

# The Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The importance and impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on English language learning in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized as it has been acknowledged globally that the integration of ICT in language learning has become indispensable in modern day learning environment. This is because of the major role it plays in the advancement and development of the frontiers of knowledge in language learning. This is more so when the world is fast becoming a global village where the use of modern technological gadgets to improve language learning has become imperative. This paper examines the importance and use of ICT in language learning and highlights some of the prospects from the plethora of using ICT for optimal performance. Some of the problems which include no internet facilities, erratic power supply, overcrowded classrooms, lack of computer knowledge and so on facing the use of ICT in language learning in a developing country like Nigeria are also discussed. Teaching of computer courses, provision of internet facilities in schools, regular supply of electricity are some of the recommendations made to improve language learning through ICT.

**Keywords:** Language, multimedia, gadgets, foreign language teaching (FLT), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Nigeria.

## 1.0 Introduction

Information and Communication Technology is an umbrella that includes the utilization of communication devices or applications, such as radio-sets, televisions, cellular phones, computer, hardware and software satellite system and so on. Broadly speaking, technology involves the modification of the natural world to suit specific purpose. From the Greek word, technology means an art of artifice or crafting but more generally, it refers to the diverse collection of the processing and knowledge that people use to extend human ability and to satisfy human needs and want. Information and Communication Technology often refers to a particular context as "I.C.T" in education health care of libraries. Many countries around the world have established organizations for the promotion of I.C.Ts because it is feared that unless technology advance in developed nations, it will only served to exacerbated the already existing economic gaps between technologies. This promotes I.C.Ts as a means of bridging the digital divide. Availability and the use of I.C.Ts as determination of effective teaching of English in Nigeria secondary schools cannot be over emphasized as it strengthens the nation's education opportunities in qualified staff books and equipment. I.C.T also helps in achieving universal school of education with quality for all children. It is being used for both attracting students to school and thereby improving environment rate as well as for providing computer aids education and computer proficiency skills to student. This will enable them to make use of opportunities presented by I.C.Ts for further learning and teaching of English in Nigeria Schools. Improved standard of education is fundamental to the creation of human capital in any country. In an effort to eradicate poverty and ensure a sustainable socio-economic development in Africa, the newly formed New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) recognized that a key issue is the development of human resources in the region. The crises facing human resources development of Africa is clearly manifested in educational sector of Nigeria in form of limited access and poor quality. As the World Bank (2005) notes the task confronting education policy makers in Africa are to transform education institution and current schooling practices into a global and technology driven world. Thus, the main focus of the education policy process in Africa is to address the twin challenge of increasing access to and improving quality and relevance of education for all young people in the region. In the long run, modern communication technologies are expected to widely develop for broad based technology enhanced education will be implemented through a collaborative partnership system in Africa countries. The pilot phrase of this e-learning initiative is currently being implemented in selected Africa countries. The NEPAD e-schools project is under the auspices of NEPADs e-African commission, the NEPADs I.C.T program implementing related projects. The school initiatives are on a multi-collaborative partnership strategy between the NEPAD major I.C.T companies departments of education in different participating African countries. The objectives of this study is to examine the prospects of teaching English through information technology in Nigeria. Due to high cost and shrinking education in the regions, technology intervention has become one of the most feasible choices for education transformation. It is on the basis of the foregoing views that this research work will investigate the effective use of I.C.Ts for the promotion of learning of English in Nigeria.

The English language is generally acknowledged as a global language, in view of its numerous functions and preference over several other languages around the globe. Going by the history of English

Language, it is important to note that it started with the coming of the three Germanic tribes namely: the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes, who invaded Britain during the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD and crossed the North Sea from what is now modern day Denmark and northern Germany. Before the invasion of Britain by the three Germanic tribes, the language spoken by the inhabitants of Britain was a Celtic language. Shortly after the invasion however, the language that was confined to Britain around the 5<sup>th</sup> century has gone beyond the boundaries of Britain and is still spreading like wild fire.

Apart from being a language of global unification, English is also seen as a veritable tool for learning, business and interactional purposes, among other functions. In view of its relevance, English is not only the mother tongue in Britain but also the mother tongue of several other countries like Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand, to mention just a few. It is also used as a second and a foreign language (EFL) in many countries like Nigeria, Ghana and many other developing countries.

Based on the foregoing, it has become imperative for English Language teachers and learners to realize the fundamental role of information and communication technology as a catalyst in the advancement of the frontiers of knowledge in language acquisition which is a prerequisite to the viability of the global economic development.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Teaching and Learning English Language in the Traditional Classroom Setting**

Unlike in the past when teaching of English was limited to all that the teacher had to say to the learners, a situation which made learners inactive in the teaching-learning situation. Be that as it may and without mincing words, the time has come for teachers and learners of English to realize the fundamental role of information and communication technology not only in the area of language teaching and learning but also in the global economy where the proficient use of English is fast assuming the indispensable engine of growth and development. It has therefore become expedient to note that the effective teaching and learning of English has gone beyond the stereotypical to regimented/tradition of mere classroom teaching because of the emergence of various gadgets in information and communication technology.

According to Brown (1980) second language education has changed considerably, pointing out the importance of the use of an “electric enlightened approach” to theory building but cautions that classroom contact is still very necessary for second language learners to give real-world validity to their theory building. Brown's theoretical comments about the classroom vignettes contribute to the attainment of this goal as major methodological approaches and current issues in language teaching are depicted in these vignettes, first with the direct method, grammar translation and the Audio-Lingual method.

Similarly, Randall (2006) has admitted that technology has become a major component; a must-have in many homes around the world, with its concomitant influence permeating all facets of human lives, including education. This is a welcome development by many as it shows the direction in which language instruction will be driven by new advancements in technology.

### **2.2 ICT in Communicative/Learning modes**

In any teaching-learning situation, learners can respond at ease for communicative mode of teaching. According to Madhavi (2010), communicative method for learning languages combines extensively, high-quality content with flexible and interactive multimedia technology. This comprehensive language learning method can act as a total solution for self-teaching, as well as teaching support to formal courses. Through a wide range of activities, a variety of skills could be developed in a learner. A learner needs to communicate in oral and written comprehension, as well as oral and written expression.

In order to achieve those stated objectives, Madhavi (2010) has identified three possible learning modes as:

- The Guided Mode: this offers a step-by-step course. When organized into learning paths, this mode focuses on the acquisition of functional language patterns across a broad spectrum of themes. In this mode, a learner at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level in Nigeria or lower intermediate level in some other countries can learn pronunciation, grammar, functions of words and vocabulary by applying the rules.
- The Free-to-roam: this gives a learner the option of learning by topic or by linguistic skill. This mode is particularly useful for learners who are at the senior secondary school (SSS) in Nigeria or intermediate level of learning and also for teachers who want to familiarize themselves with the content available to them.
- The dynamic mode: here, the advanced learners can immediately be immersed in an authentic learning context through the various dialogues and videos which illustrate every day and professional life and line with current pedagogical trends, familiarize learners with the voicing of the language using recordings made by native speakers.

Closely related to the communicative/learning modes is the use of language laboratory which can be used to enhance language teaching and learning processes through teacher's console with language learning software. This serves as a platform for learning, practicing and producing language of teaching. The functional

use of language laboratory according to Schrum (2000) is attributed to the following objectives:

- To maintain good linguistic competence through accuracy in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.
- To develop pragmatic competence, to understand the grammar form, function and state of normality.
- To enrich the discourse competence, to prepare the learner to be able to produce contextualized written text and speech.
- To acquire strategic competence to use both spoken and written language to use in a wide range of communicating strategies.

In teaching phonetics for example, the sound of English language can be written down using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for adequate exercises. The use of minimal pair perception exercises (sheep - ship, zeal - seal, ten - then, bird - board, shout - tout, port - pot) helps learners learn the sound of English. This can also be well practiced on pronunciation exercises with the help of software or by using CDs in language laboratory.

### **2.3 Impact of ICT on Language Teaching and Learning**

Many arguments have been advanced on the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on the teaching and learning of language. While some are of the opinion that it would make students smarter and enhance the teaching and learning of language, others posited that there is no certainty about its possibilities because many educators are not yet familiar with the technology to use and how to apply it in the teaching - learning process (Morse, 1972). For instance, there has been a great deal of debates in the past few decades on the pedagogical worth of computers in the classroom. While some researchers have suggested that technology often remains antiquated, limited to the simple writing assignments and browsing the internet (Cuban, 2001), others have suggested that this has been due in part, to educators' limited knowledge of the role played by communication technology in language instruction, a situation which shows that the use of computer is only a medium in which a variety of methods, approaches and pedagogical philosophies are implemented (Garret, 1991). This implies that the use of ICT in language education has its merits and challenges.

### **2.4 Prospects of the use of ICT in Language Education**

Information and communication technology (ICT) is of immense help in virtually all areas of teaching and learning. In the field of language education, there is now so much emphasis on on-line learning, which has been seen as the great liberator by freeing both teachers and students to accomplish learning in new and exciting ways by sourcing information from the Internet (Schrum, 2000).

Other prospects of ICT in language can be summarized as expanding access to language programmes, improving the quality of teaching and learning, providing access to current/ up-to-date materials and offering teachers and learners an avalanche of materials in different modes.

Specifically, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2006) stated amongst others that

- English lessons that incorporate multimedia applications can exert powerful motivation and provide bored students with exciting new ways to learn.
- The use of ICTs enhances English Language competence as well as the quality of learners' experience.
- The effective use of ICTs removes the time and space limitations found in traditional teaching, as classroom dialogue can now extend beyond the time and space constraints.
- It allows students to learn more autonomously and thereby raises self-esteem and confidence.
- It enhances learners' interaction, verbalization and involvement in group collaborative learning.

It is pertinent to note that television with its array of foreign channels, as provided by DSTV and other cable channels can be of tremendous help in language acquisition. Information and communication technology helps the students to perform better in language learning than with regimented traditional classroom teaching. Online learning has the potentials to offer anyone with an internet connection access to a wide expanse but inexpensive education just as e-learning and computer allow schools to deliver classes to students anywhere in the world (Educause, 2010).

### **2.5 Problems/Constraints of the use of ICT in Language Education**

The view that the internet and other forms of information and communication technology are of immense benefit to the education system is incontrovertible. The internet is repository of enormous content but it also contains an equal amount of junk and obscene sites which, if not regulated and censored before students are allowed to work on it, can lead to all forms of moral decadence, especially among teenagers and youths. The teachers are not totally immune from the obscene sites.

The success or failure of a teaching - learning situation in language acquisition rests to a large extent on the teacher. However, it has been discovered that many teachers are yet to upgrade or familiarize themselves with ICT and its application in the classroom setting (Morse, 1972).

Considering the above notion, it can be inferred that the integration of ICTs in language education is still being faced by the general apathy on the part of both the learners and the teachers.

In addition, poverty and perhaps economic mismanagement can be seen as great impediments to the viability and sustainability of the use of ICTs in English Language teaching and learning process not only in Nigeria but also in some other developing countries.

Furthermore, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA 2000) has identified the following as major constraints to the use of ICTs in language education:

- Electricity, phone lines, internet facilities etc. are either unreliable or expensive.
  - Video recorders and other ICTs are locked in storage closets because only few teachers know how to operate and incorporate them into their instructional programmes.
  - ICT trained teachers often quit teaching for more lucrative jobs because teaching is not attractive especially in Nigeria.
  - Poor maintenance of the existing ICT gadgets (where provided) is a debilitating factor against the use of ICT in language education.
  - There are no language and computer laboratories in virtually all schools in Nigeria.
- Large or overcrowded classes may interfere with the objectives of the use of ICTs

## 2.6 The English Language in Nigeria

English became a language of education, prestige, trade and commerce, politics, mass media, utility, as well as science and technology due to the migration of the British and American religious, commercial and colonial masters to the Nigerian inter-land in the mid-19th century. The Education Ordinances of 1916 and 1926 made English the Language of instruction and the most important subject in Nigerian school curriculum (Bamgbose, 1982). The subsequent commission made on language in Africa, for instance the Phelps-Stroke Commission made the English Language the yardstick not only to measure the students' intelligence but equally a tool used for the award of certificates in Nigerian schools (Bamgbose 1982, Akere, 2006).

Scholars like Banjo (1971), Adesanoye (1973), Bamgbose (1982) Adegbija (1989, 1998) etc have examined the varieties in the lexical, phonological, syntactic and semantic usage of English Language in Nigeria. The blending of the socio cultural ethos and norms of Nigerian multicultural and multilingual contexts with the standard British variety of English has led to a new tongue of the language called "Nigeria English". This pluralism in the indigenized variants of English Language in Nigeria was caused by the linguistic heterogeneity of the Nigerian socio-cultural contexts. Coupled with this, the hybridization of new lexicons in the English language in Nigeria, as posited by Adegbija (1989, 1998) was caused by the powerful influence of the press. Hence, we often employ expressions like "(i) The man is backing the camera," "(ii) He is a man of timbre and caliber," "(iii) I want to divorce my second wife". (iv) "They are eating bush meat with amala" and (v) "She is an Ogbanje, abiku and Orobo girl" in Nigerian English expression. Nigerian's love for honour makes every speaker to often use politeness phenomena in addressing her of his co-participants in speech (Adegbija, 1998). This has led to the employment of honorifics like: (i) "Kabiyesi, the Oluaye, Oni of Ife has just entered this hall", (II) "Dr/High Chief "X" has just arrived now", (iii) " Engineer /Bishop "Z" came here yesterday", (iv) "The Iku Babayeye, Alaafin of Oyo will not give his speech" in Nigerian English (Adegbija, 1998). The employment of the digital and automated tools in interactive discourse in Nigeria has led to the hybridization of new vocabularies into Nigerian English usage. Expressions and lexical patterns like the following are now abound in Nigerian English usage as a result of the use of digital, automated and computerized gadgets in communication in Nigeria and the world at large: (i) I want to browse, (ii) I want to surf the net, (iii) The hardware is booting, (iv) The icons on the system are not shown clearly (v) I am engaging in internet relay chat (IRC), (viii) Those guys are interacting on virtual world, etc. The expressions shown above were retrieved through the participant's information got from those engaging in "virtual community" in a South Western in Nigerian tertiary institution. According to Oni (2009), seventy percent of the users of English Language in virtual discourse in Nigeria are students from secondary schools and tertiary Institutions. They employ the English Language through facebook, LinkedIn, 2go and other digital tools in engaging in virtual interactive discourse. Besides, these Nigerian youths often employ their cell-phones, ipads, and computers to hybridize new spellings like "tkz" for "thanks", "btw" for "between", "b/c" for "because", etc in Nigerian English usage. These new spellings, according to Alabi (2005), are causing great problems for Nigeria youths to have the proper competence in the use of a usage of the standard variety of the English Language.

## 2.7 Empirical Review

Existing studies on the employment of ICT in English Language include Egbe (2009). Fehring (2001), Aremu (2010), Aremu & Sulymon (2012), Oni & Osunbade (2009), Gruber (1998), Oni (2007), Darhower (2002), Alabi (2005), Durrant & Green (2001), etc. According to Durant and Green (2001) cited in Aremu (2011), ICT (i.e information communication technology presupposes the employment of the computer and electronic gadgets to disseminate information and elicit responses from any communicative utterances. Such technological information, according to Alabi (2005), can be accessed through the utilization of mobile cell phones, computer

and internet. ICT is a digital technology used in storing, retrieving and disseminating information in contemporary jet age. In the view of Alabi (2005) and Horstein (2008), the technological and internet literacy is germane in the contemporary democratically organized education of the 21st century. The use of ICT packages like video-conferencing, teleconferencing, etc helps in the teaching and learning of English Language. According to Adeleke (2009), ICT helps in presenting interactive instructional aids on specific subject matter, assessment of student's progress and understanding of instructional material. Series of computer-based packages which are useful in the teaching of English as a second language abound in recent times. These include: Computer-Aided Language Learning (CALL), Computer –Based Language Training (CBLT), Computer- Aided Language Assessment (CALA), etc.

The Computer Based Language Training (CBLT) can be employed in teaching a wide or vast range of subjects, including language based topics. CBLT is a software which was developed to train a wide range of students on the acquisition of skills in a target language without the tutor being present. CBLT is a digital package and an interactive multimedia which can combine text, audio, graphic video, and animation with having a meaningful interaction with students. It is a digital tool that facilitates the language teaching and language learning in Europe, America, Latin American nations (e.g. Cuba, Argentina, Erithrea, Brazil, Trinida and Tobago, Mexico, etc), Asian countries (e.g. Malaysia, Kuwait, Iraq, Israel, Iran, India etc) and in some African nations (e.g. South-Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Tanzania, and Botswana). It has been noticed by scholars (e.g. Aremu, 2011) that this novel digital tool has been introduced to the teaching and learning of English as a L2 in Nigeria.

Also, the computer aided language assessment (CALA) package is an automated package used in/for assessing student's understanding of language instructional skills. Coupled with foregoing is the employment of Computer-Aided Language Learning (CALL) through which a teacher of English as a second Language (ESL) in Nigeria can create internet-based simulations for role-playing activities in language learning. The simulations incorporating e-mails, charts and online creation and editing of documents are taught to motivate the oral and written communication among the participating group. In this method, students will be guided through scenarios relevant to the Nigerian social and cultural contexts as well as the scenarios relevant to the socio-cultural contexts and backgrounds of the native speakers of the English Language. The teachers of English Language in Nigeria always employ computer to create internet-based simulations for role-playing activities in learning English as a L2. In Pakistan, their government has created what is called Rural Kiosk machine designed in Pakistan for improving the competence of the rural areas in the use of English as a L2. This "Rural Kiosk machine" is used to send and retrieve information in English as a target Language (ELTL) and has digital multilingual interface to support rural communities speaking different languages in the use and usage of English as a second Language (Kashif, 2007). In the teaching and learning of English as a second language in Nigeria, the teachers often employ the projector, webcam and other ICT tools in teaching the students. This always makes the teaching and learning processes to be interesting and result-oriented. However, series of problems are bedeviling the use and usage of ICT packages in the teaching and learning of English Language in Nigeria. These problems, among others, include: epileptic power supply, employment of computer and ICT packages in engaging in nefarious acts and internet fraud, lack of computer and ICT facilities in schools, and also lack of personnel (Aremu, 2011). Nigerian government often fails to give proper finance to providing the digital tools in teaching English as a second language. Anything that Nigerian government does towards education is often politicized. That always makes ICT facilities provided in a very few secondary schools in some states in Nigeria to be stolen few months after they were supplied. Many of the ICT buildings in Nigerian secondary schools are often employed as "visitors sitting rooms" or "staff rooms." As a result, many of them are not well-equipped with digital gadgets. This has led to poor utilization of ICT in the English Language in Nigeria (Aremu, 2010; Egbe, 2009).

### **3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

By and large, this study has been used to examine and showcase how the employment of digital gadgets can develop a nation's technology and economy. The development of the science and technology of any nation can be easily facilitated through the use of ICT and automated gadgets. If the English Language pedagogy is facilitated through ICT, it will not only improve the communication and mutual understanding among people of diverse ethno-linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but it will also develop the nation's technology. Consequently, the development of the technical skills not only helps the production and economic self-reliance, but it will also develop the nation's economy. If government can help develop the utilization of ICT in language pedagogy, Nigeria's technology and economy will be drastically developed.

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) cannot be underestimated in language teaching and learning process because emerging technologies make it pertinent and practical to approach learning in ways that have been advocated by scientists, theorists and educational psychologists. It is imperative for modern day teachers and learners to keep abreast of the modern trend at improving teaching and learning of English Language through the use of Information and Communication Technology. Suffice it to say that

information and communication technology has revolutionized society globally, including how language instruction is taught and delivered.

The internet in particular has become a conduit where people can learn, share and collaborate in ways not possible many years before now. A great deal of success however comes from preparing students to interact and learn in this internet age. Therefore, if ICT is integrated into the teaching and learning of language, our renewed approach to the teaching and learning of English will go a long way in making ICT a more rewarding partner in the teaching-learning process.

In the light of the foregoing, it is recommended that teachers should upgrade and familiarize themselves in the use and application of ICT facilities in the acquisition of language education.

The commitment and enthusiasm to the teaching and learning of English through the effective use of ICT should be of utmost importance not only to the curriculum planners and education policy makers but also the teachers and the learners of English.

In order to facilitate the integration of ICT into language learning, the following should be put in place:

Constant/regular supply of electricity, Teaching of computer course in schools, Encouragement of Research and Development Centers on ICT, Provision of computers in schools for learners and laptops for teachers of English language, Recruitment of an adequate remuneration of competent instructors, Regular computer training and re-training for English language teachers, Provision of internet facilities in schools and Government should develop policies and programmes that enhance the development of ICT in schools and the country as a whole.

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