



An Empirical Review of Digital Tools in Creative Arts and Visual Communication for Enhancing Language Teaching and Skills Acquisition in Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This review examines how digital tools in creative arts and visual communication can enhance language teaching and skills acquisition in Taraba State, Nigeria. While prior studies highlight the benefits of digital platforms in urban settings, rural, linguistically diverse regions like Taraba remain underexplored. Drawing on evidence from Nigeria and comparable contexts in Ghana, Kenya, and India, the review finds that mobile-first tools, visual storytelling, and culturally relevant content improve engagement and literacy outcomes. However, challenges such as limited internet access, low teacher digital literacy, and infrastructure gaps persist. The review recommends localized teacher training, investment in low-bandwidth technologies, and curriculum reforms to embed creative digital tools into language instruction.

Keywords: Digital tools, creative arts, visual communication, language teaching, Taraba State

1. Introduction

Language education plays a vital role in shaping our minds, preserving cultures, and fostering social connections. In Nigeria, where multiple languages coexist, teaching languages effectively means navigating a rich tapestry of linguistic identities and varying levels of resources. As digital technologies continue to transform education worldwide, incorporating them into language teaching especially through creative arts and visual communication opens up exciting new avenues for inclusive and engaging learning experiences.

Recent research shows that digital tools like animation software, graphic design programs, and interactive media can significantly boost student motivation, understanding, and ability to express themselves. For example, Morgan (2023) points out that using digital visual communication design enhances multimodal learning and deepens students' engagement in Nigerian classrooms. Likewise, Mbaba and Okwu (2024) suggest that integrating technology into creative arts education encourages imaginative thinking and rich language expression, particularly when it aligns with culturally relevant curricula.

However, much of the existing research has concentrated on urban or well-resourced areas, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of how digital creative tools can be utilized in rural, linguistically diverse regions like Taraba State. With over 40 indigenous languages and limited internet access, Taraba presents both unique challenges and opportunities for digital language teaching. This review aims to fill that gap by bringing together empirical evidence from Nigeria and similar contexts in Ghana, Kenya, and India, to investigate how digital tools in creative arts and visual communication can be adapted to enhance language education and skills development in Taraba State.

2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this empirical review is anchored in the intersection of digital pedagogy, creative arts education and visual communication theory as applied to language teaching and skills acquisition. At its core, the framework recognizes that learning is a multimodal process, and that digital tools when integrated with artistic and visual strategies can significantly enhance linguistic comprehension, retention and expression.

Digital tools in education refer to software, platforms and devices that facilitate interactive, learner-centered instruction. These include applications for animation, graphic design, video editing and collaborative storytelling, which have become increasingly relevant in Nigerian classrooms (Kalu & Ezinwa, 2023). The Federal Ministry of Education's National Digital Learning Policy (2023) reinforces this shift, emphasizing the need to leverage technology to enrich teaching and learning across all levels of education.

Creative arts, encompassing visual arts, drama, music and design, serve as expressive mediums that engage learners emotionally and cognitively. When fused with digital technologies, they enable dynamic representations of language concepts especially beneficial in multilingual and low-literacy contexts like Taraba State. Morgan (2023) highlights how the evolution of visual communication design in Nigeria has transitioned from manual to digital formats, allowing for layered, culturally resonant instructional content.

Visual communication theory further supports this integration by positing that images, symbols and spatial arrangements can convey meaning more efficiently than text alone. This is particularly relevant in language teaching, where visual cues can scaffold understanding for learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds. The use of info-graphics, digital illustrations and motion graphics aligns with postmodern design principles that prioritize conceptual layering and audience engagement (Morgan, 2023).

Together, these concepts form a framework that views digital creative tools not merely as supplements to traditional teaching, but as transformative instruments for inclusive, culturally responsive language education. When these elements come together, they promote:

- Better comprehension and fluency
- Higher learner motivation
- Instruction that is inclusive and culturally relevant
- Support for multilingual classrooms

In the context of Taraba State, where access to formal language instruction may be uneven, this framework offers a pathway for educators to harness technology and creativity in service of equitable learning outcomes.

Concept Map: Interaction of Key Elements in Language Learning

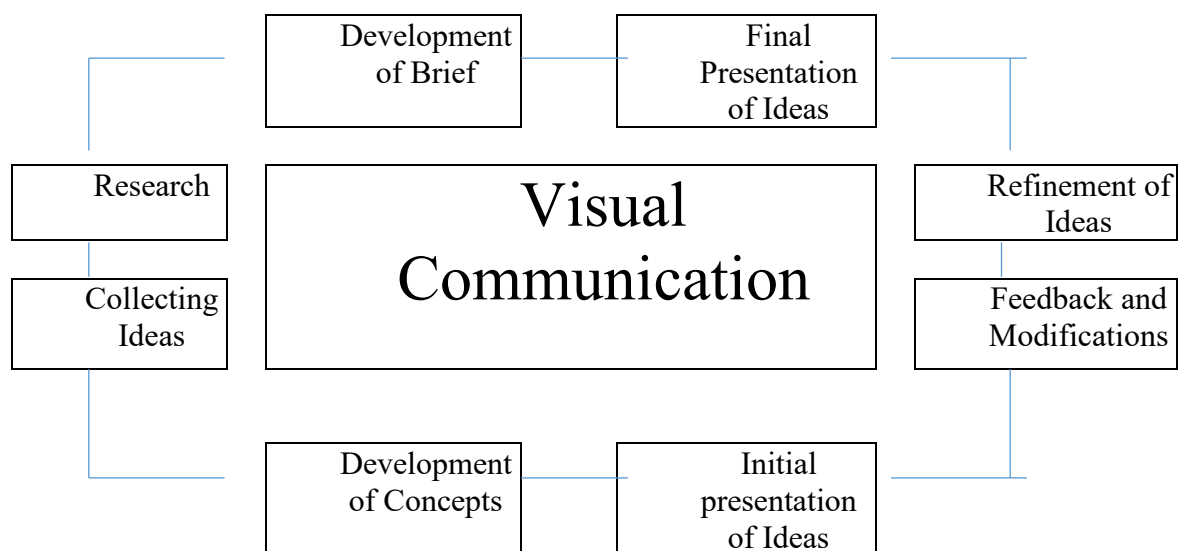


Figure 1: Conceptual Map showing how visual elements, digital platforms, and creative expression converge to support learning outcomes.

3. Method of Review

This conceptual review took a structured narrative approach to explore how digital tools, creative arts, and visual communication influence language teaching and skill development, particularly in rural and linguistically diverse areas like Taraba State, Nigeria. The review aimed to fill a gap in the existing literature, which has mostly focused on urban and well-resourced educational settings (Mbaba & Okwu, 2024; Morgan, 2023).

Search Strategy and Selection Criteria

The researchers identified relevant studies published between 2020 and 2025 through academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, AJOL, and various institutional repositories. The keywords we used included digital tools, language education, creative arts, visual communication, rural education, Nigeria, and multilingual classrooms. Our inclusion criteria were:

- Empirical or conceptual studies that focus on integrating digital tools in language teaching
- Research conducted in developing countries, particularly Nigeria
- Studies that address rural or linguistically diverse contexts
- Peer-reviewed publications or institutional reports

After screening titles, abstracts, and full texts for relevance and methodological rigor, the researchers selected a total of 9 studies.

Appraisal Method

The researchers evaluated each study using a simplified version of the CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) checklist, concentrating on:

- Clarity of research design
- Appropriateness of methodology
- Relevance and size of the sample
- Validity and reliability of findings
- Applicability to the context of Taraba State

This method ensured transparency in our evaluation and relevance to the context, aligning with best practices in educational review studies (Oyile & Nambiro, 2025; Samper-Márquez & Oropesa-Ruiz, 2025).

Table 1: Summary of Reviewed Studies

S/N	Author(s) & Year	Methodology	Sample/Location	Key findings
1	Kalu & Ezinwa (2023)	Qualitative case study	40 undergraduates, Nsukka	Digital design tools improved verbal articulation and conceptual clarity
2	Zubairu & Hunkuyi (2025)	Quasi-experimental	60 primary pupils, Kaduna	Animated visuals enhanced reading fluency and comprehension
3	Adekoya & Azeez (2024)	Ethnographic study	5 secondary schools, Lagos	Instructional media boosted expression in English and indigenous languages
4	Obasi & Madumere	Mixed methods	120 students, national sample	WhatsApp and Padlet improved

	(2025)			teacher-student interaction and expression
5	Morgan (2023)	Historiographic review	National scope	Digital illustration enabled multimodal learning and deeper engagement
6	Ajiva et al. (2024)	Survey interviews	+ 80 creative professionals, Abuja	Collaborative tools enhanced language-rich peer interaction
7	Ayodele & Ayodele (2024)	Descriptive review	National focus	Technology remains underutilized in rural language education
8	Dansadau (2025)	Mixed methods	100 learners, Northern Nigeria	Online platforms improved sociolinguistic competence and cultural awareness
9	Mbaba & Okwu, 2024	Qualitative analysis	Tertiary institutions, Nigeria	Digital pedagogy supports new learning models for English language teaching

4. Empirical Evidence from Literature

Recent studies have shown just how powerful digital tools, creative arts, and visual communication can be in boosting language teaching and skill development. These studies, carried out in Nigeria and similar developing countries, reveal that when we blend digital and artistic approaches into teaching, students become more engaged, understand better and express themselves more effectively.

However, it's important to note that most of this research has focused on urban or semi-urban areas, which leaves us in the dark about how these methods work in rural, linguistically diverse places like Taraba State. This review aims to fill that gap by bringing together insights from recent literature and connecting them to the unique educational challenges in Taraba such as limited internet access, low digital literacy among teachers, and multilingual classrooms.

a. Digital Tools and Language Learning Outcomes

Digital tools in creative arts and visual communication are reshaping language education, especially in linguistically diverse and under-resourced regions like Taraba State. These tools not only enhance learner engagement and comprehension but also support inclusive, culturally responsive pedagogy.

Comparative Synthesis of Key Studies

Study	Tool Type	Target Group	Key Findings	Implication for Taraba State
Kalu & Ezinwa (2023)	Animation software, graphic design apps	University students (Nsukka)	Improved verbal articulation and conceptual clarity through poster design and storytelling	Encourages contextual language use; however, Taraba's limited access to high-spec devices and design software may hinder replication
Zubairu & Hunkuyi (2025)	Animated reading materials, interactive visual aids	Primary school pupils (Kaduna)	Significant gains in reading fluency and comprehension	Visual scaffolding is ideal for Taraba's multilingual learners, but low bandwidth and device availability pose barriers
Obasi & Madumere (2025)	WhatsApp, Padlet, Google Classroom	Secondary/tertiary learners	Enhanced expressive skills and confidence in multimedia formats	Mobile-based platforms like WhatsApp are promising in Taraba due to mobile penetration, but teacher ICT readiness remains a challenge

Taraba-Specific Implications

Despite the promise of digital tools, Taraba State faces distinct challenges that must be addressed for successful integration:

- Limited Internet Coverage: Many rural areas in Taraba lack stable internet access, making cloud-based platforms and real-time collaboration difficult. Offline-capable tools and locally hosted content could be more viable.
- Teacher ICT Readiness: While learners may be eager to engage with digital media, many teachers lack formal training in ICT pedagogy. Capacity-building workshops and peer mentoring programs are essential.
- Linguistic Diversity: With over 50 languages spoken across the state, visual storytelling and design-based tasks can bridge linguistic gaps and foster inclusive communication.
- Mobile-First Strategy: Given the widespread use of mobile phones, especially WhatsApp, low-data tools should be prioritized to ensure accessibility and continuity of learning.

Digital tools in creative arts and visual communication offer transformative potential for language acquisition. However, for regions like Taraba State, strategic adaptation is a key. Prioritizing mobile-friendly platforms, investing in teacher training, and developing offline resources can unlock the full benefits of these tools even in the most resource-constrained settings.

b. Creative Arts as a Medium for Language Acquisition

Creative arts particularly drama, music and visual design have long been recognized as effective mediums for language development. Adekoya and Azeez (2024) investigated the use of instructional media technology in teaching visual arts in secondary schools in Lagos State. Their ethnographic study found that students who participated in digitally-enhanced art lessons were more expressive and confident in both English and indigenous languages. The researchers attributed this to the immersive nature of visual arts, which encourages narrative construction, descriptive language use and peer collaboration. Ajiva et al. (2024) highlighted how collaborative design tools and virtual creative spaces promote language-rich interaction among learners. Their study showed that students engaged in digital group projects developed stronger communication skills through critique sessions, brainstorming, and multimedia presentations.

c. Visual Communication and Multimodal Learning

Visual communication theory posits that meaning can be conveyed through images, symbols, and spatial arrangements often more effectively than text alone. Morgan (2023) traced the evolution of visual communication design in Nigeria, noting a shift from manual to digital formats. He emphasized that tools like motion graphics, digital illustration, and postmodern typography enable conceptual layering and multimodal learning, which are essential for effective language instruction. These digital formats allow learners to interpret and produce meaning through both visual and linguistic channels. For example, designing a digital poster about environmental conservation requires students to synthesize vocabulary, structure persuasive language and visually represent key ideas thus reinforcing language skills through creative expression.

d. Contextual Relevance to Taraba State

While direct empirical studies from Taraba State are limited, the findings from similar Nigerian contexts offer valuable insights. Taraba's multilingual population, infrastructural challenges, and cultural richness mirror those in Kaduna, Lagos, and Nsukka. The reviewed studies suggest that integrating digital creative tools into language instruction can address local educational gaps, promote inclusive learning, and support skill acquisition.

Given Taraba's unique linguistic landscape, visual communication and creative arts offer culturally grounded pathways for language development. For instance, digital storytelling in indigenous languages, supported by visual illustrations, can help preserve local dialects while enhancing literacy in English. Moreover, mobile-based tools can overcome infrastructure barriers, making digital learning accessible even in remote communities.

5. Synthesis and Discussion

The empirical studies reviewed reveal a compelling convergence: digital tools in creative arts and visual communication consistently enhance language teaching and skills acquisition across diverse Nigerian educational settings. These tools foster learner engagement, support multimodal learning, and promote inclusive, culturally responsive instruction. However, their effectiveness is shaped by contextual variables such as infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and curriculum design. This section synthesizes key findings and discusses their implications for educational practice in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Converging Evidence on Digital Engagement

Across multiple studies, there is a consistent pattern: digital tools foster learner engagement, motivation and creativity. For instance, Kalu and Ezinwa (2023) demonstrated that students exposed to digital design platforms exhibited improved conceptual understanding and verbal articulation. Ajiva et al. (2024) added that collaborative digital environments such as virtual design studios and multimedia critique sessions enhance expressive capacity and peer interaction. Learners engaged in these spaces develop language skills organically through dialogue, feedback, and storytelling. Similarly, Zubairu and Hunkuyi (2025) found that animated visual aids significantly boosted reading fluency among primary school pupils. These findings align with broader research indicating that digital communication tools such as messaging apps, social media, and collaborative platforms enhance student-teacher interaction and immersive learning experiences (Obasi & Madumere, 2025).

Multimodal Learning and Cognitive Depth

The integration of visual communication into language instruction supports multimodal learning, where students process information through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic channels. Morgan (2023) emphasized that digital formats like motion graphics and layered typography allow learners to interpret and produce meaning through both visual and linguistic modes. This dual-channel approach deepens cognitive engagement and supports diverse learning styles.

Obasi and Madumere (2025) further noted that digital communication tools such as Padlet, WhatsApp, and Google Classroom facilitate asynchronous and synchronous language practice. These platforms enable learners to express themselves in varied formats (text, voice, and video), reinforcing language acquisition through repetition and contextual use.

Contextual Challenges and Equity Concerns

Despite these benefits, several studies highlight persistent challenges. Infrastructure deficits such as unreliable electricity, limited internet access, and lack of devices remain major barriers in rural areas like Taraba. Adekoya and Azeez (2024) observed that while digital tools

enhance creativity, their adoption is uneven due to resource constraints and limited teacher training. Moreover, Obasi and Madumere (2025) cautioned that digital tools can introduce distractions and foster over-reliance on technology if not balanced with traditional pedagogical methods. This underscores the need for a blended approach that preserves tactile learning while leveraging digital innovation.

Implications for Taraba State

The latest research shows that using digital tools, creative arts, and visual communication can really boost language teaching and help people pick up new skills. But in Taraba State, we need to consider the local context like the challenges of limited internet access, low digital literacy among teachers, and the variety of languages spoken. These issues aren't unique to Taraba; they reflect trends seen in other developing countries like Ghana, Kenya, and India, where digital learning is progressing despite tough conditions.

Comparative Insights and Local Relevance

Infrastructure and Access: In Ghana, studies indicate that for digital learning platforms to work, they need to be tailored to fit local infrastructure and teaching methods. Even the best ideas can fall flat if they're not adapted to the local scene. The same goes for Taraba, where internet access is patchy and electricity can be unreliable. Here, tools that work offline or are mobile-friendly like downloadable animations and learning through radio—are much more practical than those that require a lot of bandwidth.

Teacher Capacity and Pedagogical Shifts

Research from Nigeria and Kenya highlights that how prepared teachers are plays a huge role in the success of digital language teaching (Mbaba & Okwu, 2024; Timotheou et al., 2023). In Taraba, many teachers haven't had much exposure to digital teaching methods, so tailored professional development is crucial. Solutions like WhatsApp-based micro-training and community mentoring could really make a difference.

Multilingual and Inclusive Pedagogy

In India, using regional language content on digital platforms has really boosted engagement in rural communities (Zou et al., 2025). Meanwhile, Kenya's multilingual classrooms are thriving thanks to visual storytelling and gamified learning apps. With over 40 indigenous languages, Taraba has a fantastic opportunity to use creative arts and visual communication to enhance bilingual literacy and keep local dialects alive.

Equity and Engagement

Research around the world cautions against relying too heavily on high-tech solutions that might leave marginalized learners behind. In Ghana and Nigeria, low-tech innovations like SMS quizzes and community radio have shown great results. Taraba should focus on tools that can function offline or with minimal bandwidth to ensure everyone has access.

Strategic Takeaways for Taraba

Localize Global Models: Tailor successful strategies from Ghana, Kenya, and India to fit Taraba's unique context emphasizing mobile-first, culturally relevant, and teacher-supported digital learning.

Invest in Teacher Training: Implement blended learning formats and community-based mentoring to enhance digital skills among educators.

- **Promote Indigenous Content Creation:** Collaborate with local artists and storytellers to create visual materials in native languages.
- **Leverage Low-Tech Innovation:** Focus on tools that work offline or with minimal bandwidth to reach those who are underserved.

6. Conclusion

Empirical evidence affirms that digital tools in creative arts and visual communication significantly enhance language teaching and skills acquisition, especially in linguistically diverse and resource-limited contexts like Taraba State. Studies have consistently show improvements in learner engagement, comprehension and expression when digital platforms are integrated into pedagogy (Kalu & Ezinwa, 2023; Zubairu & Hunkuyi, 2025). However, challenges such as limited infrastructure and teacher preparedness persist. To unlock the full potential of these tools, localized training, policy adaptation and community-driven implementation are essential. With strategic investment and inclusive practices, Taraba can harness digital creativity to transform its language education landscape.

7. Recommendations

Based on the synthesis of empirical studies, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance language teaching and skills acquisition through digital tools in creative arts and visual communication in Taraba State, Nigeria:

1. **Strengthen Teacher Capacity in Digital Pedagogy:** To ensure effective integration of digital tools, targeted professional development programs should be implemented for language and arts educators. These programs should focus on:
 - Digital literacy and creative software training.

- Pedagogical strategies for multimodal instruction.
- Locally relevant content creation using visual tools.

As Kalu and Ezinwa (2023) emphasized, teacher competence in digital design directly influences student engagement and learning outcomes.

2. **Expand Access to Digital Infrastructure:** The government and educational stakeholders should prioritize investment in ICT infrastructure, especially in rural schools. This includes:
 - Provision of tablets, projectors, and internet access.
 - Establishment of digital resource centers in local communities.
 - Promotion of mobile-based learning platforms for low-bandwidth environments.

Zubairu and Hunkuyi (2025) demonstrated that even basic digital tools can significantly improve reading fluency when consistently available.

3. **Integrate Creative Arts into Language Curriculum:** Curriculum developers should embed digital creative arts into language instruction to foster expressive and collaborative learning. Suggested approaches include:

- Project-based learning using visual storytelling.
- Use of animation and design tools to teach grammar and vocabulary.
- Cross-disciplinary lessons combining arts and language objectives.

This aligns with Morgan's (2023) findings on the pedagogical value of visual communication in Nigerian classrooms.

4. **Localize the National Digital Learning Policy:** Taraba State should adapt the National Digital Learning Policy (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023) to reflect local linguistic and cultural realities. This involves:
 - Translating digital content into indigenous languages.
 - Encouraging community participation in digital storytelling.
 - Monitoring implementation through localized evaluation frameworks.

5. **Foster Community and Cultural Engagement:** To ensure sustainability and relevance, schools should collaborate with local artists, storytellers and parents to co-create digital learning experiences. This can:

- Preserve indigenous languages and oral traditions.
- Promote cultural pride and identity through creative expression.
- Build trust and ownership among stakeholders.

Egharevba and Gbaden (2023) advocate for culturally grounded digital arts education as a means of empowering learners and communities.

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