

(ICT): A POTENT TOOL IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF LANGUAGE

¹Adeleke, O.F., ¹Ajao, R.A., ¹Amao, M.K., ²Ajibike, V.T., ³Adeleke, S.O. and ⁴Ajao, M.A.

¹General Studies Department, Oyo State College Of Agriculture and Technology, Igboora; ²Oyo State School of Science, Idere; ³Department of Foreign Languages, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife; ⁴Department of English, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State.
Corresponding Email: Ofadeleke@gmail.com, 08142696062

Abstract

In these days of technology, the impact of information communication technology cannot be under estimated in the teaching and learning of languages just like any other aspects of human endeavours where effects of ICT can be seen and felt. The authors discuss the roles of ICT in language teaching and the various technological innovations that are useful to both teaching and learning of languages. The problems associated with the use of these innovations are also highlighted. Recommendations and suggestions which will help in making ICT a potent tool in the teaching of languages are given. The authors conclude that if the suggestions are followed, ICT would enhance the teaching and learning of languages.

Introduction

The advent of technology has made everything easy for everybody. Every sphere of human endeavour has been reshaped by the influx of these technological innovation. Talk of Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture to just mention a few, and the field of education is not an exemption. ICT has positively affected the teaching of languages.

Enwereuzoh (2012), citing Uchegbou (2010) describes technology as how to use the material resources of the environment to satisfy human needs and desires. Most of the material resources created by technology experts have been in use to enhance the teaching of languages. Ofoefuna and Ebeogu (2012), while discussing ICT and national development, see ICT as any important product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transit or receive information electronically in a digested form. Some of these products that are useful in these days of digitalization are; Personal computer, digital television, email, etc Application of ICT in teaching goes beyond the application of computers. To do well in language teaching and learning especially in the situation where these languages i.e. English Language, French etc. are being learnt as second language, the imperativeness of the ICT cannot be jettisoned.

The roles of language and its teaching

Language cannot be separated from its method of teaching. Language teaching cannot be fully discussed without discussing the roles of language. Bello (1999), while discussing language as a key to

human endeavour submits that much influence and powers are attached to Olusola and Ajao (2015), citing Adesope and Tiamiyu (2011) while discussing the role of language submit that;

Language is learned, shared and it is arbitrary system of vocal symbols through which the human being in the same speech community or subculture interact and communicate in terms of their common cultural experience expectation

Language is a means by which human beings communicate. Olusola and Ajao (2015), citing Opoola (2010) see language as an instrument of persuasion, aggression, felicitation, entertainment, fabrication, interpretation and other things of life. We pray or bless in our language. Balarabe (2007) as cited by Olusola and Ajao (2015), sees language as continuing to play a vital role during peace and imbroglio. It has been the instrument for initiating war and establishing peace. Industrial actions that occur all over is through language. Instruments of negotiations are entered through language and finally resolutions are reached through language.

The above submissions on the roles of language make the teaching of language imperative. The teaching and methodology of language should be taken seriously because of the roles discussed above. Through language, people make their thoughts and feelings known. Asade (2010) submits that

Language is the key to the heart of the people.

*If we lose the key, we lose the people
if we treasure the key and keep it safe
it unlocks the door to unlock riches*

Bamidele and Adamu (2019) see language as a tool. They submit that language has the following multi-dimensional roles in the society. It helps the society to keep evolving. It is a tool for personal and communal communication. It eliminates misunderstanding of ideas, opinions and feelings.

Asade (2010) citing Balarabe (2007) submits that:

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If one considers all the submissions above on the importance of language in the society, one would see that no amount of money or effort is too much to be spent on both the teaching and learning of it. Enwereuzoh (2012) citing Eze (2003), comments that ICT is the technology which supports activities including the creation, storage, manipulation and communication together with their related methods, management and application.

Roles of ICT in language teaching

Teaching and learning of language at all levels have gone beyond imagination. This is the age of knowledge and advancement. The knowledge language teachers are dealing with is so complex, and the importance of ICT cannot be underestimated. In the teaching and learning of language, Information and Communication Technology offers a variety of resources that are inevitable tools for pedagogy. The tools of ICT, if used effectively, will enhance the teaching of language.

Mohammad (2018) submits that application of technology has considerably changed the English teaching method. He opines that ICT in language teaching provides so many alternatives as it makes teaching and learning interesting and more productive. While citing Gillespie (2006) Tan (2012) Mohammad (2018) submits that the use of technology has changed the methods from teacher - centered to learner - centered. According to him, teachers should be facilitators, and guide their learners' learning this change is very useful for learners to increase their learning.

To buttress the above submissions on the role of ICT on the teaching and learning of language, the following can be said summarily to be the roles of ICT on the teaching and learning of language.

1. ICT gives access to a variety of learning processes. The four basic language skills language, that is, the listening skills, speaking skill, reading and writing skills are all enhanced by the advancement of ICT.
2. Immediacy to information.
3. It makes learning easy and to be done anytime.
4. Collaborative learning-ICT has made the study of the language easy in groups and clusters. With an online teaching and learning, language can be taught and learnt together.
5. It allows for multimedia approach to language learning. Audio visual, education, language planning and preparation, the use of devices and materials that involve sight, sound or both, motion pictures, television, audio tapes, records, computers etc. are useful and they enhance the teaching and learning of language.

With the above submissions, it is evident that the ICT is playing vital roles in the teaching and learning of language. Enwereuzoh (2012), citing Mckenna (2000) gives the following as the summary of the roles of ICT on the teaching and learning of language.

- It is a unique motivator - It brings a lot of excitements to the younger learner of language.
- It helps students develop linguistic attitudes and skills.
- It challenges curiosity, alertness and builds endurance in the student..
- It generates enquiry, creativity and critical thinking.
- It takes care of individual interests and abilities.
- It is useful in individualized instructions and as a result, makes provision for both the slow and the fast learners to work at their own pace.
- It is very useful in giving assignments and evaluations.
- It clarifies the teacher's roles as a moderator.

ICT models useful in language teaching

In these days of technological advancement in which every aspect of the human endeavour is touched and helped by the ICT, language teaching should not be exempted. Language teaching should be handled and taught with the sophisticated available ICT models.

The following are technological models that can be used in language teaching.

- a) **The Computer:** Computer is an electro - mechanical device which accepts data as input, processes stored data. Yusuf (2016) citing Ayoade (2003) defines computer as an electro - mechanical device because its principle of operation is based on electronics and mechanics. With the use of the computer, the language teacher can guide students in the area of linguistics. Bassama (2013) sees computer as a useful instrument in teaching listening. Through the use of computer, their processed information and ideas are developed. Since listening is considered a principal language skill, Bassama (2013) is of the opinion that computer is a great asset both to the teacher and the learner of a language.

Computer is also of great importance in the teaching of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and comprehension. Grammar skills can be improved upon with the aid of word processing programs.

- b) **The Internet:** Internet is used for easy inter connectivity of individuals. The Internet is the pillar of ICT. Ofoefuna and Ebeogu (2012) citing Massari (1999) while discussing the indispensability of the internet on education, and by extension, language education lists the following as the importance of the Internet on language teaching.

- i. Write and send a message through an electronic mail system; teacher of language can send an assignment on language to a learner and the latter also can respond via the Internet.
- ii. Receive and send a message to other people who are connected to the network.
- iii. An article or newsletter can be composed for the people on the same platform.
- iv. Online discussions on groups that bring people together can be joined where interest can be shared.
- v. Enroll in a program of study of a remote Institution and then receive assignments. All these can be done via the Internet.

Considering the above submissions, Enwereuzoh (2012) is of the opinion that the language teacher is provided with less time on teacher - centered activities but more time on learner centered activities.

- c) **Electronic dictionaries:** electronic dictionary is another ICT tool that a teacher of language

can employ in language teaching. This can be used to improve students' vocabulary. Grammar and meaning of new words can be taught and learnt through the use of electronic dictionary.

- d) **Electronic white board:** This device is useful in the teaching of phonetics. The various components like electronic pens, projectors, erasers and notebooks can be used in language teaching.
- e) **Mobile phones:** This is the commonest ICT tool that is available to both the teacher and the learners of language. It has a great potential in class room teaching. It can be used in note taking, taking pictures, interviews, and survey of any type can be done through mobile phones.
- f) **Gap master:** This can be used to develop language learning such as filling of the blank spaces. This assists teachers with large class size. It can also be used to design language work for the teaching and learning of grammatical values and components.

Challenges facing the use of ICT in language teaching and learning

Despite the huge benefits derivable from the use of ICT in both the teaching and learning of a language, there are still a myriad of challenges facing its effective use. Some of the noticeable challenges are:

- 1) **High cost of ICT equipment:** Some of these ICT equipment are too costly to the extent that individuals and even schools cannot afford to get them.
- 2) **Lack of trained personnels:** In some cases where the gadgets are available, there are no trained personnel to handle them.
- 3) **Constant power failure:** This equipment cannot be used without the supply of power. Power failure is a major problem facing the effective use of these ICT tools.
- 4) **Lack of funds:** Government at all levels show a kind of lukewarm attitude to the supply of ICT tools. Funds are not made available to schools to equip language laboratories. Where this abound, how would the teacher of language make use of ICT as a tool in language teaching?
- 5) **Lack of interest on the part of teachers and students:** Some teachers do not see the need to switch from the old method of language teaching to the new technological method.

Recommendations

As a result of the indispensability of the use of the ICT in the teaching and learning of language, in these jet days the authors hereby give the following recommendations:

- 1) Government at all levels should, as a matter of priority, provide these ICT materials to school free of charge.
- 2) Teachers of language should be properly trained in the use of ICT gadgets.
- 3) Alternative power supply should be provided for schools. This will help not in a small measure in the use of ICT in language teaching.
- 4) Funds should be made available for schools to operate language laboratories.
- 5) Both the teachers and the learners of language should develop keen interest in the use of ICT equipment. They should know that this is to their own advantage.

Conclusion

Having considered the role of language in the society, and that it is the bedrock for social education, the government at all levels should see to it that all what will make its teaching and learning enjoyable should be provided. ICT as an important tool in the teaching and learning of language should be encouraged. If all these are done, teaching of language would be attractive.

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