolation, to mitigate the virus's spread, reflecting a pivotal shift towards non-

pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) such as enhanced testing, contact tracing, and public information campaigns (Heymann&Shindo, 2020; Kummitha, 2020; Deb, et al., 2020). These measures, while essential for public health, necessitated a rapid and innovative response to prevent the collapse of essential services, including education.

The transition to a virtual learning environment, propelled by the closure of educational institutions, marks a significant inflection point in the delivery of education. This shift is not merely a temporary adaptation but a paradigmatic change that underscores the potential of technology as a linchpin in educational continuity. The increased reliance on online learning platforms, language applications, and virtual tutorials exemplifies this transformation, enabling learning beyond the traditional classroom setting. Furthermore, the surge in consumer engagement with online platforms during periods of social distancing has broadened the scope of informal learning, encompassing language acquisition among other skills.

This study embarks on an exploration of the "Factors That May Aid in Foreign Language Learning through Technological Means," with a particular focus on YouTube as a medium for autonomous language learning. It is predicated on the understanding that technology, when leveraged effectively, can transcend conventional barriers to education, such as time, financial constraints, and geographical limitations. The credibility of information sources, a critical factor in the adoption of online content for educational purposes, is scrutinized, drawing from the framework of source credibility in social media studies (Chiou et al., 2013; Li, 2013; Hussain et al., 2017).

Conducted in Brazil, a burgeoning digital ecosystem with a vast and growing internet user base, this research is positioned at the intersection of technology, education, and language acquisition. It aims to unveil the key determinants that facilitate or hinder the pursuit of foreign language proficiency through digital platforms. By employing a meticulous content analysis of YouTube video content, this study seeks to uncover the pivotal actors and elements that contribute to effective language learning online.

The implications of this research are manifold, extending benefits to content creators on YouTube and learners seeking to harness the power of social networks for language acquisition. In shedding light on the dynamics of online language learning, this study not only contributes to the academic discourse on digital education but also offers practical insights for improving the design and delivery of online language learning resources.

Structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, this article begins with a review of the literature on foreign language learning via online platforms, followed by a detailed account of the research methodology. The findings are then presented and discussed, highlighting their significance to both theoretical and practical aspects of online education. The conclusion reflects on the study's limitations and outlines directions for future research, underscoring the evolving nature of learning in the digital age.

II. Theoretical background

Language Learning and the Use of Online/Mobile Learning Platforms

The landscape of language learning is undergoing a profound transformation, facilitated by the advent of digital technology. Kubota (2013) illuminates the essence of language acquisition as a process wherein learners amalgamate external information into their existing knowledge base, laying a robust foundation for skills and competencies development. This perspective underscores the pivotal role of online platforms in enhancing language learning, offering a diverse array of resources—ranging from grammar and pronunciation tips to intercultural insights—that enrich learners' educational experiences (Benson, 2015; Kubota, 2013). Hatch (1978) further posits that foundational conversational skills are among the first competencies developed by language learners, a process significantly bolstered by the rich, audiovisual content available on digital video platforms. These platforms not only facilitate an immersive learning experience but also enable learners to hone their pronunciation and conversational abilities through exposure to authentic language use.

The exponential growth of the Internet has revolutionized content creation and dissemination, offering unparalleled opportunities for language education. Chun, Kern, & Smith (2016) and Alwehaibi (2015) highlight how digital platforms extend access to a vast repository of information, allowing learners to effectively grasp the structural nuances of foreign languages. In this digital era, mobile learning emerges as a dynamic alternative to traditional classroom-based education, breaking down geographical and temporal barriers to knowledge acquisition (Traxler, 2018). Traxler emphasizes the importance of leveraging both the strengths and limitations of mobile technologies within sound pedagogical frameworks to foster an effective learning environment. This approach advocates for a holistic learning experience, where the use of smartphones and tablets empowers learners to explore new knowledge, skills, and experiences beyond conventional settings.

Moreover, the integration of humor and playful elements into educational content has been identified as a powerful tool to enhance memory retention and learner engagement (Chenail, 2011; Shifman, 2011). Content creators in the digital realm increasingly employ metaphors, songs, memes, gifs, and other humorous

resources to simplify complex concepts and make the learning process more enjoyable and relatable (Duffy, 2008; Brook, 2011). This pedagogical strategy not only facilitates comprehension but also cultivates a positive and engaging learning atmosphere.

Additionally, the digital video platform serves as a conduit for cultural immersion, enriching the language learning experience by incorporating cultural narratives and discussions pertinent to the language's countries of origin (Benson, 2015; Alhamami, 2018). Such an approach transcends mere language proficiency, aiming to equip learners with a comprehensive understanding of relevant cultural, societal, and intellectual themes (Ma, 2017; Lai, 2015). This holistic educational model fosters critical thinking and broadens learners' perspectives, highlighting the transformative potential of technology-enhanced language learning in the digital age.

The theoretical framework presented here underscores the synergistic relationship between digital technology and language learning. By exploring the multifaceted dimensions of online and mobile learning platforms, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital innovations can revolutionize language education, making it more accessible, engaging, and effective for learners worldwide.

YouTube as an Effective Medium for Autonomous Language Learning and an Attractive Platform for Language Instruction

YouTube, since its inception in 2005, has revolutionized the way content is created, shared, and consumed, establishing itself as the premier platform for user-created content (UCC) and user-generated content (UGC) (Ryu, Kim & Lee, 2009; Shifman, 2011). With over 6.5 billion daily views and a user base that includes 30 million active users daily and 2 billion monthly, YouTube's expansive reach and diverse content offerings make it an unparalleled resource for educational purposes (Aslam, 2019; Internet Live Stats, 2019). The platform's significance has only been magnified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a marked increase in users turning to YouTube for education, entertainment, and information as mobility restrictions were implemented worldwide (Perez, 2020).

Within the sphere of autonomous learning, YouTube facilitates a dynamic interaction between information sources and learners, allowing for the creation and exchange of knowledge that fosters mutual understanding (Rogers, 2010). This communicative exchange is enhanced by YouTube's ability to provide direct access to an array of knowledge sources, making it an invaluable tool for personal and educational development. The platform's educational videos on language learning, in particular, offer comprehensive guidance on grammar, pronunciation, and cultural insights related to the language's native countries, thereby supporting learners in their journey toward language proficiency (Benson, 2015; Kabooaha&Elyas, 2018).

YouTube distinguishes itself from other video-sharing platforms by serving as the primary repository for educational content, sought after by users for its wealth of instructional materials (Duffy, 2008; Brook, 2011). Content creators on YouTube optimize the educational value of their videos by focusing on clear, concise information that is easily digestible. The design and production quality of these videos, including the use of images, text, subtitles, and sound, play a crucial role in enhancing the learning experience. Videos range from lengthy, systematic lessons to short, informative clips that provide quick tips or delve into specific topics, catering to diverse learning needs and preferences (Duffy, 2008; Brook, 2011; Burden & Atkinson, 2007).

Berk (2009) emphasizes the potential of video content to captivate students' attention and bolster their memorization through visual reinforcement and repetition. This approach is particularly effective in language and cultural education, where engaging and accessible video content can significantly enhance the learning process (Terantino, 2011). YouTube videos, therefore, emerge as a potent educational tool, enabling language instructors to simulate the immersive environment necessary for acquiring foreign language skills and cultural knowledge (Benson, 2015; Tímár, Kárpáti, &Kokovay, 2011).

Despite YouTube's evident potential as a medium for language education, research into its effectiveness as a platform for autonomous language learning remains limited. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the key factors that influence learners' ability to study independently and develop necessary skills through YouTube. By examining these dynamics, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of YouTube's role in facilitating effective and engaging language learning experiences.

The Role of Source Credibility in Online Learning

The impact of source credibility on the effectiveness of educational content, particularly within the digital realm, is a critical factor in the persuasion and learning processes. Grounded in the foundational work of Hovland& Weiss (1951), the concept that information from a highly credible source has a greater capacity for persuasion, thereby inducing more significant changes in attitudes, is pivotal in understanding the dynamics of online learning environments. Source credibility, encompassing aspects of reliability and the perception of self-

promotion, fundamentally influences the relationship between the content creator (sender) and the learner (receiver).

Building on McGuire's (1978) identification of the components of persuasive communication—including the origin, message, channel, receiver, and destination—credibility, alongside attractiveness and power, emerges as intrinsic qualities of the source. Ohanian (1990) further refines this by defining source credibility as the positive characteristics that enhance the acceptance of the message by its recipients. This delineation underscores the importance of the content creator's expertise, attractiveness, and perceived power in facilitating effective educational outcomes.

Research delineates source credibility into three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Ma, Zhang & Ding, 2018). Expertise, in this context, is defined as the extent to which a communicator is perceived as capable of making correct assertions, a perception deeply influenced by the content creator's knowledge and authority in the subject matter. Trustworthiness relates to the authenticity and sincerity attributed to the content creator, emphasizing the significance of the content's validity as perceived by the learner (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). The quality of information and the credibility of its source critically impact the persuasiveness of the message, validating the information presented to the recipient (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Xiao et al., 2018; Wertgen & Richter, 2020).

In juxtaposing traditional (offline) communication with social media, the source's credibility assumes heightened importance in the digital space (Go et al., 2016). Digital content creators, by demonstrating expertise and trustworthiness, establish themselves as credible sources of information. This modern perspective positions the source's reliability and expertise as paramount, with factors such as design capability, information quality, usability, and scope contributing to the perceived credibility (Warnick, 2004).

Within the educational context, the source's credibility significantly influences the acceptability and effectiveness of the learning experience. This is particularly true in online learning environments where the educator's ability to persuade and engender trust plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes and learning outcomes (Fin et al., 2009; Yager, 2007). Therefore, understanding and leveraging source credibility is essential in designing and delivering effective digital educational content, emphasizing the need for content creators to cultivate and maintain these critical attributes to enhance learning engagement and achievement.

III. Methodology

Research design

The study's data was gathered via qualitative research design followed by content Analysis (Weber, 1990; Bardin, 1977). Content analysis was chosen as it is a valuable technique to analyze the documentary data in texts, utterances, or videos through a systematic assessment.

The data for the study was gathered from Youtube channels that teach the French language to Brazilians, where high demand for learning French has been recorded. French as the language under study was chosen because it is the second official language in 29 countries and the 18th most widely spoken language in the world (Wood, 2019). Besides, French is the second most studied language globally and has about 120 million students (Wood, 2019). Thus, owing to its cultural and historical influence, the French was chosen as the object of this study.

Even though there are other sites for disseminating and sharing videos in the virtual environment, Youtube serves as the most widely used platform by students looking for content linked to language learning (Buzzetto-More, 2014; Terantino, 2011; Brook, 2011; Duffy, 2008). In light of this, this research plans to analyze the channels for learning French that can be found on Youtube to determine what factors can help make learning languages easier.

Data Collection

The data collection was carried out from 23rd to April 30th, 2020, and focused on the thematic channels found on the Youtube platform to help Brazilian students learn French. Youtube offers an advanced search utilizing filters which makes it possible to search for options such as the following: the sending date of the shared content (upload), the duration of the videos in minutes, features and classification in order of importance, counting of the visualizations and the assessment of the users.

Filters were used during the data collection stage to find the best channels for incorporating the research analyses. The criteria adopted for this selection were having more than 30 thousand registered users, making videos available that were classified as essential and lasted from 10 seconds to 60 minutes, and the inclusion of positive assessments in their comments.

Keywords written in Portuguese were used in the Youtube search bar, such as learning French, speaking French, French for beginners, the French language, and how to study French online. Based on an initial assessment, a screening procedure was carried out to find the channels that had the most suitable themes for teaching French.

The keywords investigated are displayed in Table 1, followed by the total number of channels identified, and all the results assessed as suitable for this study's objectives.

Table 1: Division of the keywords defined to give support to the data collection

Order of the Investigation of the channels	Keywords	Nº of channels identified	Nº of channels that adhere to the research proposals
1	Learning French	1,110	5
2	Studying French Online	82	6
3	French language	175	6
4	Speaking French	619	3
5	French for beginners	187	7
Total		2,173	27

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

After screening, five channels were selected for analysis and are shown in Table 2. The table shows the number of views, the channel link, the number of registered users, the total number of videos posted up to the data collection date, and an accurate description of the channel published by the YouTube moderators themselves.

Table 2: Data related to the French language channels selected to analyze content until June 18th, 2020.

Name of the channel (Portuguese/ English)	Visualizations of the channel	Channel Link	Nº of registered users (till June 18th, 2020)	Total number of Videos	Description of the Channel
<i>Francês com a Ligia (French with Ligia)</i>	3787052	https://www.YouTube.com/channel/UCQfqvixesxNDX_HswTDsx3w/about	92.1k	265	French with Ligia – New Vídeos every week! You need to learn French, register on the channel, and get some tips about learning French or improving what you have already learned!
<i>UniFrancês(U niFrench)</i>	5303.891	https://www.YouTube.com/results?search_query=1.%09UniFranc%C3%AAs	79.,8k	173	Learn French free of charge! Leave your comments and queries here! If you would like a lesson or explanation, write below, and I will do everything possible for you! Now is the time to get to work!
<i>Curso de Francês Online e Estudos na França IFESP (Online French Course and Studies in France-IFESP)</i>	1.627.504	https://www.YouTube.com/user/ifesp	41.6k	235	Official Channel of IFESP! Learning French is much easier with our videos. Register to see more French lessons free of charge! As well as offering intensive French and Portuguese courses online, the Institute of French and European Studies of São Paulo offers academic guidance to study in France and preparatory proficiency exams. We have a 100% rate of approval in the best French universities!
<i>QueroFalarFrancês (I want to speak French)</i>	2.326.769	https://www.YouTube.com/channel/UCqgPgBHqq8gSHWVzMFsJqGQ/about	67.6k	272	This channel was created to help people to learn French – this exciting language! With valuable tips and methodologies, you will find that you can learn French quickly and easily and become fluent. Here you are going to: learn to speak French fluently, learn how to listen to French, learn how to write in French, clear up any uncertainties about grammatical patterns, get some valuable tips about how to study on your own, and much more.
<i>Olá Brasil! (Hello, Brazil!)</i>	22.550.623	https://www.YouTube.com/channel/UCUxHKCQH QzDEDeM6GF PYCZA/featured	337k	490	Hello Brasil! This is a dynamic channel where Alexis, a freshman from France, speaks on many subjects.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Data Analysis

After the choice had been made of the channels, 850 comments from 11 videos were analyzed (comprised of five most liked and six most disliked channels) were selected for analysis considering the number of likes (I enjoyed) and dislikes (I did not enjoy), the number of visualizations, and the number of comments made by the users, as well as their commitment to learning French. The arrangement of the videos that were analyzed can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Data related to the French language videos selected for analysis of content till June 18th, 2020.

Videos	Channel	Title of the Video	Links of the Analyzed Videos	Duration (minutes)	Nº of Comments	Nº of Likes	Nº of Dislikes	Nº of Visualizations of the videos
1	Francês com a Ligia (French with Ligia)	Buying fruit in France	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=tqLc_zYxHZw&t=24s	1:25	14	412	9	6.7k
2		#1 Forms of Greeting in French	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=c9PC6dBwZjE	4:54	52	3.7k	43	82.8k
3		Terms for barbecued meat in French	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=Jf8lxQk5r9Y&t=123s	5:18	17	769	12	9.1k
4	UniFrancês (UniFrench)	How to cope and learn French in Duolingo	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=gagW_VYoiy0	3:19	70	965	26	19.6k
5		10 useful tips for learning French	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=WGGLZcDMJ2M	8:25	294	5k	142	223k
6		"CerolNaMão" - Parody in French	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=SZP91wnfl5o	1:40	70	697	32	10.6k
7	Curso de Francês Online e Estudos na França IFESP (Online French Course and Studies in France-IFESP)	French in 1 Minute – Hint from the Book Le Petit Prince [The Little Prince] (FR)	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=GDR6dsMyWs8	1:06	4	139	0	2.8k
8	Quero Falar Francês (I want to speak French)	Seven sites for speeding up your French! Go to them now!	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=LB1-TELvsnY	7:36	81	790	4	11.7k
9		Complete French lesson: French verbs!	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=bdAtx2z7pc4	47:55	73	431	15	9.5k
10		Getting to know about the bathroom in French!	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=5HBA8AV7e-0&t=11s	2:16	71	883	8	10.2k
11	Olá Brasil! (Hello, Brazil!)	French class - Strange French expressions explained in terms of French culture	https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=gWkgyuJAGs&t=501s	12:09	104	1.7k	13	14.2k

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

The data were analyzed employing content analysis procedures. Weber (1990) states that the analysis of content follows a pattern comprising different stages, which are as follows: a preliminary analysis, exploration of material, result processing, interpretation of data, and the acquisition of information. During the preliminary analytical stage, the study materials are selected and arranged to locate the included information. In exploring the

material stage, the analytical categories are defined to assess the profiles or patterns of a similar kind, including the behavior, positioning, attitudes, meanings, and preferences found among the people observed.

In the interpretive stage, factors such as writing, comments, symbols, expressions, and means of communication must be highlighted to broaden the content's interpretation. In the stage of interpretation of the collected data, a reflective and evaluative analysis is carried out. With it, it is possible to interpret and understand the studied symbols. At first, the videos were analyzed separately for each of the authors of this study. Subsequently, the individual analyses were assessed collectively to find interpretive standards related to the videos' features. The comments were also taken into account to observe the users' reactions concerning the posted videos' material and format.

Since they were encoded, the users' comments were highlighted during the appraisals. This encoding took place at the end of each session indicated in the analyses. It involved listing the following: the name of the channel that was posted, the initials of the nickname (means of identification) of the author posted in the Youtube video comments, the ID number of the video in Table 3, and the number of likes in the comments and the period in which the comments were published (as informed by Youtube). Images of the analyzed videos were also included to show their visual and aesthetic features to assist the students by making it easier for them to learn a new language.

IV. Results

The findings indicate that several of the channels devoted to teaching French used hedonic content to boost their results and make the content more attractive and exciting (Shifman, 2011). It was done by including visual features such as sub-titles, designs, and soundtracks with music and audio to help students understand and assimilate words, phrases, and the meaning of French words. Aspects such as appearance, aesthetics, or design make up online interactions. They can explain communication's persuasiveness, determined by the communication source's credibility (Lowry, Wilson & Haig, 2014).

For instance, the *French with Lígia* channel seeks to teach basic French using videos about particular situations such as words and expressions linked to cleaning a room or even the vocabulary needed to buy fruit in France. The Youtuber *Lígia* looks for places that can illustrate the subjects in hand and find a visual means to relate the objects discussed to pronunciation and spelling. This environment helps to concentrate on the content in a lighthearted way by reducing abstraction and making it easier to understand what is being taught, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Vídeo – "Buying Fruit in France" on the French with Lígia Channel



Source: French with Lígia Channel, video 1, Youtube (2023).

The use of images, photos of places, personal photos in France, designs, and miniature illustrations in the videos from the French with Lígia Channel, helps fix the material taught by making an association between the word and image. As noted in Figure 1, the Youtuber *Lígia* clarifies her explanation and makes it easier to retain in the memory what has been taught by including the spelling of the word and the way it is pronounced. By way of illustration, she also shows the object, so the word is given a meaning. Besides, sentences are constructed so that the word can be understood in different contexts.

When observing users' comments in this way, it is clear that this type of teaching holds the students' attention due to the didactic, objective, practical, and illustrative manner in which words and their meanings are presented. The following comment made by one of the users is a good example:

"[...] I have already given up learning on two occasions because I found the traditional method very dull. When I came across you on Facebook, I was delighted by the way you explained things. I just needed patience and much practice! Many congratulations, and never stop teaching. You are lovely" (French with Lígia, T.A, User of vídeo 3, 0 Likes).

As Berk (2009) and Shifman (2011) point out, vídeo content arouses a feeling not attained by other media. The video can attract people's attention, create feelings of anticipation among those eager to learn, increase memorized material, and stimulate students to create their authorial content.

The UniFrench Channel also attracts students' attention by acting as an intermediary for fun and joy (Shifman, 2011). Among the various subjects covered in the French courses at the station, tongue twisters and parodies of French-Brazilian music are very fun and of great appeal (Shifman, 2011). When adapted to French words, the musical melodies and the staging arouse much interest among the students and help construct the vocabulary and phonetic understanding of the phrase, as shown in Figure 2, where there is a parody in French. Of the Brazilian song "cerolnamão."

Figure 2 – Parody of the song "cerolnamão" in the UniFrench Channel



Source:UniFrench Channel, Video 6Youtube (2023).

The subjects are treated in a fast and straightforward way (on average, the vídeos last 5 minutes) and then discussed in Portuguese. However, the French parts have subtitles and are generally repeated more than once to fix them in memory. In their comments, the users stress that the ludic elements assist in the learning process, as shown by those registered in the UniFrench Channel.

"I was having a bath and washing my hair when suddenly I started singing '*JeveuxdanserJeveuxdanser le grostigrevat'enseigner*' [I want to dance, I want to dance – the big tiger is going to teach you] HAHHAHAHAHA I laughed so much I felt ill; it was the best parody in history of YOUTUBE!!!" (UniFrench,J.D,User 6, 26 Likes).

"I loved it,Caio !!!!! Very didactic KKK - it is an excellent way to learn words – do the same with more Portuguese songs which are at the top of the pops! Cheers!" (UniFrench, J.S,User 6, 1 Like).

The Hello Brazil Channel also follows the line of entertainment for teaching French. The vídeos of the channel make comparisons of French culture with that of Brazil and discuss matters linked to the French language, such as pronunciation and grammar, and including narratives about the cultural effects experienced by a French person living in Brazil.

Warnick (2004) highlights that users are more influenced by factors, such as design professionalism, usability, and relevance, that work as reliability elements. These elements also depend on the type of content - search engine, e-commerce, entertainment.

The prominent feature of the channel takes a form expressed by the Youtuber *Alexis*. When he explains the concepts in a comic mode, he always ends with an amusing or odd feature that makes the learning process lighthearted and informal. The channel also includes cooking recipes, exciting places in France, and French customs and expressions, as shown in the following caption.

Figure 3 – Video of the Hello Brazil Channel on curious French expressions



Source: Hello Brazil Channel, Vídeo 11, Youtube (2023).

The students are very attracted by a lighthearted approach and by ludic and visual teaching with images and image charges that illustrate French expressions, as shown in Figure 3 and the users' reports below.

"I liked the meanings of these French expressions! I learned a lot! It was an excellent video." (Hello Brazil,M.C,User 11, 4 Likes)

"As always, I am learning in a lighthearted and amusing way. You are an essential part of the Internet, Alexis. More than useful content, it is flattering, essential on the astral plane! Great vídeo!" (Hello Brazil, JC, User of vídeo 11, 6 Likes)

"The design is excellent!! Who did them? I felt like learning French !!"(Hello Brazil,AR,User 11, 5 Likes)

"A lesson like this is great fun" (Hello Brazil,SX,User 11, 3 Likes)

The "*Online French Course and Studies in France-IFESP*" and "*I wantto speak French*" Channels offer to teach French content through various teaching materials such as the whiteboard. These channels also address areas like the pronunciation of words, conjugation of verbs and pronouns, as well as showing how to use them correctly. The lessons are subtly taught, with the teachers repeat the words several times and include subtitles in the videos to understand the studied grammar clearly.

In addition to providing a systematic learning approach, these channels offer videos with information about the culture of the language in a fun and exciting way. Youtubers suggest suggestions for books, films, and songs related to French cultures, according to the material recommended in the videos. Comments on these suggestions and subsequent user feedback are provided below.

"It was very nice! I like the Little Prince. There is a reasonable quotation about this book: "And now here is my secret, an effortless secret: it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye" (IFESP, GC,User 7, Likes).

"I would like to recommend one of the songs that I found helpful for pronunciation and vocabulary: it is called *TON HÉRITAGE* [Your Inheritance] with Benjamin Biolay. It is spoken by the father to his son and also talks about the conditions of life etc. The songs you chose were very useful to me. I liked them a lot "(I want to speak French, M.M,User 9, 1 Like)

Apart from the videos, the students also seek supplementary material,leading to ludic learning activities prompted by literary works and artistic/cultural areas. Moreover, most of the vídeos posted by the five channels analyzed include visual editing to ensure the images are aesthetically appealing. Many factors ensure the lesson material can be assimilated enjoyably: sources of print letters, visual effects, the lighting of the recording environment, and productions carried out to make sure the videos are objective, transparent, and pleasant or even amusing.

However, some videos are lacking in aesthetic features and have shortcomingsconcerning their textual organization. If this is the case, when students leave comments about the high standard and soundness of what is transmitted, they also point out any aesthetic or visual shortcomings. These can make students lose interest in the subject, as shown by the users' comments below.

"Suitable classes like this should have a platform to make teaching better! Images, places, etc." (I want to speak French, P.S,User 10, 2 Likes).

"Hi! I love these classes; they help me A LOTlearn French "on my own," but I would like to make one suggestion: these "Live" videos are a real mess – I was unable to follow the reasoning because I like to watch everything and take notes. You could repeat the video, but in a more orderly way and less in an improvised

"Live" manner, which keeps interfering with the line of reasoning. I loveeeeeee you !!!" (I want to speak French, P.T,User 10, 1 Like).

We can observe that attractive visual features and videos produced with an aesthetic design can influence learning languages. A video that lacks aesthetic appeal will not attract the students' attention because they are looking for videos with an acceptable range of sounds, images, and subjectmatter.

Busy working people interested in learning languages but with a paucity of time available often find it challenging to reach a satisfactory level of fluency while learning a new language. However, if the learning material can be assimilated in short time frames, the learning process can be adapted to the lives of busy students. Lesson contents of language learning should involve students watching videos that last from one minute up to 10 minutes (Duffy, 2008; Brook, 2011) and adapt them to their everyday routine without allocating a large part of their schedule to the learning activity.

As Bartolomé (1999) points out, the short videos may or may not include songs, sound effects, words, or specific material as part of a teaching strategy to be explored in the virtual environment (Amemiya et al., 2007; Burden & Atkinson, 2007; Burden & Atkinson, 2007; Bakar et al., 2009).

The channels researched in this study also adopt this strategy. Even though some of them have very lengthy videos, the Youtubers also attempt to make short videos for those who wish to obtain valuable tips and material that is condensed and adapted to their busy routine (Amemiya et al., 2007; Burden & Atkinson, 2007; Bakar et al., 2009).

As a result, videos like those of the "I want to speak French" channel have a limited, didactic, and flexible schedule, as shown in Figure 4, which has French words associated with bathrooms. These videos are designed to be watched through digital technologies such as smartphones, tablets, and notebooks, to provide access to content for those who only have availability in a reduced timeframe.

Figure 4 – Short videosshowed by the I want to speak French Channel



Source: I want to speak French Channel, Vídeo 10, Youtube (2023).

Thus short videos like drops, mini-classes, valuable tips, pronunciation, vocabulary, and curious features, produced in videos with a reduced timeframe (Duffy, 2008; Brook, 2011), appeal to students and assist them in both making constant contact with the language being studied and achieving excellent results in their learning, as is described by the following users.

"Hi! Your lessons are fantastic, and I am enjoying them. If possible, I intend to create mini-classes with different topics, numbers, days of the week, seasons of the year, parts of the house, means of transport, etc. [...] Thanks for your attention." (French with Lígia, G.V,User 2, 5 Likes).

"Good evening. I have been searching for a space that provides access to a new language. My French is very rusty, and the only access I had was in primary education (formerly the 1st Grade). Your channel is exciting, and you manage to teach a new language in small doses, although it does not leave the student in any way discouraged. It is amazing. I want to congratulate you, and I am going to live up to my dreams. *Merci*[...]" (I want to speak French, I.M,User 8, 1 Like).

The integration of mobile technologies into educational frameworks has catalyzed a transformative shift in how knowledge is acquired, particularly in the realm of language learning. The seminal works of Traxler (2018), Elaish et al. (2019), and Cho et al. (2018) highlight the pivotal role of mobile devices in facilitating not only social interaction (Walther, 1996; Naismith et al., 2004; Hauck & Satar, 2018) but also in pioneering novel approaches to learning that are accessible to anyone in pursuit of knowledge. Despite the constraints imposed by time limitations on learning processes (Traxler, 2018; Zimmerman, 2012), the advent of smartphones, tablets, and personal computers has universally connected individuals to a vast reservoir of educational content. This digital milieu fosters learning that is both contextualized and personalized, fundamentally altering the traditional paradigms of education by offering unrestricted access to content anytime,

anywhere (Lai, 2015; Chun, Kern & Smith, 2016; Duffy, 2008; Brook, 2011; Elaish et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2018).

The concept of Mobile Learning (M-learning) encapsulates this evolution, streamlining the teaching and learning process, enhancing access to information, facilitating communication, and engendering new experiences within the digital realm (Sundberg & Cardoso, 2019; Elaish et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2018). In this context, the credibility and persuasiveness of the content source are crucial, influencing learners' attitudes and fostering a conducive learning environment (Yager, 2007; Fin et al., 2009).

Leveraging these technological tools, students can immerse themselves in YouTube tutorials, explore cultural information, and refine their language skills. Moreover, the opportunity to generate and share educational content through virtual channels underscores the elimination of geographical and temporal barriers, enabled by the omnipresent connectivity afforded by mobile devices (Ma, 2017; Elaish et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2018).

Digital technologies have significantly enhanced learning practices, allowing students to expand their linguistic repertoire across multiple languages. Platforms like Duolingo exemplify this by offering interactive quizzes and exercises that drill verb conjugations and idiomatic expressions. Additionally, applications that provide songs with translations, subtitles, and podcasts cater to diverse learning preferences, particularly in enhancing listening comprehension skills.

These technologies empower students to record content, conduct research, manage academic commitments, and delve into subjects of interest through videos and other digital resources (Benson, 2015; Loewen et al., 2019; Chun, Kern, & Smith, 2016; Alwehaibi, 2015). They also explore technological innovations that transform mobile devices into essential tools for autonomous learning (Traxler, 2018; Sundberg & Cardoso, 2019; Elaish et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2018).

In analyzing YouTube channels dedicated to language learning, it becomes evident that students perceive these technologies as a means to transcend traditional barriers to accessing high-quality educational content. This is particularly significant in regions where regular language courses, such as French, are scarce or unavailable. Digital technologies, therefore, emerge as a viable and effective alternative for language acquisition, underscoring the transformative potential of mobile technologies in democratizing education and fostering a more inclusive learning landscape.

"I am 11 years old and began to do this French lesson in-app because I always wanted to speak French and never found a course where I live – and I have been able to obtain results. I only do two days and can already write and translate sentences on paper and am loving it." (UniFrench, J.L, User 4, 0 Likes)

Free access to the content is another attractive feature for anyone seeking to learn a new language. Some students use Youtube's resources, social networks, and free applications to learn. Generally, the students begin the learning process with one of the options and gradually continue with other technological alternatives through a learning process that is continuous and consistent, as shown by the users of the Duolingo application where they seek to improve with the videos of the IFESP channel.

"I am a recent student of French. I began practicing this language on Duolingo without any commitment and ended up taking it seriously. I had some uncertainties about the Possessive form, and its video was the first thing that gave help [...] I gave it a Like on the spot!! Well done!! Even though I still do not understand a lot of French, I can understand the background of what you are saying, and in the end, my doubts were cleared up entirely [...] Your accent is excellent !!#Merci" (IFESP, DS, User 7, 3 Likes).

"Duolingo was the portal for learning French. After the pages on Facebook and videos on Youtube [...] Congratulations on the video, thanks for giving me an incentive to achieve success! *Au revoir* " (UniFrench, S.G, User 4, 0 Likes).

An exciting observation probably stems from the specific cultural aspect of Brazilian society. A learner of French used the Bible as reference material and compared it across languages. The learner states.

"Teacher, I have learned a lot with the application of the Bible. It offers several languages and different versions, including audio. I plan everything and read, as well as listening and comparing the versions. You can put two versions beside each other. This does not cost anything. The application can be found in Google Play and Yourversion. Site: <https://www.bible.com/fr>. I can even alter the language of the application. It is fantastic!" (I want to speak French, J.B, User 8, 3 Likes).

Computer-mediated communication - CMC (Walther, 1996; Blyth, 2018; Hauck, & Satar, 2018) also allows students to interact more with the virtual environment (Walther, 1996; Ma, 2017; Duffy, 2008; Hauck, & Satar, 2018) and with native speakers of the language under study. The Internet and digital technologies enable significant contact, guaranteeing the opportunity to practice the language through real-time dialogue with people belonging to diverse cultures and nationalities. Native speakers of countries that use French as an official language are included.

Thus, a range of opportunities is being made available to the students (Hauck, & Satar, 2018) because they can learn about the culture of these places and pick up particular expressions that are used by francophone

countries such as regions of Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland, French Guiana, Senegal. There are also other French territories and colonies such as French Guiana in South America, Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean, and Mayotte and Réunion in the Indian Ocean. It can be seen that there is an interest among students, and considerable improvements are being made in the use of technological tools. This fact is evident from the comments of the users below.

"I have a game called Habbo, which I have put on the French server, and I have been having chats with native speakers" (UniFrench, M.A, User 5, 6 Likes).

"Look, everybody, I have discovered an app called WeSpeke, which allows you to have conversations with people from different parts of the world in several languages. Anyone who has a good basic knowledge of French can register in it and start practicing with native speakers!!" (UniFrench, F.P, User 5, 0 Likes).

Employing Information Communication Technology (ICT), the Internet has propagated and made possible the development of video-sharing platforms like Youtube. The various thematic channels encourage creating videos with a wide range of content, including languages like French. As shown in Figure 5, French learning can be carried out to aid additional features like didactic practices based on ludic methods, learning adapted to busy schedules, and being given access to thematic content related to languages. The didactic system is supported by hedonic content, the videos' design, and helpful information like stories and oddities (Shifman, 2011).

Figure 5 – Elements to assist in the learning of French through the intermediary of Youtube.



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

The incorporation of hedonic content, characterized by its entertainment value and humor, plays a pivotal role in facilitating language learning through digital platforms. The use of theatrical entertainment, parodies, tongue twisters, and an array of artistic resources such as music, images, photos, and designs significantly enhances the learning experience. These elements, as identified by Shifman (2011), not only captivate students' attention but also bolster their retention of the material presented. The meticulous design of video content, including the setting, illustrations, visual effects, lighting, and the integration of high-quality images, sounds, and subtitles, renders the subject matter visually appealing and more easily digestible.

Language educators and content creators on platforms like YouTube strategically employ these elements to craft a learning experience that is both informative and engaging. By highlighting cultural idiosyncrasies and drawing comparisons between different cultures, they foster an environment conducive to curiosity and exploration (Burden & Atkinson, 2007). This approach extends to teaching pronunciation, recommending literature, films, songs, and sharing firsthand experiences with the French language, thereby enriching students' linguistic and cultural proficiency.

Furthermore, the advent of mobile technologies, such as smartphones and tablets, has revolutionized the accessibility of language learning, accommodating the busy schedules of contemporary learners (Elaish et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2018). These advancements enable individuals with time constraints to engage with condensed educational content, such as mini-classes, drops, and helpful tips, facilitating a seamless integration of learning into their daily lives (Amemiya et al., 2007; Burden & Atkinson, 2007; Bakar et al., 2009).

The ubiquity of mobile devices ensures that learners can access short, impactful video content in various settings at any time, thereby democratizing language learning and making it more flexible and

accessible than ever before (Amemiya et al., 2007; Bakar et al., 2009). This ease of access is a cornerstone of Mobile Learning (M-learning), which has been significantly enhanced by the capabilities of modern mobile technologies (Elaish et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2018). As a result, students maintain more consistent engagement with the language they are studying, fostering continuous and effective learning.

The strategic use of hedonic content coupled with the flexibility offered by mobile technologies presents a dynamic and efficient approach to language learning. Platforms like YouTube and the utilization of smartphones and tablets not only make learning more accessible but also more engaging, motivating students to immerse themselves in the French language. This integration of entertainment and technology holds the promise of transforming language education, making it more appealing and adaptable to the needs of learners worldwide.

V. Conclusion

In the wake of the transformative shifts ushered in by the COVID-19 pandemic, the landscape of education has been irrevocably altered, fostering a burgeoning reliance on digital platforms for the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge. This paradigmatic shift underscores a pivotal reevaluation of traditional pedagogical methodologies, catalyzing the integration of technology in educational practices, particularly in the realm of foreign language learning. Our study embarked on an exploratory journey to delineate the factors that facilitate autonomous foreign language acquisition through technological mediums, with a focused analysis on the utilization of YouTube as an educational tool. Through a meticulous examination of 850 comments across 11 YouTube videos from five French teaching channels tailored for Brazilian learners, this research has unearthed valuable insights into the dynamics of online language learning, revealing a landscape marked by preferences for interactive, accessible, and flexible learning solutions.

Our findings illuminate the efficacy of YouTube as a versatile platform that not only democratizes language learning but also enriches it through the integration of ludic didactics, adaptability to learners' schedules, and unparalleled accessibility afforded by mobile technologies. The pedagogical potential of ludic elements, such as humor, songs, and visually engaging content, in fostering a conducive learning environment was evident, enhancing memorization and making the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. Furthermore, the adaptability of learning to accommodate the hectic schedules of modern-day learners emerged as a crucial factor, aligning with the demands of a globalized, technologically-driven society where learning must be both accessible and succinct. The accessibility of language learning through mobile technologies, facilitating anytime, anywhere learning, underscores a significant evolution towards more inclusive and flexible educational models.

However, the journey towards optimizing online language learning is not devoid of challenges. Our study acknowledges its limitations, notably the focus on French language learning, which may not universally apply to other languages or cultural contexts. Moreover, the brevity and lack of depth in user comments highlight cultural nuances in communication styles, suggesting the need for diversified qualitative research methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of learners' motivations and experiences.

This research contributes to the evolving discourse on technological pedagogy by identifying key factors that influence the effectiveness of language learning through digital platforms. It calls for further investigation into the nuances of ludic didactics, the impact of learning flexibility, and the role of mobile technology accessibility in enhancing foreign language acquisition. Such inquiries are essential for devising pedagogical strategies that resonate with the contemporary learner, facilitating not only language proficiency but also a deeper engagement with the learning material.

The managerial implications of our findings extend to content creators, educators, and institutions within the language education sector. By harnessing the insights into learner preferences and technological affordances, they can tailor their offerings to better meet the evolving demands of digital learners. This study underscores the necessity for pedagogical innovation, urging educators and content creators to consider how ludic didactics, accessibility, and schedule adaptability can be integrated into language learning resources to captivate and retain learners.

As we navigate the complexities of a post-pandemic world, the integration of technology in language education emerges not only as a necessity but as an opportunity to reimagine and revitalize the way we learn languages. By embracing the potential of platforms like YouTube and acknowledging the diverse needs of learners, educators and content creators can unlock new horizons in language education, fostering a learning environment that is engaging, effective, and reflective of the digital age. This study serves as a stepping stone towards this goal, offering insights and directions for future research that will continue to shape the landscape of foreign language learning in the digital era.

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