



Engagement with Social and Digital Platforms for Language Teaching Competencies among Language Preservice Teachers

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Abstract

This study investigated the engagement of language preservice teachers at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) with social and digital platforms in acquiring language-teaching competencies. A survey design was employed using a researcher-designed questionnaire administered to 213 penultimate and final-year preservice teachers in Yoruba, French, and Education/English programmes during the 2023/2024 academic session. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were used for analysis, with visualisation tools such as bar and pie charts. Findings showed that YouTube (21.33%) and Facebook Groups (15.54%) were the most frequently used platforms. A total of 182 respondents (86.26%) affirmed that these platforms enhance and effectively develop language teaching competencies, particularly lesson Planning (71.56%), as well as technology integration, classroom management, and proficiency development (17.06%–19.91%). Significant challenges included limited internet access (29.32%), lack of reliable resources and exposure to misinformation (8.53%), and time constraints (7.11%). The study concludes that social and digital platforms significantly contribute to preparing preservice teachers for contemporary language teaching demands. It highlights the need to address access and reliability challenges to optimize their instructional benefits.

Keywords: Preservice teacher education; Language teaching competencies; Social and digital platforms; Technology integration in language education; Teacher professional development

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is a technological era that has transformed the world into a global village. Technology refers to the application of scientific knowledge, tools, and techniques to solve problems, improve efficiency, and enhance human life (Kurtz, 2020). Social and digital platforms, as products of Technology, facilitate online interactions and learning (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). While Technology has been widely integrated into sectors such as engineering, finance, and healthcare, it has also revolutionized

Education, becoming an essential part of the modern classroom experience (Selwyn, 2016). Unlike in the past, teachers today must possess digital literacy, ranging from technical skills to the critical evaluation of online resources, to effectively navigate and use these platforms for instructional purposes (Hubbard, 2013; Hafner & Miller, 2019).

Before the digital age, teaching and learning were confined to formal classrooms and physical libraries (Warschauer, 2003). However, technological advancements have expanded educational access, allowing learners to acquire knowledge from anywhere via smartphones, laptops, and internet connectivity (Bates, 2019). Digital libraries and e-learning platforms have replaced traditional brick-and-mortar structures, providing instant access to vast educational resources (Zhang & Quintana, 2012). This shift has influenced teacher education, as preservice teachers now supplement formal training with online professional learning communities and digital resources (Trust et al., 2016), fostering collaborative skill development beyond institutional boundaries (Wesley, 2013).

Language teaching, in particular, has evolved from traditional methods to more interactive, technology-enhanced approaches (Chapelle, 2009). Social media and digital platforms offer preservice teachers exposure to authentic language use, peer collaboration, and diverse pedagogical resources (Lomicka & Lord, 2016; Kabilan et al., 2010). These tools align with contemporary learner-centered paradigms, fostering active engagement and real-world language application (Godwin-Jones, 2018) while encouraging reflective practice – a critical component of teacher identity formation (Farrell, 2015). Research has indicated that, for instance, YouTube is versatile in the acquisition of language skills (Basgall et al., 2023; Mosully, 2024; Nasution, 2019; Winstead, 2021). The incorporation of these technology tools into teacher training, however, requires tact to maximise learning opportunities from them for the acquisition of teaching competencies. Notably, research is scant on how they are incorporated into teacher training. However, educators usually provide guidance to (preservice) teachers on creating their own short-form YouTube videos, in addition to training them to curate helpful videos for use in language classes (Reinders, 2025).

Despite these benefits, gaps remain in understanding how effectively digital platforms contribute to teacher competency development (Hockly, 2015). Many educators lack familiarity with these tools, underestimate their pedagogical value (Kessler, 2018), or struggle to critically assess the quality of digital content (Tour, 2017). Additionally, research is needed to determine which specific teaching competencies are enhanced through digital engagement and how these skills translate into classroom practice (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

While digital platforms are widely used, their effectiveness in developing language teaching competencies is not guaranteed (Hampel & Stickler, 2015). Challenges such as linguistic barriers (e.g., accent variations in instructional videos) may hinder learning (Jenkins, 2000). For instance, an English preservice teacher watching a pronunciation tutorial by a speaker from a different dialectal region may struggle to comprehend and replicate the sounds (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Distractions from non-academic content on social platforms further complicate focused skill acquisition (Carpenter, 2015).

This study aims to explore the engagement of language preservice teachers at Obafemi Awolowo University with social and digital platforms to enhance their language teaching competencies. By examining their experiences, challenges, and outcomes, this research seeks to provide insights that inform the design of more effective teacher-training programs and contribute to the professional development of future language teachers. Through quantitative methods, this study will assess the impact of digital engagement on teaching efficacy, learner interaction, and overall pedagogical knowledge, ultimately striving to improve language education in Nigeria and beyond.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, developed by Punya Mishra and Matthew J. Koehler (2005, 2006), extends Shulman's (1986) seminal formulation of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) by incorporating Technology as an integral

component of teachers' professional knowledge. The framework emerged from the absence of a comprehensive model that could simultaneously account for teachers' pedagogical reasoning, subject-matter expertise, and their ongoing efforts to integrate Technology effectively into teaching practice. Mishra and Koehler (2006) describe TPACK as a conceptual framework that captures the complex, multifaceted, and context-dependent nature of teacher knowledge required for meaningful technology integration. It emphasizes that technology use in Education should not occur in isolation but rather through a thoughtful interplay among pedagogical, content, and technological knowledge domains.

The TPACK framework delineates seven interrelated knowledge areas: Technological Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), and Content Knowledge (CK); their intersections-- Technological Content Knowledge (TCK), Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), and Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK); and the overarching Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) itself. These domains represent the synergistic understanding that enables teachers to design, implement, and evaluate learning experiences that effectively integrate Technology. Over the years, the framework has been found valuable for teachers across different levels of Education and contexts, providing a versatile lens for analyzing and enhancing the knowledge base that underpins effective technology-mediated teaching (Koehler & Mishra, 2009; Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social media and digital platforms have become a constant feature in the day-to-day lives of students and teachers alike. The integration of Technology in Education has created new opportunities for engaging and new teaching approaches, particularly in language education. However, while digital tools such as online libraries, educational websites, language-learning apps, and social media platforms offer great potential for enhancing language instruction, their practical use depends on the teacher's knowledge and ability to make the most of these resources.

For preservice language teachers, developing digital literacy and the ability to use these platforms effectively is crucial in preparing for modern classroom demands. This study aims to determine how well teachers in training, that is, preservice teachers, engage with and use social and digital platforms such as online libraries, social media, educational websites, and apps to enhance their language-teaching competencies.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess the level of engagement of preservice teachers at Obafemi Awolowo University with social and digital platforms in acquiring language-teaching competencies. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Find out what social and digital platforms are most frequently used by language preservice teachers at Obafemi Awolowo University for enhancing their language teaching competencies.
2. know how language preservice teachers perceive the effectiveness of social and digital platforms in developing their teaching skills and methodologies;
3. determine the specific language teaching competencies that language preservice teachers feel they acquire through engagement with social and digital platforms; and
4. know the barriers language preservice teachers encounter when using social and digital platforms to acquire language-teaching competencies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For this study, the following research questions are generated:

1. What social and digital platforms are most frequently used by language preservice teachers at Obafemi Awolowo University for enhancing their language teaching competencies?
2. How do language preservice teachers perceive the effectiveness of social and digital platforms in developing their teaching skills and methodologies?
3. What specific language teaching competencies do preservice teachers feel they acquire through engagement with social and digital platforms?
4. What barriers do language preservice teachers encounter when using social and digital platforms for acquiring language teaching competencies?

RESEARCH METHODS

The research design, time and place of research, targets/objectives, research subjects, procedures, instruments, and data analysis techniques, as well as other matters related to the method of research, are described in this section. Also discussed are the research subjects, procedures, data, and instruments, data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, and other matters related to the research method.

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The research was carried out at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Obafemi Awolowo University was founded in 1961 as the University of Ifè and commenced classes in October 1962. Ilé-Ifè, which is the University town, is an ancient Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria. The city is located in present-day Osun State. It is recorded as having been founded sometime between 1000 BC and 500 BC. Ile-Ife is known historically for its sophisticated art forms. Ifè as it is also called is about 218 kilometers northeast of Lagos with a population of over 500,000 people, which is the highest in Osun State according to the population census of 2006. The research was conducted between June and August 2025, during the Rain Semester of the 2023/2024 Academic Session of the University.

Research Target/Subject

The population comprised 278 preservice language teachers in their penultimate and final years of the teacher training program during the 2023/2024 academic session at the Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. These 278 preservice language teachers were made up of the following: 6 students in their penultimate year from Education and Yoruba; 2 students from Education and French; and 134 students from Education and English Language. In their final year, there were 2 students from Education and Yoruba, 3 from Education and French, and 131 from Education and English Language (Source: OAU e-portal). The sample comprised 213 preservice teachers. Total enumeration was used to select all students in the Yoruba and French units.

In contrast, the sample for the English unit was determined using the Yamane formula ($n = N/(1 + N(e)^2)$). They gave approximately 160 students. This was considered the minimum sample that could be selected for the study. A total of 200 students were, however, selected from the English unit, over and above the 160 suggested by the Yamane formula. The random sampling technique was then used in selecting the sample from the Education and English cohort.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

A researcher designed a questionnaire titled "Assessment of OAU Language Preservice Teachers' Social and Digital Platform Engagement for Language Teaching Competency Acquisition (ASSPSDPEL)" that was used for data collection in this research. The questionnaire was structured in five sections. Section A sought demographic information from respondents, such as age, sex, level, etc. Section B was designed to sort the frequency of social and digital platform use. Section C focused on the perceived benefits of digital platforms for the acquisition of language-teaching competencies. Section D addressed challenges

hindering the use of social and digital platforms in acquiring language-teaching competencies, while Section E focused on future engagement with these platforms. The questionnaire used different response formats depending on the items. For instance, a 5-point Likert-type response format of Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree was used for the item *"To what extent do you agree that social and digital platforms help to improve your language teaching competencies"* in Section C. In contrast, the response format of Very often, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never was used for the item *"How often do you encounter misinformation or unreliable content on digital platforms related to language teaching?"* under Section D.

To ensure the instrument's validity, the questionnaire underwent face and content validation. The research instrument was reviewed by three academic experts, one each in tests and measurements, teacher education, and educational Technology. They confirmed that the questions adequately covered the relevant aspects of the research objectives. Feedback from these experts was incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire to enhance its relevance and clarity. Reliability tests were complex to establish on the items due to inconsistencies in response formats. However, mean values of 2.90 and 2.91, with standard errors of 0.097 and 0.098, were obtained for items 7 and 9, respectively. These depict the consistency of responses on the items.

Research Procedure

The instrument was directly administered by the lead researcher to respondents at different locations within the institution after their consent to participate was obtained. The questionnaire was collected back from the respondents immediately after completion. A total of 211 questionnaires were returned, yielding a 99.06% return rate.

Data analysis technique

The data obtained from the instrument were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency tables and percentages, to identify the most used platforms, gauge perceptions of effectiveness, and predict competency acquisition based on platform usage frequency. High frequencies of affirmative responses to positively worded items were taken as evidence of language pedagogical competence among preservice teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: What social and digital platforms are most frequently used by language preservice teachers at Obafemi Awolowo University for enhancing their language teaching competencies? To answer this question, the frequency of responses to the item requesting identification of the platforms most frequently used to enhance their language-teaching competencies was obtained. The results are presented in Table 1 and shown in Figure 1 as a bar chart.

Table 1. Frequency, percentage of responses to platforms used for language teaching purposes

Which of the following platforms do you use for language-teaching-related purposes?		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
YouTube	45	21.33%
Facebook Groups	33	15.64%
Online Courses	6	2.84%
Language Learning Apps	26	12.32%
Twitter	0	0.00%
Instagram	0	0.00%
LinkedIn	0	0.00%

Which of the following platforms do you use for language-teaching-related purposes?		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
TikTok	0	0.00%
Blogs/Websites	0	0.00%
YouTube + Facebook Groups	38	18.01%
YouTube + Facebook Groups + Language Learning Apps	21	9.95%
YouTube + Facebook Groups + Online Courses	16	7.58%
YouTube + Facebook + Language Apps + Online Courses	12	5.69%
YouTube + Facebook + Blogs/Websites	8	3.79%
YouTube + Facebook + Language Apps + Online Courses	6	2.84%
Total	211	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 1 are visualized in a bar chart, as depicted in Figure 1.

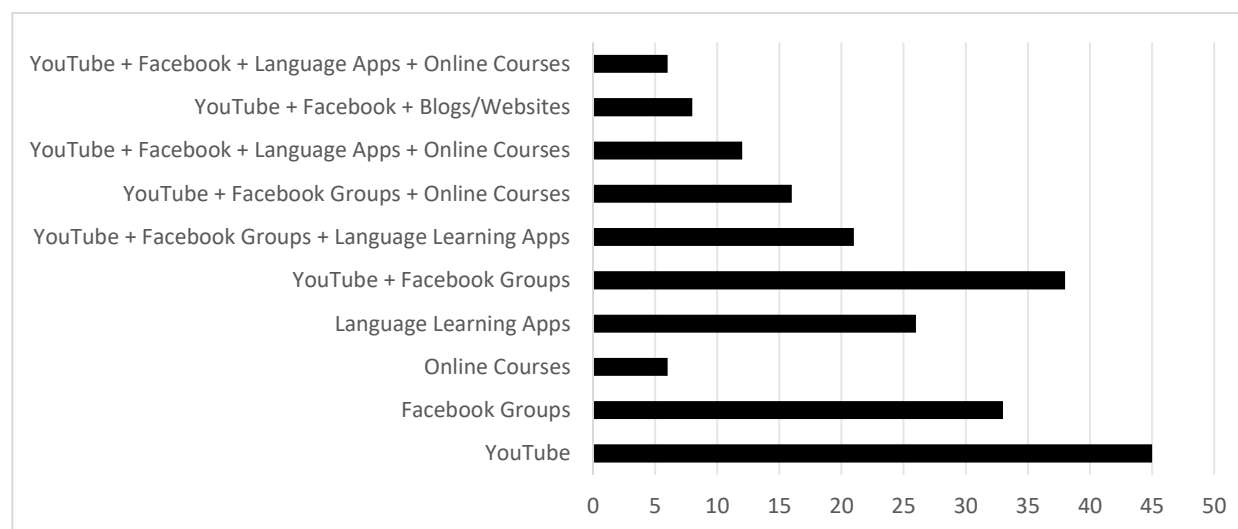


Figure 1. Bar chart showing the frequency of platforms for language teaching related purposes

The findings show that YouTube and Facebook Groups are the most frequently used platforms by language PSTs at Obafemi Awolowo University. YouTube alone accounted for 21.33% of usage, while Facebook Groups followed closely with 15.64%. A further 18.01% of respondents reported using both platforms together. This aligns with findings from Hafner and Miller (2019), who emphasised the pedagogical value of YouTube in language education. Their study illustrated that preservice teachers use YouTube to access pronunciation models, visual grammar explanations, and culturally immersive content. These types of multimedia resources support creative and student-centred instructional methods, as reflected in the high usage among the present study's respondents. Similarly, Wesely's (2013) study confirms that Facebook Groups are valuable for just-in-time professional support. Preservice teachers in her study used these groups to solve immediate classroom problems and to share strategies with peers. This usage pattern equals the experiences of preservice teachers at Obafemi Awolowo University, who use Facebook Groups for real-time collaboration and professional growth. The preference for these two platforms over others, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, or TikTok, suggests that accessibility, content relevance, and interactive communities are key factors driving platform selection.

Research Question Two: How do language preservice teachers perceive the effectiveness of social and digital platforms in developing their teaching skills and methodologies?

To answer the question of how preservice teachers perceive the effectiveness of social and digital platforms in developing their teaching skills and methodology, responses to relevant items in the instrument were collated. The results obtained are highlighted in Table 2 and visualized in Figures 2 and 3 as a pie chart.

Table 2. Frequency, percentage of responses to agreement on digital platforms improving language teaching competencies

To what extent do you agree that social and digital platforms help improve your language teaching competencies?		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	98	46.45%
Agree	84	39.81%
Neutral	14	6.64%
Disagree	14	6.64%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.47%
Total	211	100%

How effective are digital platforms in keeping you updated with the latest language teaching trends?

	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	98	46.45%
Effective	84	39.81%
Neutral	12	5.69%
Ineffective	8	3.79%
Very Ineffective	9	4.27%
Total	211	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

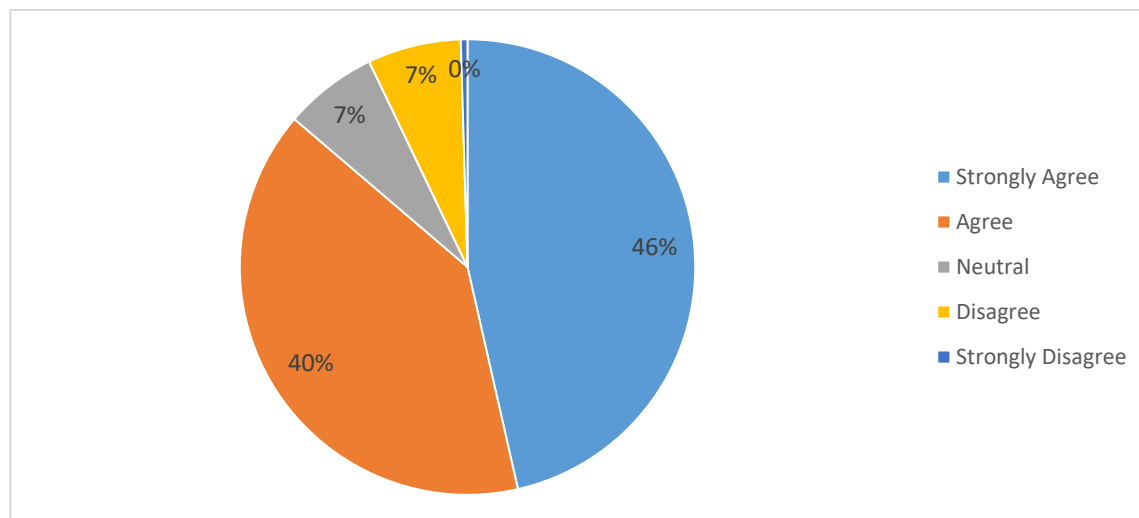


Figure 2. Pie-chart showing preservice teachers' agreement to social and digital platforms' assistance in improving language teaching competencies

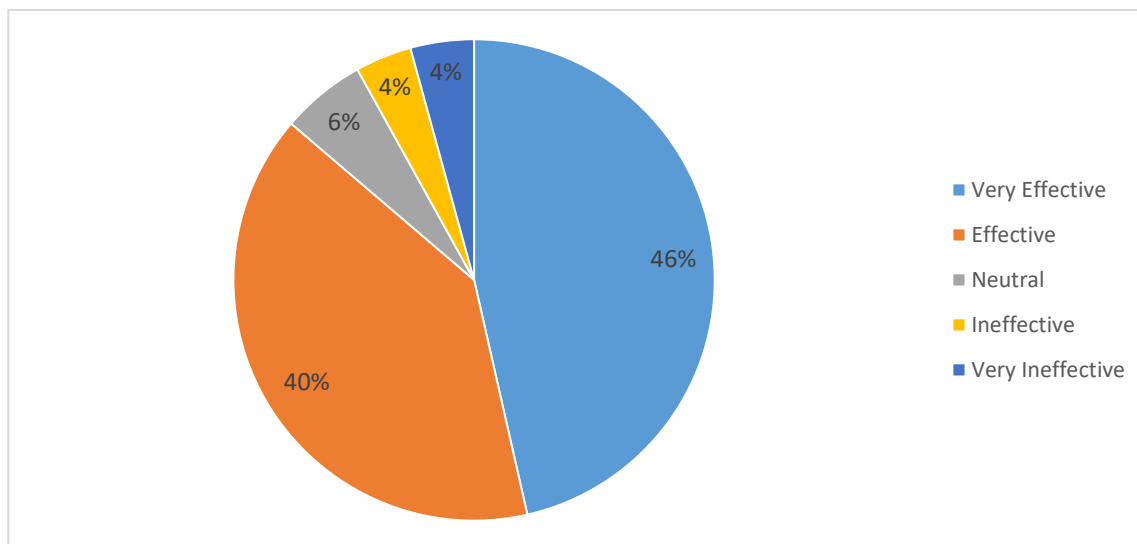


Figure 3. Preservice teachers' response to how effective digital platforms are in keeping them updated with the latest language teaching trends

One hundred and eighty-two preservice teachers (86.26%) of the total preservice teachers in this study viewed social and digital platforms as effective tools for developing their teaching skills and keeping up with current language-teaching trends. This perception supports the arguments made by Trust et al. (2016), who found that consistent participation in digital Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) fosters critical thinking, collaboration, and reflective learning among preservice teachers. The study by Trust et al. showed how preservice teachers gained a nuanced understanding of instructional design through interaction with other educators, a benefit echoed in the current study's findings. The effectiveness perceived by preservice teachers in this study aligns with Farrell's (2015) findings, which showed that digital reflective tools (such as blogs and e-portfolios) significantly deepened preservice teachers' understanding of their instructional decisions and improved their teaching strategies. While the present Obafemi Awolowo University study did not focus specifically on blogs or e-portfolios, the perceived usefulness of platforms like YouTube and Facebook for reflective and interactive learning suggests a similar value in digital engagement for professional growth.

Research Question Three: What specific language teaching competencies do preservice teachers feel they acquire through engagement with social and digital platforms?

The frequencies of language preservice teachers' responses to the item on language teaching competencies acquired through engagement with social and digital platforms are presented in Table 3 and in Figure 4 as a line graph.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of responses to language teaching competencies developed through digital platforms

Which of the following language teaching competencies have you developed through digital platforms?			
Variable	Frequency	Percentage	
Language Lesson Planning	151	71.56%	
Language Lesson Planning + Classroom Management	36	17.06%	
Language Lesson Planning + Technology Integration	42	19.91%	
Language Lesson Planning + Proficiency Development	38	18.01%	
Proficiency Development + Assessment + Intercultural Awareness	28	13.27%	

Which of the following language teaching competencies have you developed through digital platforms?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Technology Integration + Classroom Management + Assessment	19	9.00%
Proficiency Development + Language Lesson Planning + Technology + Assessment	15	7.11%
Classroom Management + Technology Integration + Language Proficiency Development + Assessment + Intercultural Communication & Awareness	8	3.79%
Total	211	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

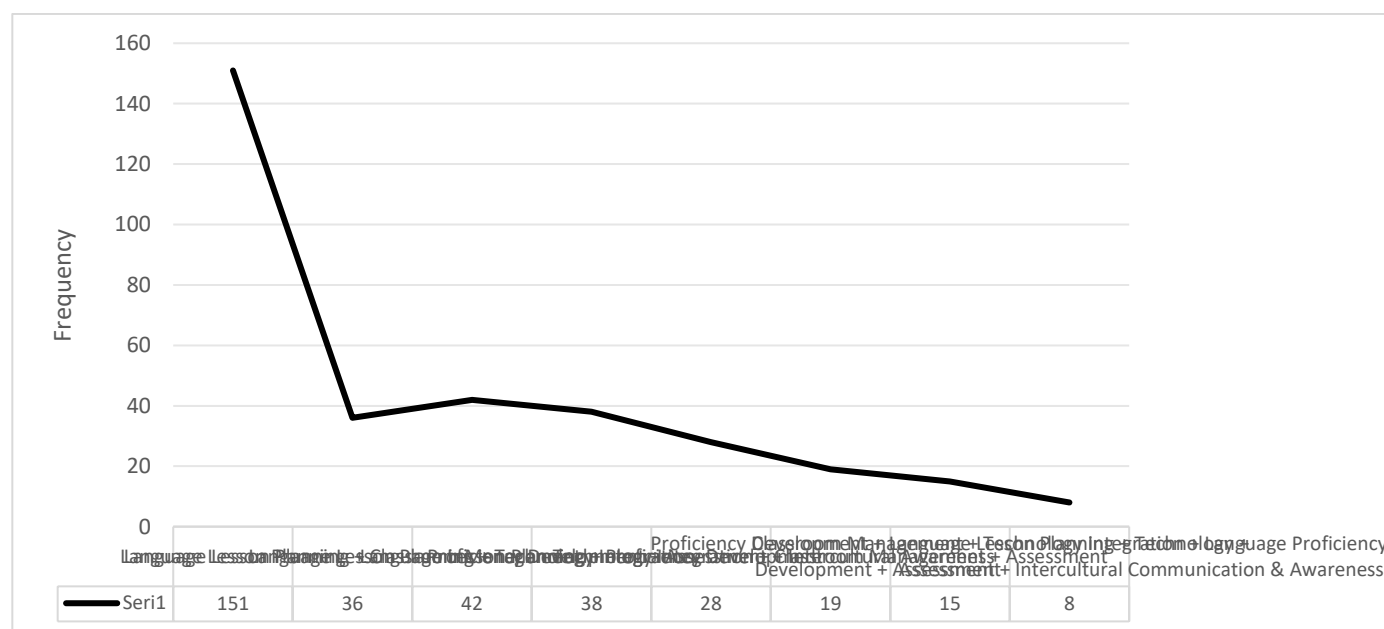


Figure 4. Preservice teachers' development of language teaching competencies through digital platforms

As could be gleaned from Table 3 and Figure 4, language lesson planning emerged as the most widely acquired competency among preservice teachers in the study, reported by 71.56% of respondents. This finding aligns with Tour's (2017) work on the use of Pinterest and other content-sharing platforms for lesson plan development. Tour observed that preservice teachers used these platforms to collect, adapt, and personalise educational resources. Similarly, platforms like YouTube and TeachersPayTeachers have been credited in Hafner and Miller's (2019) research with supporting preservice teachers in acquiring multimedia instructional skills, particularly for teaching grammar and pronunciation. Other competencies gained by respondents included technology integration, language proficiency development, and classroom management. These competencies closely align with the outcomes reported in Carpenter's (2015) and Trust et al.'s (2016) studies. Through interaction in online communities, preservice teachers were exposed to diverse instructional models such as flipped classrooms, student-centred activities, and real-time troubleshooting methods—all of which enhance teaching competence. Moreover, Wesely (2013) emphasised that the Facebook learning communities fostered a hands-on understanding of classroom dynamics and helped participants apply theory to real-world challenges. This finding aligns well with the current study's data, which shows that preservice teachers reported gaining practical classroom management strategies through peer exchanges on Facebook Groups. The findings of this research have demonstrated the complex

interplay among pedagogical, content, and Technological knowledge, as explained by Mishra and Koehler (2006), where teachers acquire technology skills not in isolation but for the purpose of applying them in teaching-related activities such as lesson planning, classroom management, language proficiency development, and assessment.

Research Question Four: What barriers do language preservice teachers encounter when using social and digital platforms for acquiring language teaching competencies?

The barriers language teachers usually encounter when using social and digital platforms to acquire language-teaching competencies are highlighted in Table 4 and Figure 5, presented as a donut pie chart.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of responses to challenges faced when using digital platforms for language teaching development

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of Reliable Resources only	18	8.53%
Information Overload	14	6.64%
Time Constraints only	15	7.11%
Limited Internet Access only	62	29.38%
Lack of Reliable Resources + Limited Internet Access	33	15.64%
Limited Internet Access + Time Constraints	29	13.74%
Lack of Guidance + Information Overload + Reliable Resources	22	10.43%
Limited Internet + Lack of Reliable Resources + Lack of Guidance	18	8.53%
Total	211	100%

How often do you encounter misinformation or unreliable content on digital platforms related to language teaching?		
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Very Often	40	18.96%
Often	40	18.96%
Sometimes	106	50.24%
Rarely	25	11.85%
Never	0	0.00%
Total	211	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

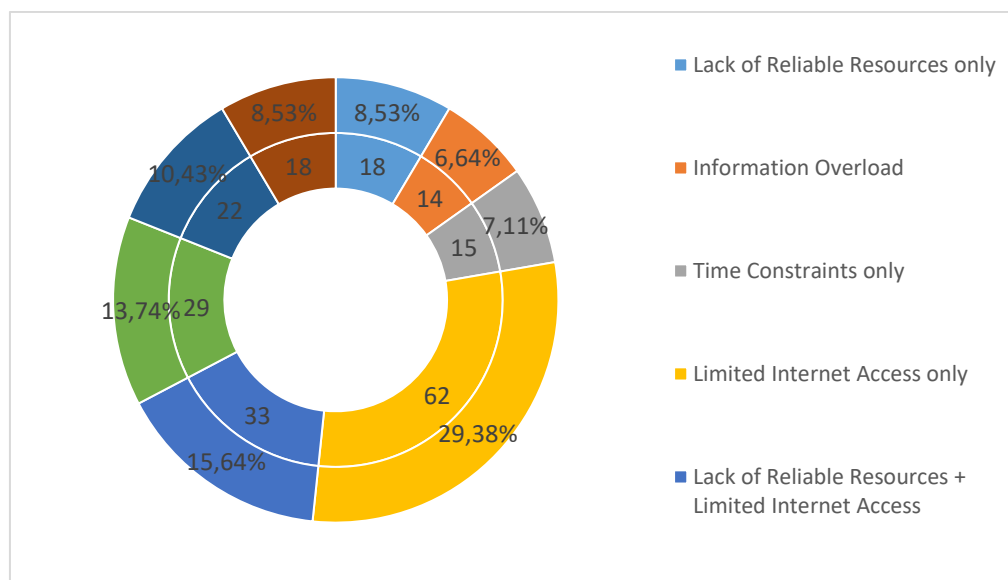


Figure 5. Donut chart showing the challenges faced by preservice teachers when using digital platforms for language teaching development

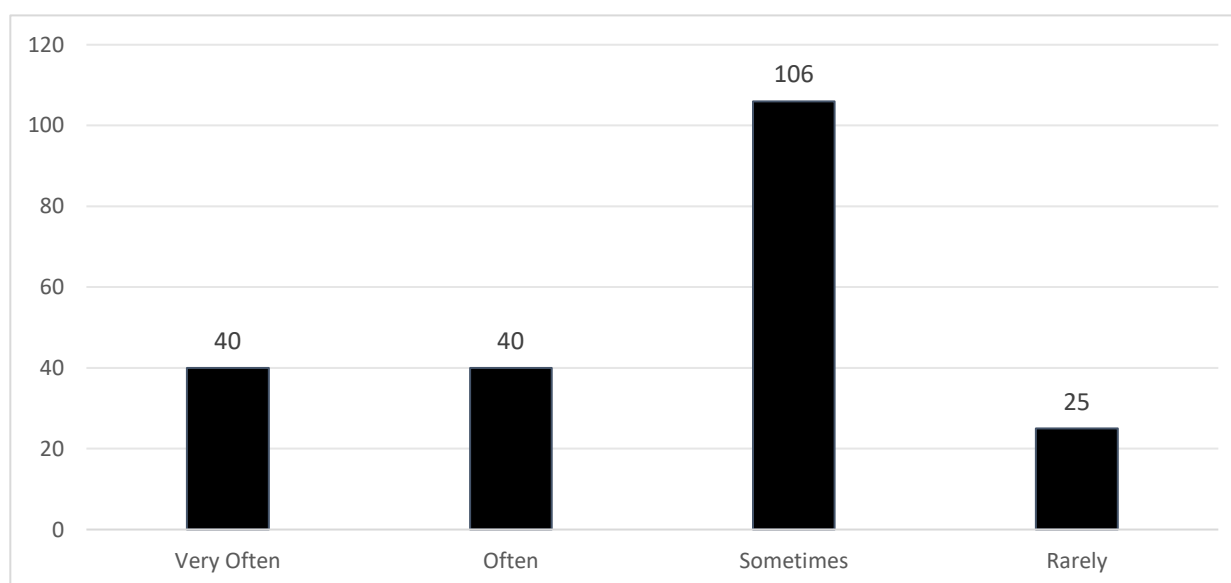


Figure 6. Preservice teachers' response to the frequency of encounters with misinformation or unreliable content on digital platforms related to language teaching

The study identified poor internet access as the most frequently reported challenge, cited by 29.38% of respondents as a standalone issue and appearing often in combined responses. This finding supports concerns raised by several scholars about digital inequity in teacher education. Although empirical literature, such as Hafner and Miller (2019) and Farrell (2015), mostly assumes stable digital access, the present study reveals the infrastructural constraints that limit the benefits of social and digital platforms in Nigeria. Other challenges noted included a lack of reliable resources, time constraints, inadequate guidance, and misinformation. Nearly half of the respondents mentioned encountering false or misleading content on digital platforms. These findings echo those of Kabilan et al. (2010), who stressed the importance of structured guidance for effective e-portfolio use. Without rubrics and regular feedback, digital tools may not yield the desired learning outcomes. Similarly, Wesely (2013) and Trust et al. (2016) both noted that meaningful digital learning requires clear goals, moderation, and scaffolding. The presence of misinformation is

especially concerning in environments where teacher education relies heavily on informal peer learning through social media. Without critical digital literacy skills, preservice teachers may adopt ineffective or inaccurate teaching methods, which could compromise the quality of their future instruction.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the engagement of language preservice teachers at Obafemi Awolowo University with social and digital platforms is mainly positive and impactful. The findings show that platforms such as YouTube and Facebook Groups are widely used and perceived as highly effective in helping future teachers develop key language-teaching competencies. The continued use of these platforms despite challenges such as limited internet access, a lack of reliable resources, and occasional misinformation suggests that social and digital platforms play an important role in preparing preservice teachers for the demands of modern language classrooms and should be further integrated into teacher training programmes to enhance their effectiveness.

Hence, the study recommends that teacher training programmes should encourage and formally integrate the use of platforms such as YouTube and Facebook Groups into language education courses. In fact, educational and curricular policies that inform the development of language education programmes should articulate an extensive yet reasonable integration of digital literacy training, including media, information, and artificial intelligence literacy skills, into the curricula of preservice language teachers. Also, seminars should be organised to train preservice (and in-service) teachers on how to maximise the educational benefits of social and digital platforms to develop teaching methods and stay updated on global language-teaching trends. At the same time, the university management should work to improve on-campus access to high-speed internet to reduce connectivity challenges reported by students.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The research used preservice teachers at a university in Southwestern Nigeria, which might limit the generalizability of the findings. The scope of the social and digital platforms captured in the study is also limited to those popular in Nigeria, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube. However, the use of generic terms such as Language Learning Apps, Online Courses, and Blogs/Websites did not capture the nuances of trademarked language-learning applications. Respondents would therefore have had different conjectures of applications while responding to the items. Further research could consider factors that are associated with and thus influence preservice language teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of social and digital platforms in developing their teaching skills and methodologies. Such research could consider robust samples and statistical techniques to enhance the generalizability of findings.

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