APPLICATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN TEACHING AND LEARNING OF IGBO LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Information communication Technology (ICT) has a very significant role to play in language education. This paper takes a look at the meaning of information Communication Technology and meaning of language/Igbo language. It examines the ICT systems necessary in teaching and learning of Igbo language, the problems of implementing ICT in Nigeria schools, some recommendations were made and then conclusion.

Introduction

Interactions in language and especially in Igbo language classroom have always been a tripartite affair between the teacher, the learner and the instructional materials. The teacher, the learner and the learning materials are expected to produce the intended outcome.

Igbo language teachers have to be contended with the challenges of how to get students to concentrate to invest more effort and to take academic work serious. They need to be aware of the possible and probable uses of information and Communication Technology (ICT) so that: they can identify techniques and methods that further their education goals.

According to Olusanya and Oloyede (2003), the greatest achievement in the 21st century was the development and application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to all facets of human endeavour.

What is Information and Communication Technology?

Information and Communication Technology according to Akinyokun (1999) means the use of computers and telecommunications gadgets in information processing. Ajegun (2003) asserted that Information and Communication Technology include the radio, television, videos, computer, sensors, interface boxes, e-mail, and satellite connections, Internet and all the software and materials which are employed by teachers for teaching and learning.

Information Communication Technology has contributed immensely in every sphere of life. Its impact on the growth and equality of education is much particularly, if well harnessed in Nigeria.

It has affected virtually every aspect of human life in the society as it has penetrated the political, economic, social and cultural life of people in many nations of the world. According to Eze (2007), Information and Communication Technology has changed and improved the way we do practically everything and so, one cannot effectively and efficiently retrieve any programme in today's world without it. ICT is very important in teaching and learning language especially the Igbo language.

Meaning of Language/Igbo Language

Language is a means of communicating our ideas to a reader/ listener or audience. According to Hall in Lyons (1981), language is the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually, used oral auditory arbitrary symbols.

Igbo language is a language spoken by the Igbos. It is a badge through which the Igbo people speak both in private and public gathering. The Igbo people are one of the tribes in Nigeria. Igbo language is one of the three major languages studied in Nigerian schools.

It is a subject in educational system, which should be mastered properly like every other subject with the aid of ICTs systems.

ICTs Systems Necessary in Teaching and Learning Igbo Language in Nigeria Schools.

The ICTs system necessary for Igbo language teaching and learning are many and their usage by teachers and students depends on need. Examples of such ICTs systems are:

1. **Computer:** Computer, according to Bamiro in Ofoefuna and Eya (1999) is a machine that can process data to produce information at a speed and accuracy that are humanly impossible. It has been founded as an indispensable tool in language, education. It can be used to teach different drills and exercises in Igbo language. With the availability of CD ROMs, Igbo language topics can be put in CDs and used for individualized learning. The topics could be in Igbo literature, Igbo culture or Igbo Grammar. Computer can be used for Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) or learning in Igbo language.

2. **Internet:** Internet, according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2000) is an international computer network connecting other networks and computers from companies, universities etc. Internet is very important in teaching and learning Igbo Language as well as any African or foreign language. For example, in Igbo Language, teachers can use it to view and exchange lessons plans and language topics, keep abreast of recent development in language as well as share experience with professional colleagues. Both the teachers and students can make use of internet facilities in information search and knowledge enrichment. It is also used in distance learning, students receive learning materials do and hand in assignment test through the internet.

3. **Video Technologies:** These equipments are originally invented for journalism and entertainment before they found their way into educational system for the teaching and learning language. They appeal to the sense of seeing and hearing. Examples of these technologies are Video Camera, Video Cassette Recorder (VCR) and Video Disks. They are very effective media in teaching and learning of Igbo Language. For example, the VCR can be used to record content of a lesson and play back for full teaching or illustration which students observe on a monitor while the disk can be used for guided and independent practices of skills in Igbo Language like listening, speech and reading skills.

4. **Television:** Television offers wide range of aural and visual experience which is normally difficult for the teacher to provide in the classroom. It is a common electronic in many Nigerian families. Igbo Language awareness programmes and other programmes displaying various aspects of the life of Igbos especially cultural aspects should be televised in Igbo language to stimulate the youths to appreciate the culture. It can also be used to teach Igbo Grammar and to perform school dramas based on contemporary issues, and the drama should be acted in Igbo Language. It can also be used to teach large number of students at the same time by the teacher.

5. **Radio:** Radio, like television offers wide range of aural experience. It plays similar roles with television but the difference is that it lacks visual quality. It can be used in distance learning education. It can also be used in teaching listening, speech in Igbo language.

The Role of Information and Communication Technology in the Teaching and Learning of Igbo Language.

ICT is an aspect of technology that has a great impact in all aspect of human life in very profound manners. It plays very significant role in language education especially, Igbo Language. Firstly, it prepares both the teacher and the student to participate in a rapid changing world in which education and other activities are increasingly being transformed by access to technology.

It can be used as an instructional strategy to teach Igbo Language to the learner at every corner of the globe.

It can be used to teach larger number of students in Igbo Language far and near with immediacy. Take for instance in some of our Colleges of Education where we have large number of students offering Igbo, a lecturer may not need to give lectures to three different groups at different times.

He/She could just deliver to one group and cables and TV are used to present the exact thing to the other groups in other classrooms at the same time.

ICT promotes active participation: the television and computer progammes engage the imagination of the learner by permitting the creation of his own images and can be captivating.

Students' interest is sustained and ideas concretized using different resources at a pace that appeals to each student. Individual differences of students are accommodated such that slow and fast learners benefit from instructional approach as the process can be repeated several times. ICT enhances the students' attitude to learn. Students appear better motivated to learn, have increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

It enables the students to gather data that could otherwise be time-consuming, costly or both. For example, students can use the internet to get up-to-the minute information in any subject. They can use a CD ROM to watch Igbo dramas or festival, listen to Igbo music as well as folktales. It gives the teachers opportunity to experience growth when they could on current knowledge and understanding.

With ICT, large volume of information is made available to both the teacher and the students within a short period. ICT helps the students to receive learning materials, do and hand in assignments, test, through internet they can also participate through video conferencing.

Problems of Implementations of ICT

Despite the huge and immense benefits of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education, there are however, a number of obstacles hindering its effective implementations viz.

Low level of computer literacy among teachers: Lack of qualified teachers in the areas of ICT is a serious impediment. Only very few Igbo teachers are computer literate while majority are computer illiterate. It is obvious that such computer illiterate teachers will find it extremely difficult to deliver the appropriate education and training demanded by ICT age of 21st century for their students.

Lack of ICT facilities in schools/colleges: There is non-availability of ICT facilities for the teaching of Igbo language in our schools. Such facilities like computer, internet, radio cassette, television are not available. A well over 90 percent of schools in Nigeria are without ICT tools. For this reasons, teachers and students cannot make use of materials that do not exist in their schools.

Lack of Language Laboratories : language laboratories are very important in teaching language in schools, colleges and Universities. It could be seen as one of the attempts by modern education to apply Technology in education. It is an attempt to make the learner to speak like the model speakers of that particular language. It is very unfortunate that majority of Nigerian schools do not have it, few that have it do not make proper use of it, because some are not well equipped thereby making the teaching and learning of the language difficult.

Low Level of Funding By The Government: The cost of ICT equipment are quit high and this definitely determines the usage of this valuable and necessary Technology in Nigeria schools. Funding is a major constrain for making Nigeria schools ICT compliant. The current level of funding of education in Nigeria with low budgetary allocation to education sector is not encouraging.

Power Failure: Nigeria is a country that should experience uninterrupted power supply in view of the presence of kanji Dan and the amount of wealth generated from oil for its servicing but on the contrary, there is incessant power outage. This in no small way has a disruptive effect on utilization of ICT systems in Igbo language teaching and learning in Nigerian schools.

Inadequate Trained Manpower: Professionals to support the use of ICT are inadequate because most of this technologies are new and skilled-oriented and this effects proper utilizations of these systems.

Poverty: Majority of Nigerians are poor therefore, cannot afford to purchase these ICT systems because they are expensive. This might be the reason for the inadequate utilization of the important medium to most public schools in the country.

Recommendations

Government at all levels should make computer education compulsory. Computer literacy should be one of the conditions for employment of Igbo language teachers and for the serving teachers to stay on their job.

The Federal Government should make available all ICTS facilities to every school in Nigeria.

The Federal Government should review the current curriculum on language education which include Igbo language to incorporate elements of ICT in them.

Schools should be adequately equipped with computer, necessary softwares and on-line services. Our libraries should be equipped with current books on ICT. Such books should be made available to both teachers and students.

Provision of language laboratories in Nigeria schools by the government especially tertiary institution is very necessary because of its numerous advantages to both the teacher and the students. The government should make sure there is regular power supply in both urban and rural areas in the country.

The federal Government should also provide enough funds for the purchase of the ICT gadgets/ facilities by Nigerian schools.

There is need to provide scholarships for the training of adequate personnel in all areas of information technology.

Conclusion

It is obvious that ICT is a modern technology that is changing all facets of human Endeavour. It's importance in the teaching all and learning of Igbo language or language generally is overwhelming. The government should therefore try to provide the necessary ICT equipments for schools in the country. Teachers of Igbo language are encouraged to go for training and retraining in ICT courses.

These in no small way, will help for better utilization of information and communication technology ICT in Nigerian schools.

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