

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE THROUGH THE USE OF ICT: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on language learning has been acknowledged globally such that the integration of ICT in language learning has become indispensable in today's teaching-learning environment. This is because of the fundamental role it plays in the advancement 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 ICT and students in classroom, the importance of ICT in English Language learning (expanding access to and improving the quality of teaching and learning, enhancing language competence and learner's interaction and verbalization among others). Some of the challenges (no internet facilities, erratic power supply, overcrowded classrooms, etc). Provision of ICT gadgets at schools, involvements of NGOs, regular power supply and need for language laboratory are some of the recommendations made to improve language learning through the use of ICT gadgets.*

**Keywords:** ICT, English language, Gadgets, Teaching, Learning.

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

The past few decades have witnessed electronic communication technology becoming a fixture in many homes around the world. Its influence has permeated all facets of human lives, most especially, in the educational settings. In fact, the phenomenon is hailed by many as the wave of the future in which language instruction will be driven by new advances in computers, the internet, and mobile technologies (Davis, 2012). It is not a surprise therefore, that digital communication among students and between students and teachers is gradually becoming a



cliché in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Gary, 2005). People communicate through various channels such as e-mail, sms, Facebook groups, twitter, and recently the WhatsApp.

The ICT has changed the pace of teaching strategies to suit the goals of a teacher's materials and the needs of his students. On the other hand ICT has given the students many opportunities to practice English in and outside the classroom. ICT is very stimulating because of the availability of the materials whether it is computer-based, in the web or on CDs. Therefore, a student can learn at his own pace with a very patient tutor (the mache). Meanwhile, the use of online telecommunications for teaching and learning via the computer in the classroom across the world consolidates the improvement of different academic skills. The availability of images, animation, audio and video clips help much more in presenting and practicing English language (Adebiyi, 2015).

### **ICT AND STUDENTS IN CLASSROOM**

Mobile phones now have an important place in young people's lives. Mobile phones are the most popular among the technological devices available in this century. Prensky (2005) maintains that mobile phones outnumbered the personal computers. Young people, especially undergraduates, can hardly do without their phones.

Many foreign research works seem to be positive towards the use mobile phones as tools of instruction in classroom. (Bar, Tews and Robling (2005) in Fasasi, 2014) investigated classroom interaction based on the mobile phone owned by most students. The study discussed a prototype for mobile-phone based interaction. The study which was based on the assumption that both students and educators can benefit from software support in very large lectures posited that the use of mobile phone is cost effective and widely usable solution.

Reinders (2010) discusses twenty practical ways by which mobile phones can support English language learning in and outside the classroom. Believing that students are already glue and familiar with the mobile phones and that teachers who use them benefited a lot and students of tertiary institutions are addicted to it. What then are it's importance in the teaching and learning of English language.

### **The Importance of ICT in English Language 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 (Morse, 1972).

ICT has also been found very useful in classroom situations where the students feel the need to record lectures during lecture time. In a situation where by the students listen at the same time take note, there is every tendency for them to forget some aspects of the lectures. But if students play smart enough to record their lectures using this device. The method saves the students from putting down every word said by the lecturer and allows them to concentrate fully on the lectures. Such recordings may help some students who were absent from lecture room by posting the recorded materials to them.



The ICTs have changed the pace of teaching strategies to suit the goals of a teacher's materials and the need of his students (Fogg, 2010). On the other hand, ICTs have given the students opportunities to practice English language. Waite *et al.*, (2003) opined that interaction and feedback are important components of lecturer and can improve the success of learning. Therefore, both lecturers and students should strive to achieve meaningful interaction.

ICT materials present an entirely new learning environment for students, thus requiring a different skill set to successful in language teaching and learning. ICT provides opportunities to access an abundance of information using multiple information resources and viewing information from multiple perspective, thus fostering the authenticity of learning environment. For example the use of films, overhead projectors and mobile phones makes the environment more attractive to students.

ICT can enhance the quality of language teaching aid learning in several ways, by increasing learner motivation and engagement, by facilitating the acquisition of basic skills. ICT materials, especially computer, mobile phones and internet technologies, enable new ways of teaching and learning rather than simply allow teachers and students to do what they have done before in a better way. It has impacts not only on what students should learn, but it also plays a major role on how the students should learn.

### **ICT Tools for Language Classroom.**

There exists a wide range of ICT tools used in teaching and learning the English language. The nature of the technology used in any case is dependable upon the teaching/learning modes for that particular educational purpose. However, in recent times, the use of 'the internet' has become so widespread in achieving this goal.

According to Gary (2005), the internet is "a communication which computers use to talk to each other called TCP//P." This package is designed to enable computers to exchange data reliably and efficiently, though not necessarily quickly. In another definition by the Apple Dictionary Inc. (2012), the internet is, "a global computer networking providing a variety of information and communication facilities, consisting of interconnected networks using standardized communication protocols."

The internet is therefore a channel through which the World Wide Web (www) educational resources are harnessed to improve communication in English. The following tools have been useful in the language learning and communication; they are;

- Blogs (Edublogs)
- Wikis
- Podcasts

Blogs (edublogs) refer to a simple web page consisting of brief paragraphs of opinion, information, personal diary and entries of link called posts. Blogs are usually arranged chronologically with the most recent first using the style of an online journal (Faleke and Ibrahim, 2009). Blogs encourage exchange of views between a primary author and a group of comments of contributors. Linking is an important aspect of blogging because it deepens the



conversational nature of the blogosphere. The blog roll is a list of links to other blogs that are similar. Blogosphere refers to the number of people who are engaged in blogging (Fasasi, 2014).

### **Types of Blog for Language Communication and Teaching**

Three prominent blogs are often used in language communication and teaching, they are;

- The tutor blog
- The class blog
- The learner blog

The tutor blog is mainly used by the teacher to publish course or subject information, homework, assignment or results. The teacher can also write about international issues to stimulate online/in class discussion.

The respondents/students are only expected to write their comments on the post.

The class blog is a shared blog between the teacher and the students where they discuss issues in specialized areas. It is usually meant for collaborative discussion. The students are opportune to post their writing for people's reaction.

The learner blog is an individual blog which allows the owner spaces to write on topics of their interest and react promptly to what others have written.

### **Impact of Blogging in Language Teaching/Learning**

- It serves as an online file for student's written work.
- It enable student to participate fully.
- It enhances digital interaction.
- It stimulates outside class discussion and provides extra listening, reading and writing practice for students.

**Podcast:** - Is a combination of the word and broadcasting which is a name given to the publishing of audio or sound files using the internet. In order words podcasts are audio recordings which are usually on mp3 format, of talks, interviews and lectures which can be played on desktop computers or on other technological devices. It can be used as an alternative way of radio type of content information. It can be saved in other devices for class use. It can be used by a learner to facilitate personalized learning. These skills however should be properly integrated in order to achieve effective English language communication in the academic environment.

**Wiki:** - Is a webpage which is easily accessible to anyone who has internet access. It is also known as wikipedia. It serves as a collaborative tool used in the facilitation and production of a group work. It provides a wide range of information in diverse areas of inquiry. Unlike the blog, wiki allows previous versions of ideas and subject to be examined. It also performs a rollback function, which restores previous versions. Wiki maintains a high level openness which makes it easily accessible. Example of wikis include: <http://www.wiki.org/>, <http://wikihow.com>

### **ICT and the Acquisition of English Language in Nigeria**

Researchers, educators and stakeholders in the education enterprise in Nigeria have over the years bemoaned the negative influence of GMS phones on the teaching and learning process in schools, especially with respect to English language acquisition. Many have, therefore, called for its ban among students in educational institution; a call we know is very impossible at least in higher institutions where the system believes that students are adults and should be allowed a degree of freedom.

Many students who come to lectures with phones are always busy and glued to their phone chatting, writing text messages, making calls, playing games posting pictures while the lecture is going on.

This impedes learning as it implies lack of concentration. The problem of lack of concentration is even less dangerous than the effect of the use of mobile phones and the orthography of the English language. Students write unacceptable linguistic forms: improper abbreviation, wrong spellings and poor sentence constructions in their school works. The call for the ban of mobile phones among students in schools is therefore understandable given the above background.

Chiluwa (2007) was rather mild in his description of the ‘Nigerianness’ he observed in the text messages. He described his observation as ‘new linguistic style’ that shows that the language has a new form of orthography. According to Egya (2009) “Here is a great injury being inflicted on the English language with the explosion of the telecommunication in Nigeria today”. Alabi (2008) was rather very blunt as she referred to the perceived problem of the mobile phone communication as ‘method in madness’.

Faleke and Ibrahim (2011) spoke in a similar vein. They investigated the use of mobile phone through the sms device to see how the various styles of writings adopted by Nigerians have been transferred into formed writing in the essay question. Data was the selected 2006 WASSCE essays of students and these researchers observed the occurrences of mobile phones writing indicators at the morphophonemic, orthographic and expression levels which largely negatively affect the performance of students in the examinations. The study concluded that the occurrences of these features in formal essay writing may eventually retard the standard of English usage in Nigeria.

Onadeko (2011) in Fasasi (2014) examined the extent to which some Nigerian undergraduate students were able to transfer academic writings through chat rooms. The study found out that internet lingo is creeping into undergraduate’s academic writings and warned that the trend portends a serious danger for the evolution of Nigerian Standard English.

Therefore, many educational researchers and instructors in Nigeria believe that mobile phones have no place in the Nigerian educational system. More often than not, educators generally tend to view new technologies as a great distraction from the learning process. They just think that banning the students from using mobile phone will solve the problem. But since we cannot separate them from their phones because they are glue to it, the best way to solve this

problem is to consciously invite them with their phones into the classroom so that they can use it for their academic works.

### **Educational Implications of ICT Materials in Language Teaching and Learning**

The use of ICT materials in language teaching has the following educational implications: Teachers have taught through lectures and presentations interspersed with tutorials and learning activities designed to consolidate and rehearse the content. Contemporary settings are now favouring curricula that promote competency and performance. Curricula are starting to emphasize capabilities and to be concerned more with how the information will be used than with what the information is. Contemporary ICT are able to provide strong support for all these requirements. For example, the use of language laboratory and mobile phones for listening and understanding where students are actively involved to do things by themselves.

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

- English lessons that incorporate multimedia application can exert powerful motivation and provide bored student with exciting new ways to learn.
- The use of ICT enhances English language competence as well as the quality of learner's experience.
- The effective use of ICTs remove 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 raise self-esteem and confidence.

### **Constraints/problems of the use of ICT in language education**

Despite the numerous advantages of using ICT materials in education, there are some practical challenges bedeviling proper use of ICT in our schools. Some of the problems are as follows:

- Electricity, phone line, internet facilities etc. are not available or expensive.
- Video recorders and other ICTs are locked in storage closets because only few teachers knew 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 over crowded classes may interfere with the objectives of use of ICTs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Power supply in the country is epileptic and ICT operation requires constant electricity for its maximum use. Therefore, power supply should be massively improved and worked upon so as to enhance the use of ICT in secondary schools. The government should pay particular attention to the source of electric power by overhauling the energy sector in order to play its crucial and supportive role in the development of ICT materials in our schools.
- Adequate funds should be allocated and disbursed to public schools for proper financing and maintenance of ICT appliances. Government, NGO's and individuals should all join hands together by providing financial support to maintain the ICT materials in our schools.
- There is need for the government at all levels, non-governmental organization (NGO) and philanthropists to invest in the development of ICT materials in our schools by provide adequate human and material resources. When this is done, the problem of inadequacy in terms of human resources and facilities will be minimized.
- Government and English Language Associations should engage in training of teaching the language.
- New classes should be built to decongest the present ones.
- Also there is need for language laboratory.

## **CONCLUSION**

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) cannot be underestimated in language teaching and learning because the emerging technologies make it pertinent and practical to approach learning in ways that have been advocated by scientist, theorists and educational psychologists. ICT in language teaching and learning has a positive impact on both the teacher and students. ICT can affect the delivery of education and enable wider access at the same time. In addition, it will increase flexibility so that learners can access the education regardless of time and geographical barriers. It can influence the way students are taught and how they learn. It would provide the rich environment and motivation for teaching and learning process which seem to have profound impact on the process of teaching and learning through its offering new possibilities that can have impact on students' performance and achievement. I therefore conclude, that government, NGOs, parents and stakeholders to put more efforts in the implementation of ICT gadgets in our educational institutions.

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