

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY RELATIONSHIP TO THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper is on how information and communication technology system help in the teaching and learning of English Language and literature at the secondary school level. The teaching of these subjects have changed drastically because of the importance of introducing ICT systems for the benefit of students, since it helps in the understanding of the lessons better than ordinary reading of the textbooks. Application of ICT systems to teaching enables the learners to obtain first hand information from more appropriate and reliable sources. This enhances student's direct participation in the lesson and involvement in practical demonstration and operation of the computer systems during the lessons. The ultimate aim of this paper is to show the relationship between the teaching of English Language and literature using ICT systems, the advantages and problems associated with the use of the system. The recommendations indicate what the government should do in order to promote effective usage of ICT systems for the teaching of English Language and Literature.

Recently, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been introduced into the curriculum of teaching in secondary schools in Nigeria. Most of the schools in Nigeria up till this present time, did not introduce the ICT system into the teaching process in the schools. In this regard, it becomes difficult for both the teachers and students of such schools to be exposed to the use of ICT system. But there are certain problems that do not allow for the smooth operation and effective usage of the ICT system for the teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools.

The approaches and methods used by the teachers affect students' understanding of the lesson. The teachers should store the lesson topic and notes, discussion and demonstration directly into the ICT system for the learners to see, use and study by themselves during and after the lessons. The information on the students needs should be stored in the computers and connected to the internet and multi-media systems so as to enable the students access whenever they are in need.

Advantages of the Use of ICT for the Teaching of English Language and Literature in Secondary Schools

Information and communication technology systems are used specifically for the storage, preservation, sending and receiving messages. It also serves as the most efficient and quick method of communication when connected to the proper web site. Therefore, it would serve as a good teaching material for the study of literature in secondary schools. Emenanjo (2005:2) stated that ICT system has brought about an intimidating revolution and explosion in the storage, speed, exchange and dissemination of information in all subjects. The internet through the World Wide Web (www) maintains and distributes multi-media documents which include textbooks, pictures, audio, graphics, video and advertisements from all over the world. Both the teachers and students of literature should make use of the internet in order to discover the new approaches and methods of teaching literature have access to new and old books so as to either purchase them or use the information from those books directly from the internet by downloading them from the system. The greatest importance of the internet is in its capacity to allow the users to interact directly with the teacher and lesson.

Also, the internet provides what is known as virtual library. This virtual library is meant for the learning and acquisition of knowledge, provision of research materials, introducing more solid basis for educational materials, research facts and information. As can be observed, the internet is an indispensable modern source of research materials for teaching and learning of literature and other subjects. Therefore, information and communication technology is a vital tool for the enhancement of any learning process since it controls the major sources of research materials and information required by every learner, throughout the world according to Ekah (2009:108). Many literature books that are difficult to get are usually obtained through ICT system transaction. ICT helps the learners to apply their basic education skills to increase their knowledge, self esteem and confidence when browsing and collecting the textual data for their class work.

ICT has greatly enhanced the use of English Language in a variety of ways especially in the creation of new vocabulary. In an attempt to study literature through the use of ICT systems, the students end up acquiring new vocabulary that help in the operation of the ICT system. Now such dormant vocabulary in the dictionary becomes active vocabulary since they are now used daily in sentences. These vocabulary include browsing, surfing, attachment file, cyber land, download, keypad, nets peak, netiquette, pin code, online, password, taximeter, flash drive, mouse, menu, virus, save, cybercafé, website, video conferencing, email, text messaging, electronic discourse and many others. In this way, English Language as used in the computer and internet bring out new words and new meanings which had hitherto been either unused or unheard of. The good thing is that these new words and their uses find their way into the literary books lexicon. It is now common in literary books to find episodes, events and incidents, as well as acts and scenes in drama texts with internet vocabulary as words used in describing and narrating the events or actions in the literary work.

All the words used in the ICT operational system have new meanings different from the old usages because of their application in the ICT system. As it is, ICT systems become necessary machines for the teaching of English Language and Literature in English in schools and colleges. Taiwo (2004:140) further stated that ICT systems should be used to teach English Language so that the teacher can explain the meanings of this vocabulary properly to the learners. In the same way Khon (1998:76) observed that the teaching of English Language cannot be effective now without the use of information and communication technology system. According to Khon, ICT systems facilitate learner's autonomy, communication-embedded target language learning, tutoring and open pedagogic integration in language teaching and learning by teachers and students respectively. With regards to the facilitation of the teaching of literature, the use of ICT encourages the students to learn how to use the ICT embedded language to describe, explain, analyse and communicate what they study in literary lessons.

As a matter of fact, ICT language usage provides the students with stylistic varieties of the use of vocabulary, lexical items and fabrication of new syntactic rules during communication, narration of stories and description of ideas. Therefore, it is proper to use ICT systems in the teaching and learning of both language and literature for the benefit of students. Ekah (2004:57) was of the opinion that the only available choice now is for the teachers of English Language to teach the subject according to the internationally acceptable standards by using ICT systems, language laboratories and practical demonstration orally.

Relevance of ICT to the Teaching of English Language and Literature In Secondary Schools

The teaching of English Language and Literature to students in secondary schools in Nigeria can be fruitful and easy if the teachers are able to apply ICT devices in their teaching process. It is common knowledge now that the language and system of learning has changed from teachers' use of local teaching aids to modern ICT communication systems. Of course, this depends on the nature of the school and the owners of the school. Many private schools and some public secondary schools in Rivers State and other states have ICT systems in order to facilitate the teaching and learning processes. Emenanjo (2005:12) postulated that the teaching and learning of audio aural skills in English Language can better be done in digital laboratories for students in small and large class sizes. Emenanjo further stated that computers interconnected to telecommunications are very effective irrespective of the location of the students. According to Emenanjo, with the use of ICT systems, internet, computers, and multi-media systems learning can now take place in offices, homes, centres and classrooms far away from the operational base.

The important point is that phonology, semantics, morphology and syntax of English Language are better taught and learned practically by the use of ICT systems. This makes the learning of the language more interesting as the students are exposed to

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exercises, drills and conversations from the original speakers of the language as if they study in England.

Proper teaching and learning of English Language enables the students to understand literature when they read prose, drama and poetry. Appropriate use of ICT systems help the students to understand the language very easily, thereby making the learners to engage in what Yule (1998:132) calls discourse analysis. According to Yule, when English Language users and learners are able to understand and interpret what other users or speakers of the language say, they are able to discuss what each other says meaningfully and correctly. This is how communication takes place between the speaker and the listener. When the learners are able to read and understand effectively, they now acquire the necessary skills to read the novels, plays and poetry with understanding, appreciation and analysis in order to bring out the plot, subject matter, style, themes and characterisation in the literary works. Students now use ICT systems to browse, study and place order for literary books now available in their environment. This becomes easy because their interest is already aroused in wide and extensive reading. They now become more inquisitive to read books from other parts of the world and countries since they can understand what they read properly.

How Teaching Methods and Approaches Helps In the Use of ICT for Teaching English and Literature

ICT systems alone cannot provide effective approaches and proper teaching methods for the teaching of English Language and Literature, except the teachers adopt methods and approaches suitable to each lesson. It is therefore very important for the teacher to know what the end product of each lesson entails for the learners or students before embarking on lesson plan, lesson note and actual teaching in the class. What this entails is that the objectives of each lesson should be well established by the teacher before the teacher teaches the students. One major thing about teaching in secondary schools is that every lesson is students centred, as such emphasis should be on how to make the students know what is taught at the end of each lesson through evaluation. There are different approaches and methods but what should guide the teacher to adopt a particular approach or method should be the level of the students or class, the environmental needs or cultural influence, the age of the students, their exposure in the target language, the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domain of such lesson to the learners.

The appropriate approaches and methods that are currently in vogue are the combination of functional-notional approach with eclectic method and the use of integrated pedagogic approach with practical demonstration, role play, dramatisation, miming and dialogue. All these approaches and methods are necessary if the intention of the teacher is to enable the students to listen, speak, read and write English Language and Literature well. The emphasis during the lessons by the teacher should be how to encourage the students to speak the language through listening to the way the teachers who are competent in the use of the language speak during the lessons. From the

beginning of the lesson, the teacher should create situations that will encourage the students to speak by making remarks that concern what they do or did in the class and after the class. Every English Language lesson should emphasise oral lessons more than the written lessons, because when the students are able to express themselves orally during the questioning and answering sessions in the class, they will be able to read the textbooks and write the answers at the end of the class evaluation.

It is important to understand that English Language as a second language in Nigeria demands that the learners should be exposed to listening, speaking, reading and writing in every lesson in the class. Therefore, the exercise should be done simultaneously in the class at intervals as the teacher is able to direct the students. Students should be made to participate actively in practical listening and pronunciation of the words and reading of the sentences as written on the board by the teacher. While speaking enables the student to be mentally alert by listening to the teacher attentively in order to imitate the pronunciation of the sounds, letters and words, reading encourages the students to look at the words whether in books or board with the intention to see, know, identify and read according to the teacher's direction. Reading enables the students to come directly in contact with the words. Odo (2007:15) observed that without words as vehicle to speech, no cumulative growth of intelligence can occur. This entails that words must be exposed and taught to the learners before they can read effectively.

Further illustration of the use of integrated approach with the ICT system teaching of English Language and other languages is emphasised by Shobomein (2005:55) by stating that it is proper to use a diagnostic method of ICT in language research. Shobomein observed that these approaches come about because of the evolution of different perspectives on language learning and feeding process. According to Shobomein, the use of ICT system encourages the people in Nigeria to study the language, learn and use the language effectively since it is the only official language of administration, communication, and education and business transactions. Okwudishu, (2005:19) stated that in second language teaching and learning, ICT systems provide opportunities and possibilities for simulating accurate second language teaching and learning. Emenanjo (2005:25) further confirmed the importance of using ICT systems to teach English Language and described it as a radical approach for the transformation of the teaching and learning process by both the teachers and students.

Butler-Pascoe (1997:110) expressed that the ICT systems are very resourceful for the teaching of English especially to the people using the language as their second language. ICT systems create both independent and collaborative learning environments in which students can learn the new language comfortably according to Butler-Pascoe. Butler-Pascoe also drew attention to the salient characteristics and benefits of a technology enriched curriculum of second language learning. This has underscored the central role which ICT can play in second language teaching and learning as computers utilize multi-sensory collection of texts, sounds, pictures, videos, animation and

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hypermedia can be used to provide meaningful contexts to facilitate the teaching of literature lessons, comprehension and effective communication. Butler-Pascoe further explained that ICT systems provide students with language experiences as they move through the various stages of language acquisition and also supports the writing process approach.

Another advantage of ICT systems for the teaching of English and Literature is in the ability of the teachers to use it to teach drill exercises, speech practice and competence in language usage. The students are exposed to limitless opportunities provided by online database for them to have access to authentic facts that allow second language learners in Nigeria to compare the voice quality and speech pattern of the native speaker's pronunciation with that of Nigerians. Butler-Pascoe (2005:65) called this approach to the teaching of English using ICT as computer-based immersion method, based on the theory that language is best mastered when the learners are surrounded or taught by only the native speakers.

Hindrances to the Use of ICT to Teach English Language and Literature

There are a lot of hindrances to the teaching of English Language and Literature using ICT. In the first instance, the use of ICT systems is not very common in public secondary schools because the state governments do not have such facilities in the schools. The common complains which researches revealed is lack of sufficient funds to cater for educational needs in the state. Moreover, there is poor funding of public schools generally and as such, there is decay in infrastructural development and non provision of ICT systems. Even in a place like Akwa Ibom State where there is free education at the primary and secondary school levels, there are no functioning ICT systems in few schools where such facilities exist because of lack of computer literate teachers to operate the systems, lack of constant power supply to the schools, lack of money to buy fuel for the school generating plant and even poor attitude of the learners to the practical aspect of computer lessons.

Also, there are no adequate texts books that students can use to read and study the components and operation devices of the computer, and these affect students interest adversely towards the use of computer for their lessons. Where there are obstacles such as these during the teaching and learning processes, students tend to turn deaf ears to whatever improvisation the teachers do to enhance the learning processes. Since what is worth doing is worth doing well, the school owners or the government should endeavour to provide real functional computer sets connected to the internet so as to enhance the learning process. Apart from this, all broken down or malfunctioning computer systems should be replaced as soon as possible. As a solution to frequent breakdown of computers, the school authority or the government should employ computer engineers to be permanently attached to the computer units of the schools so as to repair the computers whenever there is any breakdown.

Another hindrance to the use of ICT systems to the teaching of English Language and Literature is in the inability to link the computer systems to the internet because of poor subscription by the school authority or lack of funds to install the internet system and link it to the computers since it is capital intensive. Therefore, the school authorities and governments at various levels should make budgetary provisions that will take care of these extra expenses if the students are expected to be computer literate and vocationally skillful in computer operations. In this era of job scarcity, emphasis in secondary education should be “education for self employment and reliability”. This entails that students should be exposed to more practical lessons now than before so that they can use their skills to employ themselves. ICT systems are used in all business transactions and they replace the manual typewriters. If students are properly trained on the use of ICT system before they leave school, it means that the education system is functional and directly related to the current needs of Nigeria.

Conclusion

ICT systems are necessary for the teaching of English Language and Literature in Nigerian Secondary Schools so as to expose the students to modern learning methods during their studies. It will also enable the students to become computer literate also and function as competent computer operators, after leaving school. Also, using ICT for lessons will encourage students to break new grounds in studies, since it will expose them to a good number of materials, books, periodicals, magazines, methods and approaches towards the study of English and Literature. Therefore, as can be observed, there is need to use ICT systems for the teaching and learning processes because it enhances faster reading, understanding and covering of wide areas in both English Language and Literature Studies. For the educational system to succeed Chauhan (1995:48-52) observed that for effective teaching of English Language, the teachers of the language should be psychologically prepared so as to deal with the complex application of the ICT systems in the teaching of the subject.

Recommendations

The following things are recommended for effective application of ICT systems to teaching and learning in secondary schools;

- (i) The government and school proprietors should provide functional ICT systems like computer and internet system in all secondary schools. This will enhance the teaching and learning of literature and English Language because it will expose the students to varieties of exercises, books and practical demonstrations during class lessons.
- (ii) All the teachers now teaching at the secondary schools should be retrained in computer operations and usage in their lesson notes writing, presentation of the lessons in the class using opaque projectors and how the students should respond to questions through operation of the computers. There is need to

transform the teaching and learning processes in Nigerian schools as it is done in America and Britain.

- (iii) In order to avoid disruptions of lessons, the schools should be provided with constant electric power supply during the lesson periods. Therefore, adequate arrangement should be made with Power Holdings Company of Nigeria for constant power supply or provide private power plant and install in the schools for lessons using ICT systems.
- (iv) Students should be given adequate opportunities for effective practicals to enhance their skills to operate the ICT systems after leaving school. This will enable them to create employment for themselves without depending on government jobs.

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