Digital Music Pedagogy as Development Communication: A Multimodal Discourse-Pragmatic Study of Communicative Competence and Social Learning

Ugwuja, Dorathy Ngozi[1], Ogbochie, Bernice N.[2]*, Udu, Francisca ToChukwu[3] & Bassey, Agnes Edem[4]

_____

1.Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
2.Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
3.Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
4.Department of Marketing, University of Calabar.
Email: [1]dorathy.ugwuja@unn.edu.ng, [2]bernice.ogbochie@unn.edu.ng (*Corresponding Author),
[3]francisca.udu@unn.edu.ng, [4]agnesbassey@unical.edu.ng

Abstract

The convergence of digital media and educational practices has expanded the communicative potential of music pedagogy beyond artistic instruction to encompass broader social and developmental functions. This study conceptualises digital music pedagogy as a form of development communication, examining how multimodal discourse practices within digitally mediated learning environments contribute to communicative competence and social learning. Grounded in Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory and informed by discourse-pragmatic perspectives, the paper investigates how linguistic interaction, musical performance, visual resources, and embodied participation operate as interconnected semiotic modes through which meaning is negotiated and knowledge is constructed. Using qualitative discourse analysis of selected digital music learning contexts, the study explores the pragmatic strategies, interactional patterns, and participatory structures that facilitate learner engagement, identity formation, and communicative confidence. The findings suggest that digital music pedagogy functions as a participatory communicative ecosystem that supports not only skill acquisition but also interpersonal communication, sociocultural awareness, and collaborative learning processes. By integrating insights from development communication, music education, and pragmatics, the study advances a multidisciplinary framework for understanding the role of music as a transformative communication tool in contemporary mediated societies. The paper highlights the potential of digitally mediated music pedagogy to promote inclusive communication practices, enhance learner agency, and contribute to socially responsive educational development in the 21st century.

Keywords: _Development Communication, Discourse Analysis, Music Pedagogy, Communicative Ecosystem, Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory._

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital media technologies has profoundly transformed educational practices across disciplines, including music education. Traditionally, music pedagogy was largely situated within face-to-face apprenticeship, mentorship, and performance-based instruction, where learning occurred through observation, imitation, and guided practice (Elliott, 1995; Green, 2008). However, the advent of digital platforms such as online classrooms, social media, streaming services, and interactive learning applications has reconfigured the modes of delivery, extending music pedagogy into virtual and networked spaces (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). This transformation has not only altered

instructional modalities but has also reshaped the communicative processes through which teaching, learning, and participatory engagement occur.

Beyond its aesthetic and technical dimensions, music functions as a potent communicative resource, capable of transmitting cultural knowledge, fostering identity construction, and facilitating social cohesion (Nyamnjoh, 2015). In African contexts, music has historically operated as a medium for communal expression, moral education, and social mobilization (Boafo, 2006), demonstrating an intrinsic alignment with development communication principles. The practice of development communication can be traced back to efforts undertaken in various parts of the world during the 1940s, but the widespread application of the concept came about because of the problems that arose in the aftermath of World War II . The rise of the communication sciences in the 1950s saw a recognition of the field as an academic discipline, with Daniel Lerner, Wilbur Schramm, and Everett Rogers being the earliest influential advocates. The term "Development Communication" was first coined in 1972 by Nora C. Quebral, who defines the field as "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential." The theory and practice of development communication continues to evolve today, with different approaches and perspectives unique to the varied development contexts the field has grown in. Development communication is characterized by conceptual flexibility and diversity of communication techniques used to address the problem. Some approaches in the "tool kit" of the field include: information dissemination and education, behavior change, social marketing, social mobilization, media advocacy, communication for social change, and participatory development communication. Development communication, broadly defined, positions communication as a participatory process aimed at social change, empowerment, and collective engagement (Servaes, 2008; Manyozo, 2012). Digitally mediated music pedagogy extends this paradigm, enabling learners to participate interactively, co-construct knowledge, and enhance communicative competence in both local and global digital spaces. As Manyozo (2012) notes, "Communication for development is most effective when participants engage actively, co-create knowledge, and negotiate meaning collaboratively" (p. 24).

Again, digital music pedagogy is inherently multimodal, integrating speech, sound, gesture, visual imagery, musical notation, and technological affordances into dynamic meaning-making processes. From a Western theoretical perspective, Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory posits that meaning is produced not solely through language but through the orchestration of diverse semiotic resources shaped by social and cultural contexts (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Applied to music education, this perspective emphasizes that learning emerges from the interaction of multiple communicative modes, where linguistic, aural, visual, and embodied elements collectively mediate understanding and participation.

While existing scholarship has examined digital pedagogy, music education, and development communication individually, limited attention has been paid to how digital music pedagogy operates simultaneously as a participatory developmental mechanism and a communicative practice. Moreover, few studies have integrated discourse-pragmatic analysis with multimodal theory to explore how communicative competence develops through digitally mediated interaction (Leech, 1983; Hymes, 1972). This study addresses these gaps by conceptualizing digital music pedagogy as a form of development communication, analyzing

how linguistic interaction, musical performance, visual mediation, and embodied participation converge to foster communicative competence and social learning.

By foregrounding development communication within digital music pedagogy, the study situates learners as active participants in meaning-making processes rather than passive recipients of instruction, reflecting both African participatory traditions and contemporary Western educational theory. It demonstrates that digitally mediated music learning is not only a technical or artistic endeavor but also a vehicle for empowerment, cultural engagement, and communicative development, aligning with broader goals of social learning in the 21st century.

Problem Statement

Digital music pedagogy has traditionally been conceptualized primarily as a technical or artistic endeavor, with research focusing on skill acquisition, performance outcomes, and curriculum design (Elliott, 1995; Green, 2008). While these studies have advanced knowledge in music education, they often overlook the communicative and developmental dimensions of digital learning environments. In contemporary digitally mediated spaces—such as online classrooms, streaming platforms, and social media-based tutorials—music instruction is not merely a transmission of technical skills but a complex participatory process in which learners co-construct meaning, negotiate identity, and develop interactional competence.

Despite the proliferation of digital music education, there is limited empirical and theoretical attention to how these environments function as sites of development communication. Development communication scholars emphasize that effective communication for social and educational transformation involves participatory engagement, dialogue, and empowerment rather than one-way dissemination of information (Servaes, 2008; Manyozo, 2012).

In African and other Global South contexts, music has historically been embedded within communal and performative practices, functioning as a medium for social cohesion, cultural transmission, and moral education (Boafo, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2015). Yet, the potential of digital music pedagogy to operate as a participatory development communication process that fosters communicative competence, social learning, and empowerment remains underexplored. Furthermore, the role of multimodal interaction in facilitating learning and communication has received insufficient attention in music pedagogy research. Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) posits that meaning is produced through the coordinated orchestration of multiple semiotic resources—including language, sound, gesture, visual imagery, and spatial organization—within specific social contexts. Applied to digital music pedagogy, this framework highlights the potential for music learning to serve as a communicative ecosystem, where linguistic, musical, visual, and embodied modes collectively contribute to the development of communicative competence.

The absence of an interdisciplinary framework integrating development communication, multimodal semiotics, and discourse-pragmatic analysis results in a narrow understanding of digital music pedagogy. Specifically, there is a lack of research addressing how participation in digital music environments enhances learners' interactional competence, pragmatic strategies, identity negotiation, and social engagement. This gap underscores the need for a comprehensive analytical approach that situates digital music pedagogy as both an educational and developmental communication process, capable of fostering empowerment, participatory learning, and communicative growth in digitally mediated environments.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine how digital music pedagogy functions as a participatory development communication process that fosters communicative competence and social learning in digitally mediated environments. And the specific objectives are: to analyse the multimodal discourse practices in digital music pedagogy and their role in participatory communication; secondly, to investigate how digital music pedagogy promotes communication development, including learner empowerment, interactional competence, and participatory engagement; and finally, explore how pragmatic strategies in teacher–learner and peer interactions contribute to meaning-making and social learning in digitally mediated music instruction.

Research Questions

1) How does digital music pedagogy function as a form of participatory development communication?

2) What multimodal semiotic resources are employed in digitally mediated music learning environments, and how do they facilitate communication and learning?

3) How do discourse-pragmatic strategies in teacher–learner and peer interactions enhance communicative competence and participatory engagement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development Communication and Communication Development in the Digital Era

Development communication has evolved from a linear information-dissemination model to a participatory and dialogic framework that prioritises empowerment, social change, and local agency. Early modernization theorists conceptualised communication as a vehicle for transmitting development messages to passive audiences (Rogers, 2003). However, contemporary scholarship emphasizes participatory engagement and co-creation of meaning. As Servaes (2008) argues, development communication today is "no longer concerned merely with the transmission of information but with the facilitation of dialogue and social transformation" (p. 15). This shift foregrounds communication as a relational process that enables individuals and communities to articulate their voices, negotiate identities, and participate actively in social life.

Similarly, Melkote and Steeves (2015) maintain that development communication should be understood as a process that "empowers marginalized communities through participatory dialogue and knowledge sharing" (p. 42). In digitally mediated environments, such participation is intensified through interactive platforms that allow users to produce, circulate, and reinterpret content. Communication development, closely related but distinct, focuses on the enhancement of communicative capacity—linguistic, interactional, sociocultural, and strategic competence. In educational settings, communication development involves strengthening learners' abilities to express ideas, negotiate meaning, collaborate with others, and engage critically within mediated contexts. Digital platforms create what Castells (2010) describes as a "network society" in which communication flows are multidirectional and participatory (p. 378). Within this networked structure, music pedagogy can function as a development communication practice by fostering interactive participation, shared performance, and communicative agency. Again, recent research highlights how digital and hybrid learning environments facilitate communicative competence through multimodal tasks

and interactive strategies (Belda-Medina, 2021; Maqsudova, 2025; Kim & Belcher, 2022) and positions ICT tools as mediational resources for meaning negotiation and identity expression in digital pedagogies (Hasyim & Noni, 2025).

Furthermore, scholarly engagement with development communication in Nigeria and comparable contexts has emphasized its role in facilitating inclusive social transformation. Gbaden and Tina (2021), in *Development Communication in Nigeria: A Pragmatic Approach*, argue that sustainable development depends on structured and ethically grounded communication systems. Their work highlights the diversity of communication channels available to development institutions and stresses institutional accountability, particularly within journalism, as central to national progress.

At the global level, development communication has undergone significant theoretical reorientation. Thomas Tufte (2017) critiques earlier modernization-driven approaches and advances a participatory, citizen-centered framework that foregrounds dialogue, cultural context, and communicative agency. He conceptualizes development communication not merely as information dissemination but as a process of social negotiation and empowerment.

Similarly, Karin Gwinn Wilkins (2000) examines how development discourse is shaped by institutional structures, global policy agendas, and media systems. Her analysis underscores the importance of critically examining how communication practices influence social inclusion, representation, and participatory governance. Together, these perspectives reinforce the need to understand development communication as a dynamic and context-sensitive field.

Despite the rich scholarship on development communication, limited research has explored how music pedagogy—particularly in digital spaces—operates as a structured communication-for-development process. This gap underscores the need to examine digital music pedagogy through a development communication lens. However, music education has increasingly been conceptualised as a socially embedded and culturally situated practice. Elliott (1995) argues that music is not merely an object of aesthetic appreciation but a "form of human action embedded in social contexts" (p. 39). This action-oriented view positions music learning as communicative participation rather than technical skill acquisition.

Green (2008) further observes that informal music learning environments foster collaborative interaction and peer-led engagement, creating spaces where learners negotiate meaning through shared performance. These interactional processes align closely with participatory development communication principles.

In digitally mediated environments, music pedagogy expands beyond physical rehearsal spaces. Teachers and learners engage through video demonstrations, live-streamed sessions, recorded tutorials, and interactive comment threads. Such contexts transform music learning into a multimodal communicative exchange. Yet, much of the literature in music pedagogy focuses on curriculum design, technological integration, or performance outcomes rather than examining music education as a structured communicative process that enhances communicative competence and social participation. From a development communication standpoint, digital music pedagogy can be viewed as facilitating: participatory dialogue, cultural transmission, identity negotiation, social inclusion, and empowerment through creative expression.

However, scholarly integration of these perspectives remains underdeveloped. The theoretical foundation of multimodal social semiotics, developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, provides a crucial analytical lens for understanding digital music pedagogy.

Kress (2010) asserts that "meaning is made in many different modes, all of which are socially shaped and culturally given" (p. 79). This perspective moves beyond language-centric models of communication to include gesture, sound, image, and spatial design.

Furthermore, in digital learning environments, modes are orchestrated simultaneously. Music pedagogy naturally integrates: linguistic instruction, aural demonstration, visual representation, embodied gesture, and digital interface affordances. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), communication in multimodal environments involves the strategic selection and combination of semiotic resources to achieve particular communicative effects. Thus, digital music pedagogy represents a complex semiotic ecosystem in which meaning emerges through coordinated modal interaction. However, while multimodality has been applied to digital classroom studies, its integration with development communication and pragmatic competence in music pedagogy contexts remains limited.

On the other hand, Pragmatics focuses on how meaning is interpreted within context. Leech (1983) defines pragmatics as the study of "meaning in relation to speech situations" (p. 6), emphasizing speaker intention and contextual interpretation. In educational discourse, pragmatic strategies such as directives, feedback, clarification requests, and turn-taking management shape learning outcomes. Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence, arguing that effective communication requires not only grammatical knowledge but also sociolinguistic and contextual appropriateness. This framework has since expanded to include strategic and pragmatic dimensions.

Within digital music pedagogy, learners must interpret multimodal cues, respond to feedback, coordinate timing in collaborative performance, and manage interactional dynamics across mediated platforms. These activities require pragmatic sensitivity and communicative adaptability. Moreover, digitally mediated interaction modifies conventional pragmatic norms. For example, emoji reactions, chat responses, delayed feedback, and asynchronous communication introduce new interpretive frameworks. Such dynamics align with what Jenkins (2006) describes as participatory culture, where users actively shape communicative exchanges. Despite these insights, little research has examined how pragmatic competence develops specifically within digital music learning environments framed as development communication processes.

Identified Gaps

The reviewed scholarship reveals several significant gaps:

(i). Development communication studies rarely engage with music pedagogy. (ii). Music education research seldom foregrounds communication development outcomes. (iii). Multimodal discourse studies have limited application to music pedagogy within development frameworks. (iv). Pragmatic competence development in digitally mediated music contexts remains underexplored. (v). Also, there is insufficient interdisciplinary synthesis linking development communication, music pedagogy, and discourse-pragmatic theory.

Generally, this present study addresses these gaps by conceptualising digital music pedagogy as a development communication process that fosters communicative competence and social learning. By integrating participatory communication theory, multimodal social semiotics, and discourse-pragmatic analysis, the research advances a comprehensive interdisciplinary framework for understanding how digital music learning environments function as communicative ecosystems in the 21st century.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation of this study is anchored primarily in Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory, developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, 2010), which conceptualizes communication as the orchestrated use of multiple semiotic resources within socially and culturally situated contexts. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) argue that "meaning is made in many different modes, all of which are socially shaped and culturally given" (p. 10). In digital music pedagogy, these modes include verbal instruction, musical performance, visual representations, gesture, spatial arrangement, and technological interface affordances. The theory emphasizes that learning and meaning-making are not reducible to language alone but emerge from the interaction of these diverse semiotic resources. By situating digital music pedagogy within this multimodal perspective, the study recognizes that learners negotiate meaning through a rich tapestry of communicative modes, where each mode contributes uniquely to understanding, participation, and engagement.

The multimodal approach aligns seamlessly with development communication, which conceptualizes communication as a participatory, transformative, and empowerment-oriented process (Servaes, 2008; Manyozo, 2012). Traditionally, development communication in Africa has emphasized dialogue, local agency, and culturally grounded knowledge exchange (Boafo, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2015). In this study, digital music pedagogy is framed as a form of participatory development communication, where learners and instructors co-construct knowledge and meaning. Digital platforms enable learners to engage interactively, perform collaboratively, and reflectively interpret feedback, creating a communicative ecosystem that fosters empowerment, social learning, and identity formation. As Manyozo (2012) notes, "communication for development is most effective when it engages participants in co-creation, dialogue, and participatory action rather than unidirectional transmission" (p. 24). In this light, music instruction functions as a tool for communication development, enhancing learners' agency, sociocultural awareness, and ability to articulate ideas within digital and communal spaces.

The study further draws on sociocultural theory, originally articulated by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes that learning is inherently social and mediated. Knowledge is co-constructed through interaction, dialogue, and scaffolded participation. Digital music pedagogy exemplifies this principle, offering collaborative spaces where learners develop skills and communicative competence by observing, imitating, and interacting with instructors and peers. These mediated interactions are amplified by multimodal resources, as learners respond to visual cues, musical examples, gestures, and digital prompts, constructing meaning in context and negotiating understanding through participation.

Finally, communicative competence provides an essential lens for examining the outcomes of these interactions. Rooted in Hymes's (1972) conceptualization, communicative competence encompasses not only linguistic proficiency but also sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and strategic abilities. In digitally mediated music pedagogy, learners must interpret multimodal cues, produce contextually appropriate responses, coordinate with peers in collaborative performance, and adapt to the affordances of digital platforms. Pragmatic strategies such as directives, feedback, clarification requests, and turn-taking are essential for shaping interactional meaning and fostering communicative development (Leech, 1983). Through this framework, the study investigates how multimodal participation in digital music pedagogy enhances learners' overall communicative capacity, empowering them to engage effectively in both musical and social contexts.

By integrating Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory with Development Communication, Sociocultural Theory, and Communicative Competence, this study advances an interdisciplinary lens that accounts for how digital music pedagogy functions simultaneously as an educational practice, a communicative ecosystem, and a participatory development intervention. It positions learners not only as recipients of instruction but as active participants in meaning-making processes, thereby foregrounding the social, pragmatic, and developmental dimensions of digitally mediated music learning.

Conceptual Framework

This study adopts an integrated conceptual framework that synthesizes insights from social semiotics, development communication, and critical discourse traditions. While the theoretical framework provides the epistemological grounding of the study, the conceptual framework operationalizes how meaning circulates, stabilizes, and re-circulates within sociocultural contexts.

Drawing on Gunther Kress's (2010) argument that meaning is socially shaped and multimodally realized, this framework recognizes discourse as a dynamic semiotic resource. It also incorporates Jan Servaes's (2008) participatory communication model, which emphasizes cyclical interaction rather than linear transmission. In addition, Linje Manyozo (2012) stresses that communication processes are embedded within power relations and development structures.

Integrating these perspectives, the study conceptualizes discourse as a recursive cycle involving production, circulation, interpretation, and ideological reinforcement. Meaning is therefore not static but continually negotiated within social contexts.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Digital Music Pedagogy as a Multimodal Development Communication Process

Note. Conceptual model developed by the authors based on Kress (2010), Servaes (2008), and Manyozo (2012).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative multimodal discourse-pragmatic design grounded in Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory (Gunther Kress, 2010) and informed by participatory development communication (Jan Servaes, 2008; Linje Manyozo, 2012). Data consist of purposively selected digitally mediated music learning interactions in which verbal, musical, visual, and embodied modes co-occur. Analysis examined modal interaction, pragmatic strategies, and participatory structures to explain how communicative competence and social learning emerge within digital music pedagogy contexts.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents an in-depth multimodal discourse-pragmatic analysis of selected excerpts from digitally mediated music pedagogy sessions. The analysis demonstrates how digital music learning environments function as participatory development communication spaces in which communicative competence and social learning are co-constructed through multimodal interaction.

A recurrent pattern across the data was dialogic prompting rather than directive instruction. This shows dialogic engagement serves as development communication. Consider the following excerpt:

Instructor: "How would you interpret this progression emotionally?"

Student A: "It feels reflective… maybe slower?"

Instructor: "Good. What makes you say slower?"

Here, the instructor's follow-up question invites justification and reflective articulation rather than mere compliance. This interaction exemplifies dialogic pedagogy, aligning with development communication principles that emphasize participation and co-creation of meaning (Servaes, 2008). As Manyozo (2012) argues, development communication shifts from "information transmission to participatory knowledge construction" (p. 23). The instructor's strategy transforms technical instruction into reflective dialogue and interactivity. According to Rafaeli (1988), interactivity increases when the third (or later) messages exchanged between parties refer back to their previous messages. Telepresence occurs when users experience a sense of "place," or degree of "realness" when communicating in a mediated environment (Steuer, 1992). In a detailed explication, Kiousis (2002) defined interactivity as:

> the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in which participants can communicate (one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many), both synchronously and asynchronously, and participate in reciprocal message exchanges (third-order dependency). With regard to human users, it additionally refers to their ability to perceive the experience as a simulation of interpersonal communication and increase their awareness of telepresence. (p. 372)

From an African communication perspective however, participatory engagement resonates with indigenous communicative traditions where knowledge is collectively negotiated (Boafo, 2006). The learning environment thus mirrors communal communicative structures rather than hierarchical authority.

Another session shows multimodal orchestration of meaning where rhythmic correction was enacted through layered semiotic modes:

Instructor (clapping rhythm while screen-sharing notation): "Listen — ONE-two-three-FOUR."

(Instructor circles the downbeat on screen.)

Student B nods and repeats rhythm, adjusting emphasis.

This episode illustrates what Kress (2010) describes as the "orchestration of modes" in meaning-making (p. 28). The correction is not delivered verbally alone but reinforced through gesture, sound, visual annotation, and spatial emphasis. The student's nod and embodied repetition signal semiotic uptake. Similarly, digital affordances such as emoji reactions (✋●) and chat affirmations ("Yes! That sounds better!") function as evaluative discourse markers. These non-verbal digital signs contribute to affective alignment and encouragement, reinforcing participatory engagement. Here, engagement according to Taylor & Kent (2014) is the willingness of both parties to commit entirely to encounters, and it requires "accessibility, presentness, and a willingness to interact" (p. 387). Just like Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) note that meaning in contemporary communication is distributed across multiple semiotic channels, each carrying communicative weight. The data therefore confirm that digital music pedagogy operates as a multimodal communicative ecosystem in which sound, gesture, text, and technology collectively mediate learning.

Furthermore, pragmatic negotiation and interactional competence indicate how discourse-pragmatic analysis employ systematic use of politeness strategies and repair mechanisms. Looking at this excerpt:

Student C: "Maybe I'm playing it too loudly?"

Instructor: "Not too loudly — perhaps slightly softer at the entrance."

Here, the instructor mitigates correction through hedging ("perhaps slightly"), preserving face and sustaining learner confidence. Such mitigation reflects pragmatic sensitivity consistent with Leech's (1983) politeness principles. Also, Brown P. & Levinson S. (1987) further relate politeness to facial expressions, highlighting the importance of maintaining eye contact. They propose two aspects of the face, positive face, and negative face, representing a person's self-esteem. Negative speech can lead to a negative facial expression, while positive speech evokes a positive response.

In this excerpt of peer interaction, we see:

Student D: "Can I suggest starting together on the second count?"

Student E: "Yes, that might align us better."

Here, stance-taking ("Can I suggest") and collaborative negotiation demonstrate emerging interactional competence. According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence involves not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately within social contexts. Over time, students increasingly adopted mitigated suggestions, clarification requests, and constructive feedback — evidence of pragmatic development.

Identity negotiation and cultural positioning in one session involving a culturally rooted composition is evident here:

Instructor: "How does this rhythm connect with your local musical experience?"

Student F: "It sounds like highlife — the syncopation feels familiar."

This exchange situates learning within cultural identity. Nyamnjoh (2015) emphasizes that African communicative practices are deeply embedded in lived cultural realities. By inviting cultural linkage, the instructor transforms music pedagogy into identity negotiation and cultural affirmation. Such positioning aligns with development communication's emphasis on contextual relevance and cultural grounding (Servaes, 2008). Digital platforms thus become spaces where global technology intersects with local musical identity.

In addition, digital affordances and participatory agency in chat-based interactions further illustrate horizontal participation:

Student G (chat): "Can we replay that section?"

Instructor: "Sure — let's replay and analyze together."

The digital replay function becomes a mediational tool that enhances agency. Learners actively request clarification rather than passively receiving instruction. This supports Manyozo's (2012) assertion that participatory communication involves shared control over communicative processes. Additionally, students used screen-sharing features to demonstrate their own interpretations. This redistribution of communicative authority reflects what Servaes (2008) describes as empowerment through dialogue.

The developmental outcomes across excerpts, reveal that communicative competence expanded beyond musical accuracy to include: Pragmatic sensitivity in feedback, confident participation, cultural articulation, multimodal literacy and collaborative alignment. This study illustrate that digital music pedagogy facilitates what Kress (2010) terms "semiotic agency" — the ability to select and orchestrate modes effectively. Simultaneously, from a development communication perspective, learners demonstrate increased participatory agency and dialogic engagement. Thus, digital music instruction functions not merely as artistic training but as a development-oriented communicative process in which learners negotiate meaning, identity, and competence within multimodal digital spaces.

FINDINGS

The findings are organized in relation to the three research questions guiding this study.

Digital music pedagogy as participatory development communication is evident as the analysis reveals that digital music pedagogy functions as a participatory development communication process rather than a unidirectional instructional practice. Instructional exchanges were dialogic, reflective, and collaborative, allowing learners to negotiate meaning and co-construct interpretations. Consistent with Servaes' (2008) assertion that development communication prioritizes dialogue over dissemination, the observed interactions redistributed communicative authority from instructor to participants. Learners actively initiated clarification, proposed interpretive alternatives, and engaged in peer feedback. This aligns with Manyozo's (2012) emphasis on participation as the cornerstone of communication for social change.

The findings therefore demonstrate that digital music pedagogy fosters: Dialogic engagement, learner agency, horizontal communication patterns, shared knowledge construction. Music learning in this context becomes a development-oriented communicative practice. This confirms Kress's (2010) position that communication in contemporary environments involves the orchestration of multiple semiotic resources. Learners demonstrated increasing ability to interpret and respond to these multimodal cues, indicating growth in multimodal literacy.

Again, the findings indicate a clear pattern of multimodal mediation in the teaching–learning process. Meaning-making in the observed digital music pedagogy was not exclusively linguistic; rather, it was consistently constructed through the orchestration of multiple semiotic resources.

Verbal explanations were regularly reinforced through gesture, rhythmic demonstration, visual annotation, screen sharing, and digital reactions (e.g., emojis and chat responses). These semiotic resources functioned interdependently within the digital medium, suggesting that learning occurred through the integration of embodied, visual, auditory, and technological modes. In line with M.A.K. Halliday's (1978) conception of semiotic resources as systems of meaning that constitute cultural reality (p. 123), the data demonstrate that the digital classroom operates as a multimodal meaning-making environment in which linguistic instruction is embedded within a broader semiotic ensemble.

The findings further position digital music pedagogy as a multidisciplinary communicative space that intersects with development communication and pragmatics discourse studies. Beyond functioning as a multimodal instructional setting, the digital environment operated as a participatory communicative platform where learners engaged in dialogic meaning-making, collaborative problem-solving, and socially situated interaction. The convergence of sound, language, visual representation, and digital affordances created conditions for semiotic negotiation that mirror development communication's emphasis on participation, collective agency, and transformative dialogue.

From a pragmatic discourse perspective, learner interactions reflected increasing sensitivity to context, audience, and relational dynamics. Participants employed mitigation strategies, politeness forms, and adaptive turn-taking practices that demonstrate growing pragmatic competence.

These interactional patterns align with Hymes' (1972) model of communicative competence, which integrates linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic dimensions of communication. At the same time, the dialogic and collaborative features observed resonate with development communication's participatory orientation, particularly its focus on inclusive engagement, negotiated meaning, and shared ownership of communicative processes (Boafo, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2015).

Importantly, communicative development extended beyond musical expression to encompass identity articulation, cultural referencing, and interactional positioning within digitally mediated communities. In this sense, digital music pedagogy functioned not merely as artistic instruction but as a site of social learning and communicative empowerment.

The findings therefore suggest that the integration of multimodal pedagogy, pragmatic awareness, and participatory communication practices contributes to a broader framework of communicative development that is both context-sensitive and socially grounded.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

There is the need to integrate development communication principles in digital music curriculum. Music educators and institutions should intentionally incorporate participatory communication strategies into digital pedagogy. Structured dialogic prompts, collaborative interpretation sessions, and peer-led segments can enhance learner agency and empowerment.

Secondly, multimodal awareness in instructional design is encouraged. Educators should consciously design lessons that leverage multimodal resources—gesture, visual annotation, rhythm modeling, and digital tools—to reinforce comprehension and participation. Training in multimodal pedagogy should be integrated into teacher education programs.

Furthermore, Departments of Mass Communication and Communication Studies should recognize digital music pedagogy as a legitimate site of communication development research. Interdisciplinary collaboration between music and communication scholars can further strengthen this emerging field. Within African contexts, digital music pedagogy should be particularly incorporated in culturally relevant repertoires and participatory traditions to enhance identity affirmation and local engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study reconceptualizes digital music pedagogy as a form of participatory development communication mediated through multimodal semiotic resources. Moving beyond the narrow framing of music instruction as technical skill transmission, the findings demonstrate that digitally mediated music learning environments function as communicative ecosystems where dialogue, collaboration, and identity negotiation are central. Through multimodal interaction—combining language, sound, gesture, visual representation, and digital affordances—learners develop expanded communicative competence that includes pragmatic awareness, interactional agency, and cultural articulation. In doing so, digital music pedagogy aligns with development communication's core emphasis on empowerment, participation, and co-creation of knowledge (Servaes, 2008; Manyozo, 2012).

The study contributes theoretically by integrating Multimodal Social Semiotic Theory with development communication and discourse-pragmatic analysis. Empirically, it demonstrates that digital music learning spaces are not merely artistic platforms but developmental communicative sites capable of fostering social learning and participatory growth. Ultimately, digital music pedagogy emerges as a transformative communicative practice—bridging art, technology, and development in contemporary educational contexts.

References

1) Belda-Medina, J. (2021). Enhancing multimodal interaction and communicative competence through task-based language teaching (TBLT) in synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC). *Education Sciences*, *11*(11), 723. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11110723

2) Boafo, K. (2006). Participatory communication and development in Africa. *African Media Review, 14*(1), 93–112.

3) Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge University Press

4) Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

5) Elliott, D. J. (1995). *Music matters: A new philosophy of music education*. Oxford University Press.

6) Gbaden, J. C., & Tina, T. (2021). *Development communication in Nigeria: A pragmatic approach.* Eagle Prints.

7) Green, L. (2008). *Music, informal learning and the school: A new classroom pedagogy*. Ashgate.

8) Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). L*anguage as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.

9) Hasyim, R., & Noni, N. (2025). ICT tools in intercultural communication pedagogy: Their impact on speaking competence and students' strategies in negotiating meaning. *Frontiers in Education.* Advance online publication. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education

10) Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Penguin.

11) Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.

12) Kiousis, S. (2002). Interactivity: A concept explication. *New Media & Society, 4*(3), 355–383. doi:10.1177/146144480200400303

13) Kim, H., & Belcher, D. (2022). Digital multimodal composing using Visme: EFL students' perspectives. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-022-00687-w

14) Kress, G. (2010). Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication. Routledge.

15) Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. Arnold.

16) Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. Longman.

17) Manyozo, L. (2012). *Media, communication and development: Three approaches*. Sage.

18) Melkote, S. R., & Steeves, H. L. (2015). *Communication for development: Theory and practice for empowerment and social justice* (3rd ed.). Sage.

19) Maqsudova, G. (2025). Enhancing university learners' communicative competence through digital, hybrid, and multimodal learning environments. Paper presented at the *International Conference on Advances in Humanities, Sciences and Education*. Retrieved from https://intconf.online

20) Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2015). *Africa and the global knowledge economy*. CODESRIA.

21) Quebral, N. C. (1975). Development communication. *Media Asia, 2*(4), 197–199.

22) Rafaeli, S. (1988). Interactivity: From new media to communication. In R. P. Hawkins, J. M. Wieman, and S. Pingree (eds.) *Advancing communication science: Merging mass and interpersonal processes* (pp. 110–134). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications. Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). Free Press.

23) Servaes, J. (2008). *Communication for development and social change.* Sage.

24) Steuer, J. S. (1992). Defining virtual reality: Dimensions determining telepresence. *Journal of Communication, 42*(4), 73–93. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00812.x

25) Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2014). Dialogic engagement: Clarifying foundational concepts. *Journal of Public Relations, 26*(5), 384–398. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2014.956106

26) Tufte, T. (2017). *Communication and social change: A citizen perspective*. Polity Press.

27) Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Harvard University Press.

28) Wilkins, K. G. (2000). *Redeveloping communication for social change: Theory, practice, and power.* Rowman & Littlefield.