Original Research Article

The Use of ICT for the Teaching and Learning of English as a Second Language in Nigeria: The "What", "Why", and "How"

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Abstract: In language teaching, the use of computers has been on since before the coming of the internet. Later computer assisted language learning (CALL) developed and concerned itself with the pedagogical applications of the technology. Information Communication Technology (IT) which is an offshoot of science through its internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC) has gone beyond science to broaden the lexical inventories of the English language. It is against this backdrop that this paper tends to conduct a study on computer-mediated communication with a focus on the teaching and learning of the English language in Nigeria. The study aims to bring to the fore the issues and challenges associated with this new normal. The study also examines the benefits associated with the use of this technology in the teaching and learning of the English language. The study also employs Direct Participatory Observation and a questionnaire as means of gathering data for the research. Famous Mclunnham's Technological Determinism Theory was employed as the theoretical framework of analysis. On the whole, the paper discovered among other things that the use of CMC made students confident and gives them the zeal of being online and wanting to discover and learn via the medium of computer-mediated communication. The study concludes that the use of this method of teaching and learning English in Nigeria has to be encouraged for efficiency and exactness for both in the teaching and learning of English in Nigeria. Solutions and recommendations were proffered to ameliorate the challenges associated with the use of these technological devices.

Keywords: English language, Teaching and Learning, Computer-Mediated Communication, Computer Technology.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the English language particularly standard British English has continued to enjoy maximum attention as the medium of formal communication, especially as a language of instruction. Parents and proprietors of schools have often accepted the use of the English language as a mark of prestige. Taiwo (2008) contends that the expansion of the domains of English to electronic communication has increased the number of English users, especially among the young ones. No doubt, many educators like Cameroon, (1999), Chambers and Davis (2000), and Zhoo (2003) have written on the implications of the computer in the context of teaching and learning generally, but it is part of the focus of this present research article to address some of the implications of computer-mediated communication (CMC), e-English, or ICT for the teaching and learning of English as a second language. It is obvious, life is changing and so are its languages too. The dynamism seen in language is a result of the creative power of the human mind using language. Therefore, the English language as a global language is allowing or absorbing these changes thereby increasing its lexical inventory, which might achieve acceptability after some time. Some of these new creations will be a source of worry for teachers in the classrooms. Thus, the implications are the students who are at the centre of these changes will be at the receiving end since most of their expressions will be seen as errors.

Computer technology has given the students the latitude to play with words and encourage them in developing their writing skills Abdulah (2005). Apart from this, it is extending beyond the regionalized boundaries of Nigerian

English (NE), America English (AE), British English (BE), and Ghanian English (GE) to language without borders. Therefore, the ways of writing and vocabulary coinages in English are expanding to reflect this trend. And this rapid and largely uncharted evolution of the English language is sure to continue unabated given the growing influence of English in the world. Despite the importance of English, its teaching in Nigeria has continued to witness a lot of problems with a dwindling performance by students. Thus, Computer-mediated-Communication (CMC) Means using computer technology for inter and intra- personal communication. It is a means which involves people situated in different places and/or times. It is a screen-to-screen training which is obtained through the computers that are hooked to the internet. Computer-mediated Communication includes e-mails, text messaging, list servers, bulletin boards, web pages, audio conferencing and online chat, etc.

Indeed, Adegbola, (2007), posits that "science no doubt has spun great success and facilities technology to define the way we live." This paper expresses the view that various innovations occasioned by science and technology have not changed the world's physical outlooks, but have also contributed to the growth and use of English in painting present-day realities. In the same way, Information Communication Technology (IT) which is an offshoot of science through its internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC) has gone beyond science to broaden the lexical inventories of the English language. Also in the words of Gradol (1997), as cited by Faleye, (2008), "computer technology age is not only encouraging the use of English but also transforming it". Thus, technological innovations have gone hand in hand with the growth of English and the two are changing how we communicate, write, and learn English.

Statement of the Problem

The computer is impacting greatly on the way we write and speak the English language. This is because it has revolted against some parts of conventional patterns of usage and writing. However, language teaching is entering a new and uncharted phase as a result of e-English. This is what Warchaner & Isern, (2000) as cited in Falaye, (2010) call the 'cognitive phase' in which students/teachers interact with one another and the world through the computer. Thus, it is against this backdrop that the present study tends to conduct a study on the issues and challenges of computer-mediated communication with a focus on the teaching and learning of the English language in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research paper mainly investigates the challenges encountered by teachers and as well as students in the course of using technological media to teach the English language. The study aimed at examining the issues and challenges of the use of computer-mediated communication in the teaching and learning of the English language in Nigeria. The objectives are as follows:
  i. Determine the challenges of computer-mediated communication in the teaching and learning of the English language in Nigeria.
  ii. Inspire group learning and student-teacher participation in learning through computer-mediated communication.

Conceptual Clarifications
The Internet and English Language

In language teaching, the use of computers had been on even before the coming of the internet. Later computer assisted language learning (CALL) developed and concerned itself with the pedagogical applications of the technology. In the course of this work, the paper discovered that computers in the pre-internet days did not significantly influence the English language, but with the advent of the internet, the computer began to proportionately change the language. For example, the various text messages on mobile phones and expressions used while engaging in computer-related activities come with various spellings and coinages that deviated significantly from the conventional and Standard English spelling and usage. Crystal (1980) as cited by Faleye (2008), aptly describes it as the features of situational distinctive uses of language. Hence, computer-mediated communication has its peculiar coinages, vocabularies, and spelling devices. Also, Awonusi (2004) opines that the advent of SMS messaging which is an aspect of e-English depends on the linguistic features of informal English as a constraint of time, money, and space as some of the factors encouraging the evolution of various linguistics strategies to communicate comprehensively but briefly. Hence, this caused the distortions of English spellings and omission of punctuation marks in some constructions in text messages.

In another development, the inventions of the computer and electronics have greatly affected English vocabulary in the present era. It has equally led to the evolution of what Cheater (2006) calls *netiquette-* a convention that surrounds the use of internet-related expressions in society. However, the question remained, what impact has this computer-mediated Communication (CMC) had on the English language?

Many educators like Cameroon (1999), Chambers and Davies (2001), and Zhao (2003) have written on the implications of the computer in the context of teaching generally, but it is part of the focus of this paper to address some of the implications of Computer-mediated- Communication, (CMC), e-English or ICT for the teaching and learning of English language as a second language. The fact is, life is changing, and so are languages too. The dynamism seen in

languages is a result of the creative power of the human mind in using language. English language as a global language is allowing or absorbing these changes, thereby increasing its lexical inventory, which might achieve acceptability after some time. Some of these new creations will be a source of worry for teachers in the classrooms. The implications are the students, who are at the center of these usages will be at the receiving end since most of their expressions will be seen as errors.

Teaching English as a Secondary Language

Teaching English as a second language means teaching English as a second language. A second language (L2) can be described as a language that is usually the sequential second language of a bilingual person. It may or not be the sequential second language of a multilingual person. It may be the fourth language of a multilingual person which however functions as a second language in a societal bilingual. For example, in Nigeria, English has been considered a second language for quite some time. But with the current educational policy in the country where the three major indigenous Nigerian languages are made compulsory in schools; and every child is expected to learn at least Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba as his second language.

Kachru (1983) as cited by Omole (2007), Submits that English as a second language is also referred to as an institutionalized variety. It has some ontological status. Its features are an extended range of use in the sociolinguistic context of a nation where it's used, extended register and style range, undergoes a process of nativization of registers and styles which have taken place in both formal and contextual terms Ajibola (2010). Teaching English as a second language or any other language has much in common with any other teaching, but also has its unique challenges. Among other things, it needs some understanding of how language works quite a bit of patience, and considerable showmanship; hence the need for computer-mediated communication CMC software.

The Benefit of Computer-Mediated-Communication in Language Teaching and Learning

There is no gain in saying that with the introduction of ICT came a new approach to language teaching and learning using computer-assisted learning (CAL). Quality CAL software provided yet another medium for learning a language. At the moment, there are varieties of computer applications available including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation checkers, electronic workbook programs, etc. This is to say that many of the CAL programs have been developed for students to practice in their course of learning as a second language; and these are in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Also available are programs in grammar, language function, and vocabulary development.

ICT and the internet in particular provide language learners with an opportunity to use the language being learnt in meaningful ways in authentic contexts. The internet provides easy and fast access to the use of current and authentic materials including online newspapers, web-casts, pod-casts, newsrooms, video clips, and sharing websites such as you-tube.

Another motivating language learning opportunity using ICT is provided by chat rooms and a visual environment such as 'second life' where language learners can practice not only the written use of language but also practice speaking and pronunciation of language without the fear of making mistakes. ICT is also important in classroom language learning with the opportunity of ICT- based tools given to language teachers. ICT-based tools allow language teachers to teach their learners more efficiently. With the help of ICT-based tools, they can give individual and personalized guidance to learners. It is easier for the language teacher to use different approaches with students and accommodate different learning styles and the different needs of fast, slow, or handicapped language learners.

Theoretical Framework: Technological Determinism Theory

For us to investigate a phenomenon of this nature, the researcher depended on technological determinism theory as a guide to uncover the challenges experienced with the use of computer-mediated communication in the teaching and learning of the English language in an ICT age in developing countries with a focus on Nigeria. technological determinism theory as propounded by Marshal Mclunham (1962) states that a man's feelings, actions, and thoughts are shaped by evolving technologies, the theory sees 'medium as the message' because we learn, feel and think the way we do, because of the current communication technologies that we are exposed to. Thus, the teaching of the English language is being reshaped by digital technology. This is manifested in the new ways of teaching and learning of English language through the medium of computer-mediated communication. For example, reading on screen is now evolving because of the availability of various tools that aid reading in e-learning as well as e-teaching. The fundamental underlying technology determinism is that, the media are now an extension of the human body and that they alter not only their environment but the very message is received, (Folarin, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

Several sampling techniques could be used to gather information for a study of this nature. The data for this work was gathered through self-effacing observation and the administration of questionnaires. These two methods were used simultaneously to complement each other thereby making the outcome reliable. In other words, the motive behind the use of the two methods is to check whether or not there are conflicting findings. In the first place, unobtrusive observation was chosen to note the proficiency in the application of the devices available to the users for teaching and learning. While the students and teachers were observed in classrooms, lecture halls, lecture theatres, computer rooms, and laboratories; the questionnaires were personally administered to the respondents at once to ensure total return. Thus, in the questionnaire, the respondents were among other things demanded to identify digital devices they are familiar with, their willingness to use them, and which of them is most friendly and affordable. And what are their challenges?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

As earlier made mentioned, in this paper that the purpose of this study was among other things to examine the challenges of the use of computer-mediated communication resources in the teaching and learning of English as a second language in Nigeria. The current investigation in Science and Technology is providing new techniques for teaching and learning in our schools. Therefore, the finding from our Personal Participatory Observation revealed that the shift from the conventional methods of teaching to the use of ICT resources in teaching and learning has been embraced by many. Language teaching and learning require the development of skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and speaking require the learners to hear and produce sounds and be able to distinguish one sound from another. To read, a learner must associate spoken words with written or printed symbols. Communication and Information Technology media are therefore very essential not only for the development of language skills but also to stimulate the ability of oral and written expressions on the part of learners. Therefore, this study summarises its discovery as follows:

a. The use of computer-mediated communication resource makes the students confident and gives them the zeal to be in line with what they want to discover as well as what they are asked to do.
b. Students are always willing and eager to use computer-mediated communication devices for learning.
c. The students are well motivated when they are undertaking a project that involves the use of technology to find a solution.
d. Students' attention is arrested whenever something is displayed on the screen which in turn remained in their memory longer than when such things are written on the chalkboard.

On the question of the challenges of using computer-mediated communication in our schools in Nigeria, the researcher discovered during the investigation that several factors affect the effective use of computer-mediated communication resources in Nigeria. These factors among others include the following:

i. Inadequate teaching methodology: teaching theory behind education is referred to as Constructionism. Teachers' preparation of courses in educational technology teaches the concepts of inquiry-based learning. In-inquiry based classrooms or lessons, students are encouraged to research topics under their guidance and direction with the teachers acting as facilitators. This type of teaching and learning can take years to achieve, and it often requires great expense in terms of both money and time. Thus, to use computer-mediated communication and resources most effectively, extensive professional development is required for the classroom teachers who would serve as facilitators.
ii. The inadequacy of resources also constitutes a challenge to the teaching and learning of the English language. For instance, a large number of students requires a large number of technology resources in ensuring that there are enough computers, internet devices, modems, and other necessary educational-assisted media, and another plethora of other necessary teaching and learning instrument is also a challenging task.
iii. Maintenance Expenses: the cost of maintenance of machines and equipment can be very expensive. For instance, outdated software and hardware components can be incompatible with available programs.
iv. It was also discovered that many students and teachers find it very difficult to subscribe to data or better still get themselves functional smartphones of their choice. In short, very many of them do not have functional laptops, or desktops to use for teaching and learning activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In language teaching, the use of computers has been before the coming of the internet. Later computer assisted language learning (CALL) developed and concerned itself with the pedagogical applications of the technology. ICT and the internet in particular provide language learners with an opportunity to use the language being learnt in meaningful ways in authentic contexts. The internet provides easy and fast access to the use of current and authentic materials in language, which is aimed at motivating language learners. Such authentic materials include online newspapers, web-casts, pod-casts, newsroom Video clips, and sharing websites such as YouTube. The fact remains that, as we accept education to be an investment with effect on all sectors of the economy globally, we should also accept the fact that the

English language is an important highway that leads us to sustain the development that we are always yearning for especially in changing world of science and technology. Therefore, issues concerning teaching and learning must command the attention of the government. Therefore, it is part of the task of this paper to make valuable recommendations to the government as well as the users of English in the following terms:

    a.   That the contents of the language syllabus have to be enriched to include lexemes from e-English to facilitate teaching and learning of English as a second language. This cannot be delayed because of its relevance to our day-to-day activities. There should be a new syllabus and the contents should include the vocabulary from computer-related learning situations so much so that the learners/ teachers can generate authentic language expressions which can be employed by teachers in authentic language situations.

    b.   The teachers should be made to emphasize in teaching the dichotomy that exists between the formal and informal styles of writing and pointing to their students that most of the distortions in spelling and use of abbreviation permissible in GSM, OR CMC will not be allowed in formal academic writing.

    c.   Language, to behaviorists, is a habit stabilized. It should be stressed that users of e-English should be very conscious of the context of the use of language and make the right choice of which variety of expressions to be used in different domains of language use. For example, spelling distortions or phonetic spelling are not used in official/business writings, but they are permissible in unofficial writing.

    d.   Teachers who are guilty of using short hands in classrooms with students must desist from doing so because of the impact this has on their students who see them as role models.

    e.   The teachers should ensure that students are frequently assessed especially in essay writing and other forms of writing where non-standard usage by students is underlined and notes made by teachers concerned on the script. Marked scripts should unfailingly be returned to students so that they learn from their mistakes.

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