

Information and Communication Technology as Teaching and Learning Space for Teachers of English Language in Schools

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Abstract

The pragmatic approach of technology to teaching and learning problems has brought a great relief to pedagogy. Through the use of modern technology, teaching and learning processes are easier, efficacious, real, applicable to practical situations, relevant to life, retentive, and simplified, but cannot replace the role played by teachers. This study is a descriptive research of the survey type. It is an appraisal of the teaching of English language in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. The sample used for this paper consisted of forty English language teachers randomly selected from seven secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti. A simple random sampling technique and self-structured validated questionnaire were used for the study. The purpose of this study is to examine the necessity of ICT and emphasize its importance as teaching and learning space in the contemporary digitalised day to day teaching of English language in schools. To this end, the immense merits of utilizing ICT as a supplement to teaching and learning would be enunciated. From this study, all and sundry would know the usefulness of ICT as teaching and learning space and the reason why the integration of ICT into teaching and learning is ineluctable. Through this research, English teachers would take cognizance of other effective and efficient means of teaching, to which ICT belong besides the traditional method and they would know the consequences of being computer illiterates in this highly competitive world of technology. This paper shows the results, discussions, and recommendations.

Keywords: information and communication technology (ICT), english language teaching, teaching and learning space, ICT teaching tools, pedagogical methods, social software

INTRODUCTION

ICT is one of the globally acknowledged learning and teaching space today as well as one of the key propellants of globalisation. Development in ICT has vastly transformed every sphere of life and permeated all human actions and endeavours. The fusion of technology and science result in ICT which is useful in services and applications such as in e-commerce, e-transaction, e-governance, e-health, e-learning, e-business and e-banking, etc.

Njamanze (2010) opines that technological innovations have gone hand in hand with the growth of language teaching especially English. With the aid of technological advancement, resounding improvement has been recorded in the manner in which teachers learn, communicate and discharge their duties. ICT has offered the English language teachers the opportunity to leapfrog the archaic and parochial chalk and talk method to modern ways of teaching. Korkut (2012) explains that the use of ICT in language learning not only involves pedagogical changes for teachers, but also involves environmental and pedagogical changes for learners who are traditionally used to face-to-face teaching in classrooms. The recent upsurge of some technologies in teaching and learning has salvaged learners from the quagmire of peremptory teachings; they can confirm whatever they were taught, practise repeatedly what they have learnt and determine the

pace at which they learn. ICT and new technologies can help development in learning of individual skills of learners that may seem more difficult with traditional and conventional method (Pour, 2013)

The growth of the Internet has contributed to the growth of the English language and this has occurred at a time when computers are not no longer the exclusive domains of the dedicated few, but rather available to many (Madhavaiah, et.al, 2013) It is through this language that most countries majorly spread their arts, beliefs, culture, sciences, make their findings, inventions, innovations, and expeditions. It is a language of wider communication used for several purposes and by different people. English language keeps growing as it accommodates new vocabularies, as old words phase out, new words are added. The advent of ICT has added gargantuan number of novel vocabularies to English language, thus making it a living language.

In Nigeria, English language is an official language used for day to day transactions, administration, religion, conducting businesses, education, health, etc. Despite the pivotal role of English language in social, communication, political, economy, military, technological advancement, etc., there are high numbers of non-English speakers; its acceptability in Nigeria is due to its neutrality as non-indigenous language. Most Nigerians see it as prestigious despite

this; the number of non-English users outweighs its users in Nigeria. It is in this light that English language is made mandatory in all Nigerian secondary schools. Since English language is both a compulsory subject and the language of instruction at the secondary school level in Nigeria, thus it is imperative that teachers use devices that can improve its teaching and help to reduce the problem of mass failure in it. (Olatunji and Kolawole, 2008)

To enhance the teaching of English language in Nigeria, and prepare Nigerian teachers to match up to their counterparts in the globe, the integration of ICT is ineluctable. Leach (n.d) explains that ICT has enhanced teachers' professional knowledge, enabling planning and preparation for teaching to be more efficient and extending curriculum activities. Teachers' exposure to ICT would improve the quality of teaching, cause drastic decline to students' failure, develop and solidify students' communicative competence.

In the teaching and learning processes, learners are at the focal point. They are different entities with diverse backgrounds, learning experiences, perceptions, intellects and abilities, etc. With these, they are expected to be exposed to different patterns and methods of learning within and outside the school. It is in this light that ICT becomes imperative as a companion in learning and teaching of English language. Change is the only constant thing in life. Therefore, English teachers should embrace the current trends of change in the education sector; keep updated and learn how to use these technologies in their noble profession- for administrative and academic purposes. When these tools are introduced in classrooms definitely, learning would be facilitated, this could spur learners to make use of these tools individually, with this, learners could learn how to operate these tools and become better students. The use of ICT makes students active participants rather than being passive in the class. The objectives of this study therefore, are to examine the use of ICT as a veritable tool in the teaching and learning of English language in schools, the appropriate application of these tools and address the inevitability of teachers to explore other ways of teaching alongside the traditional method.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study could enable teachers and students use appropriate ICT tools in the teaching and learning of English language in schools respectively. It could unravel the level of teachers and learners' exposure to ICT. The paper would serve as an eye-opener for the government, education ministries, curriculum planners, schools, seekers of knowledge, and concerned bodies on the importance and challenges of integrating ICT into English language teaching and learning and panacea for the raised problems.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Hoarding of vital information required of respondents as they were cagey and diffident. In addition, limitation of this study cannot generalise to include other schools in the country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) includes the full range of computer hardware and software, telecommunication and cell phones, the Internet and Web, wired and wireless networks, digital and video cameras, robotics, etc. (Moursund, 2005) which are used in storing, controlling, exchanging, transmitting, receiving of data or information. Buseni (2013) explains that technology is all about methods and the way people apply them in order to get results, and the act of bringing in different approaches to tackle a problem. With the use of ICT devices, teachers and learners can send, store, process, share and receive educative information from one location to another. Teachers could carry out other administrative duties with ease and within shortest period of time.

ICTs are essential tools in any educational system as Kalnina and kangro (2007) reveal that ICT helps to increase the quality of education and meet the requirements set by the contemporary knowledge society. ICT tools have capacity and capability of offering unlimited objective educational advantages to each student, providing quality learning materials, creating autonomy of learning, supplying computer-based questions and answers(programmed learning), permitting students to learn at their own pace and at different locations, increasing English teachers' knowledge and widening their scope of teaching. In order words, the best of the teacher plus the best of the technology could result in positive learning outcomes. (Sharma, 2009).

The use of technology makes English class interactive and collaborative as teachers and learners are given the opportunity to explore ideas and have knotty problems solved. They could relate with the native speakers and authorities in the field. Reddi (n.d) explains that ICT provides uniform quality to the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural and at the same low rate in as much as the content is well produced and is of good quality.

Most of the Nigerian students and teachers are accustomed to the one-way traffic traditional method of teaching, students believe that teachers are all-knowing and impeccable saviours in classrooms whose teachings cannot be refuted, but ICT has provided several avenues for students to learn better and be exposed to other experts outside the four walls of the school. Pickersgill (2003) explaining how the Internet can be effectively utilized, finds out that the ease of Internet access allows teachers to help

students to become experts in searching for information rather than receiving fact. Through the Internet, learners can work in team, execute different projects, partake in blog discussions, converse with other students in different schools and exchange opinions.

With the current trend of ICT invasion on education, English language teachers should update themselves on how to teach appropriately and effectively with the various ICT tools, devise novel methods and techniques of teaching, think up unprecedented ways of evaluating themselves, the students and the methods of teaching. The impact of teachers without the modern technology in the impartation of knowledge in the classroom is never complete, vice versa. In English language class, where teacher teaches with ICT tools, the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator who makes learning possible and convenient while ICT tools make learning retentive. Jegede (2008) affirms that teachers constitute the facilitators and entrepreneurs in classroom ICT learning environment. Therefore, the input of the teacher combined with the infusion of technology would definitely cause desirable pedagogical output. Chang and Zhao (2011) enunciate that teachers and learners use a word processor to enable correcting and redrafting of an essay; they use PPT, flash and other software to prepare lectures or presentations; they use BBS, blog and computer conference to develop cross-cultural understanding.

Teachers' optimal cooperation and dedication are needed for successful execution of ICT integration in schools. The reasons, objectives and goals for integrating technologies into the teaching of English language, the mode of application, the suitability and relevance of ICT tools to the subject matter to be taught, the condition of usage of the tools in schools, etc. should be lucid to teachers for effective implementation. In research, Yusuf (2005) explains that ICT provides opportunities for schools to communicate with one another through e-mail, mailing lists, chat rooms, and so on. There are several ICT tools that could be harnessed for dynamic, productive and efficient teaching like TV, Computers, Radio, Electronic Dictionary, Audio Cassettes, CDs, DVDs, VCDs, E-mail, the Internet, CALL, Skype, etc. Teachers' prior knowledge about these devices and familiarization with their applications would be of help whenever sudden technical hitch crops up. The following ICT teaching tools are viable for teaching English language skills effectively and efficiently:

Multimedia Software

Nomass (2013) asserts that multimedia computer programs can increase the motivation for learners to develop their vocabulary and reading skills. Since multimedia use a combination of graphics, video,

sound, text and animation, retention of content taught and relevance of subject matter to life, mastery of language skills, conservation of teachers' energy and independence of learning are guaranteed.

Surfing the Net

Students and teachers can surf the Internet as there are plenitudes of educative websites meant to aid the teaching and learning of the four language skills. Robinson and Zaitun (2006) suggest some websites where "self exercises" on English language could be done which are <http://www.smic.be/smic5022> and <http://eslgo.com/> while Encyclopaedias, Dictionaries, Journals, etc. are of benefit to learners surfing the Net. Becta (n.d) suggests some useful websites to teachers and learners:

<http://www.iki.fi/hezu/dict.html> - website for dictionaries.

www.emaonline.org.uk - online resource base and interactive materials.

<http://www.teem.org.uk> - for teachers evaluating multimedia.

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org-> for collaborative learning project.

Listening to and Viewing Educative Programme on Radio and Television

Some series of slated- language based educative programme which could complement what are taught in classes, like quizzes and debates are often held on air. Students listening could compare themselves with other students and learn more. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and "Learn" on channel 319 on DSTV are good examples.

Computer

Computer aids writing skills and helps in editing. Through computer, students can explicitly make known their ideas, have their spellings corrected through spell-checkers, have additional knowledge of words through thesaurus, and have their essays, vocabularies and grammar corrected. Some games which are for edutainment (e.g. scrabble, an example of word formation game) could also be harnessed on the computer. The use of computer in English language class spurs students to engage in brain-tussling activities, through computers, teachers could also create an enabling atmosphere where learners could reason out answers to questions in a logical way. Noytim (2006) explains that the learning environment itself and activities chosen by teachers ought to give room for thinking processes like problem-solving, critical thinking, creative thinking and analytical thinking skills.

Tape- recorders, Audio CDs and Video CDs

Correct pronunciation of English sounds could be taught using International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), stress pattern and vocabulary could be taught through these technologies. CDs/VCDs are attached to some

textbooks and dictionaries. Students could listen to them and repeat what they have heard till they have mastery of the subject matter. Assignments, project and group work could be recorded on these technologies for correction.

Social software

Melissa (2009) explains that social software includes web applications such as blogs (used for online story telling), wikis (editing and collaborative content sharing), social bookmarking (construction of meaning) and discussion forums (information exchange). Students could comment, edit and ameliorate the current material to create a new course content. This software enables students to become active participants rather being merely beneficiaries.

Through ICT students could:

- * give attention to a particular task like stress pattern and pronunciation.
- * have instant feedback to their assignments.
- * work individually and learn how to interpret information independently.
- * boost their morale, as diffident learners can express their views.
- * work collaboratively as they could interact to negotiate meaning on difficult tasks.

ICT is for all and sundry, whenever and wherever is needed. Software could be purchased at affordable prices, but some are costly, depending on the software the user subscribes to. Mikre (2011) expounds that several studies reveal that students using ICT facilities mostly show higher learning gains than those who do not use. ICT exposes students to several cultural and linguistic disparities and bridges the distance between students in remote and urban areas. ICT tools appeal to sense of sight and hearing, activate reflective practices, sustain students' interest, provide new intriguing ways of learning, boost the quality and augment the students' learning experiences. Active learning can best take place through learners' active participation and involvement, thus teachers are drifting from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness. With the aid of ICT, teachers could navigate complex topics, revitalize their sense of reasoning and come up with new ideas and several problem-solving strategies. Garret (1991) is of the view that the integration of ICT in teaching and learning is not a method; rather it is a medium in which a variety of methods, approaches and pedagogical philosophies may be implemented. ICT is not an end itself, but a means to an end. Some ICT tools best suit some pedagogical methods than others viz.

- For presentation and demonstration: audio cassettes, video cassettes, computers and the Internet etc. are effective technologies for teaching.
- Drill and practice: computers, CD-players, programmed software etc.

- Group/collaborative teaching and learning: connected computers and the Internet are essential.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study deals with the inability of teachers and learners to harness the relevance of ICT as space for teaching and learning in schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research sought to provide answers to the following questions:

- ❖ Does ICT improve the teaching of English language?
- ❖ Do teachers and students have access to the use of ICT tools?
- ❖ Do English language teachers prefer teaching with ICT tools?

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study is a descriptive research of the survey type. The target population was English language teachers in Ado-Ekiti metropolis. The population for the study comprised the English language teachers in the seven selected schools in Ado-Ekiti metropolis. Through random sampling, a total of forty (40) respondents were selected.

Instrumentation

A self-constructed questionnaire was the instrument used for the collection of data. Section A of the instrument contained personal information about respondents while Section B contained three questions requiring respondents to pick questions. It was constructed on a four point scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree used to enable respondents indicate their level of agreement. The instrument was validated by an education expert in order to ensure the face and content validity. 50 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the target population out of which a total of 40 copies were returned.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage scores.

Table 1 shows that 9 (22.5%) of the sample had NCE, 29 (72.5) had Degree while 2(5%) of the respondents had their qualification above Degree.

Distribution according to gender revealed that 14 (35%) of the respondents were male while 26(65%) were female. The table also shows that 10(25%) of the respondents were private school teachers while 30(75%) were public school teachers.

Distribution according to age revealed that 17 (42.5) of the respondents fell between 25-35 years of age,

45(32.5%) of the respondents fell between 36-45 years of age while 10(25%) of the respondents fell between 46 years and above.

The study revealed that the years of teaching experience showed that 16(40%) had teaching experience below five years while 24(60%) had teaching experience above five years.

Table 1: Information about the Respondents Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teachers' qualification	NCE	9	22.5
	Degree	29	72.5
	Above Degree	2	5
Total		40	100
Sex	Male	14	35
	Female	26	65
Total		40	100
School	Private	10	25
	Public	30	75
Total		40	100
Age	25-35	17	42.5
	36-45	13	32.5
	46 and above	10	25
Total		40	100
Years of teaching experience	Below 5	16	40
	Above 5	24	60
Total		40	100

RESULTS

Research Question 1:

Table 2: Does ICT improve the teaching of English language?

	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Computer, teleconferencing and the Internet etc. improve the teaching of English language	39	97.5	1	2.5
Computer improves student' writing skills.	30	75	10	25
Educational programmes on radio and television are effective means of teaching English language.	39	97.5	1	2.5
Students learn faster and better when ICT tools are applied.	38	95	2	5

In table 2, it is shown that 39(97.5%) of the respondents opined that computer, teleconferencing and the Internet etc. improve the teaching of English language while 1(2.5%) rebutted this view. Also 30(75%) of the respondents upheld the view that computer improves students' writing skill while 10(25%) were against this view.

It is evident that educational programmes on radio and television are effective media for English language teaching as 39(97.5%) agreed while 1(2.5%) disagreed. 38(95%) affirmed that students learn faster and better when ICT tools are applied

while 2(5%) disagreed. From this result, it is clear that ICT improves English language teaching.

Research Question 2:

Table 3: Do teachers and students have access to ICT tools?

Item	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
English language teachers in Ado-Ekiti are computer literate.	4	10	36	90
Secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti are equipped with ICT tools for effective teaching.	2	5	38	95
Government/Proprietors have facilitated the integration of ICT tools in teaching and learning in my school.	11	27.5	29	72.5

The research revealed that 4(10%) affirmed that English language teachers in Ado-Ekiti are computer literate while 36(90%) are not. 2(5%) of the respondents agreed that secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti are equipped with various ICT tools for effective teaching while 38(95%) asserted that secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti are wallowing in dearth of ICT tools. It is obvious that majority of the English language teachers are incompetent in teaching with these modern technologies and there are no adequate provisions for the procurement of these tools.

Research Question 3:

Table 4: Do English language teachers prefer teaching with ICT tools?

Item	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Computer literate teachers are at advantage over the illiterate ones.	37	92.5	3	7.5
The traditional method of teaching is effective than the use of ICT in the English language class.	9	22.5	31	77.5
Teachers prefer the traditional method of teaching to ICT method.	22	55	18	45

While 37(92.55%) of the respondents indicated that teachers who can manipulate computer are at advantage over their colleagues who cannot work with computer. They are skilful and have productive teaching outcomes than their unskilled counterparts while 3(7.5%) negated this. Although 22(55%) of the respondents preferred to use Traditional Teaching Directed Instruction (TTDI) to ICT, 18(45%) desired to use ICT tools. The disclosure of respondents revealed that teachers religiously adhere to their conventional ways of teaching despite their awareness on the unparalleled contributions of ICT to teaching and learning.

DISCUSSIONS OF IMPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

It is evident from the findings that ICT enriches, accelerates and enhances the teaching of English language skills. Learning by-doing is considered the most effective way to learn, and the emergence of the Internet and other technologies provide learners authentic learning experiences from experimentation to real-world problem solving (Lombardi, 2007). ICT encourages students to combine school lessons with individual studies and as well link them up with other students in the world.

English language teachers opined that traditional chalk and talk method is not effective than the use of ICT in English language class, they expressed that computer literate teachers are at advantage over the literate ones yet, they have not changed their stereotyped and old-rugged form of teaching. Robinson and Zaitun (2006) in their research showed that teachers are aware of the benefits inherent in integrating ICT into teaching and learning activities, but they are unable to use the ICT tools; as a respondent explained his view:

I know ICT tools can motivate pupils and help in better understanding of concepts, but I can't conduct an ICT integrated lesson because many of the computers in the computer laboratory are not in proper working condition...I have no time and I've to finish my syllabus... I've too many classes to handle and right now I can't think of ICT integration...

English language teachers in Ado-Ekiti have a slim access to the use of ICT, but the few ICT tools provided are not sufficient and are not networked to a central server, the proportion of teeming population of students to teachers, dearth of language laboratories and excess workload of teachers are contributory factors to their complacency in adhering to traditional method of teaching. Salehi and Salehi (2012) posit that teachers believed that insufficient technical supports at schools and little access to internet and ICT prevent them to use ICT in the classroom. Insufficient ICT tools in schools, lack of exposure to ICT tools and inaccessibility make most of the teachers uncomfortable and not confident in operating these tools in the classrooms. Despite the importance of ICT to education, Shyamlee (2012) advises that the teaching principle should be to appreciate new technologies in the areas and functions where they provide something decisively new useful and never let machines take over the role of the teacher or limit functions where more traditional ways are superior. Traditional teaching should not be sacrificed at the altar of ICT, it should not be accorded dominance at the expense of traditional teaching; it should not dominate class, but should serve as an assisting instrument rather than a target.

Teachers are aware of the benefits inherent in teaching English language through ICT, yet most are complacent about the chalk and talk method. In a survey conducted by Becta (2004) about 21.2% of the respondents who were teachers reported that lack of confidence contributed to their inability to use computers in their classrooms. Becta (2004,) stipulates that many teachers who do not consider themselves to be well skilled in using ICT feel anxious about using it in front of a class of children who perhaps know more than they do. Some learners with personal computers and other ICT tools do not know how to make use of them; they do not know educative websites to log in. Some do not utilize them for educational purposes, they prefer to ponce about with these tools, while away time, surf the Internet for frivolities and access chat rooms for non-educative purposes while some are unaware of its uses and importance.

CONCLUSION

ICT undoubtedly serves as teaching and learning space for teachers of English language. This paper revealed that utilization of technology would ameliorate and aid the teaching of language skills. ICT infuses changes in the quality of language teaching, provides authentic online materials, allows access to data collection and retrieval, and grants privileges to upload, download or transfer of information, injects innovations to methods of teaching, broadens teachers' knowledge on subject matter, permits theoretical and practical use of technology facilities.

Though Nigerian English language teachers are acclimatized to incessant subject innovations, but tend to be recalcitrant to technological pedagogical innovations which could improve the quality of teaching. Teachers should liberate themselves from negative disposition to ICT in which they are enmeshed, and partake in the new lease of life in which ICT has brought to teaching. Buabeng-Andoh (2012) explains that if teachers have negative attitudes toward technology, providing them with excellent ICT facilities may not influence them to use it in their teaching. This is the reason most of the English teachers cannot explore the ICT tools in schools. Since some of the English teachers are not making headway in ICT use, learners are not beneficiaries and bear the brunt. Therefore, they should have access to ICT though; access to ICT and the ability to use it cannot be possible without sufficient time, effective training and technical support Khalid (2009). Therefore, all these must be put in place for effective results. Teachers and students should improve on their ICT skills either by self-training or with the help of luminaries.

Some Nigerian teachers and learners are unfit to raise their shoulders in today's technologically competitive

world. Educational sector could witness a new lease of life if teachers could cultivate positive attitude to ICT use. The traditional method (product model) which is teacher-centred should not be solely relied on, but be used alongside with the modern technological method (process model) which is learner-centred. By this, there will be improvement in learners' linguistic competence, communicative competence and performances in examinations.

The following recommendations are advanced to achieve better results in teaching and learning activities:

- Teachers should have their orientation changed about ICT and develop positive attitude towards using ICT tools in the classrooms.
- Adjustments should be made on school time table, so as to conveniently inject ICT integration into teaching and reduce the workload of English language teachers.
- Government and proprietors should provide necessary ICT tools for effective teaching and learning by considering appropriate ICT that would facilitate better teaching and learning of English language.
- Seminars and workshops are to be organised from time to time for teachers in order to develop and guide their interest in ICT use, keep teachers abreast of the contemporary trend in education and put them through on how to teach English language with ICT tools.
- Teachers should encourage team and individual work thus; assignments should be given to students online while the teachers could score them online and correct assignments online.
- Other ICT tools that would enhance the teaching of English language should be encouraged both within and outside schools.
- Students with laptops or who have access to computers should be guided on how to use them in enhancing language skills, for educative purpose and in sustaining their reading interest.
- For efficiency, uninterrupted power supply, networked computers and server, computer and language laboratories should be provided.

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