

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract

In a technologically developing world, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a crucial role and affects people's ways of life. ICT is in fact an effective method for language and literature learning because of the variety of tools available for teaching and learning them. This paper explores the potentials of ICT or technology towards language and literature teaching and explicates further the relevance of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to English Language teaching and learning. Given that ICT is an indispensable instrument for language development, this paper x-rays equally the impact of computer and internet services as tools for effective language and literature learning and development as well as their advantages, especially in the English Language. It is recommended that ICT centers be established in schools and colleges in Nigeria.

Information and Communication Technology for language learning aims at promoting and sharing good practice and transactional cooperation. Given that ICT is concerned with the storage, retrieval, manipulation, transmission and receipt of digital data, it has the potential to enrich both the teaching and learning process. In as much as the chalkboard, textbook, radios etc have been used for language and literature teaching purposes, none has impacted on the educational process like the computer and other ICT equipment. Information and Communication Technology and other aids can speed up the language learning process by offering

opportunities for practice. It not only provides for the language teacher a relatively safe environment but also a strong realistic language use.

In general terms, ICT creates a fertile learning environment particularly for the acquisition of a second language. It has made a triumphant entry into literature and English as it can help students work in team (ie collaborative and co-operative learning) and thus learn with the help of one another. ICT has the capacity to provide higher interactive potentials for users of a language to develop their individual intellectual and creative abilities. ICT stresses the role of unified communication and the integration of telecommunication to language learning.

The integration of ICT in second language and literature education has assumed the potential of new technological tools to revolutionize an outmoded education system. It has brought about the innovative use of web based learning in second language and literature learning, particularly in the area of English as a second language. Despite ICT's resounding success in English Language and Literature teaching, Baylor and Ritchie (2002) posit that regardless of the amount of technology and its sophistication, technology will not be used unless instructors have the skills, knowledge and attitude necessary to infuse it into the curriculum. This emphasizes the potentials and indispensable nature of teachers in literature and language teaching and learning.

ICT assists teachers to be more creative in their planning and preparation of teaching materials and use them effectively and flexibly. It is a sine qua non for effective modern language and literature teaching. It is in this respect the application of technological solutions in the development and learning of language.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and English Language Teaching

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is succinctly defined by Levy (1997) as the search for and study of applications of computer in language teaching and learning. It is now widely accepted to be a tool which can be used to facilitate the language learning process particularly English Language teaching. CALL embraces a wide range of ICT applications and approaches to teaching and learning of English Language. It can be used to reinforce what has already been learned in the classroom or as a remedial tool to help learners who require additional support.

The use of computers makes English classes vivid, pleasant and appealing to students. Computers among others are instruments for understanding and using language through spellings. Banditvilai (2000) discovered that students increase their motivation when they use the internet as an integral part of reading courses, and enabling them to develop reading skills and enriching their vocabulary. Computer Assisted Language Learning is equally useful in the area of pronunciation and speaking or oral skills if well applied. Yangklang (2006) used a CALL program to investigate the improvement of English pronunciation, particularly the final /-l/ pronunciation of 40 Thailand students. The students were divided into two groups: good and poor pronunciation abilities and the result revealed that pronunciation abilities of both groups of students were significantly improved

after using the CALL programme. CALL in this respect can help students correct grammatical mistakes and give some suggestions for certain expressions.

Furthermore, Kaewphitoon(2003) developed an English Language learning computer application. It was found that the students had positive attitude towards using the computer programme as it helped them improve their listening and speaking skills and they gained more confidence in speaking and listening. In the Nigerian context, this CALL can be of great assistance in Oral English teaching, grammar, vocabulary and so on.

The Internet

Nowadays, the internet is the principal medium by which students can communicate and learn languages. The internet offers a wide variety of reference materials like online dictionary where meanings of words can be searched for, encyclopedia and search mechanisms necessary for English language learning and development. Some of the possible reasons for using the internet in EFL classroom include increasing students' motivation,(Warschauer,1996b) and providing authentic audience for written communication. The internet creates optimal conditions for learning to write since it provides an authentic audience for written communication. It has been found that electronic discourse tends to be more lexically and syntactically more complex than oral discourse (Warschauer,1996a) as its linguistic nature of online communication is desirable for promoting language learning.

For proper language learning, both students and teachers can subscribe to electronic journals either by e-mail or using the (WWW) through the internet and keep new trends of English teaching which includes its dynamic status and methodology. The internet is considered the greatest innovation in the information technology as it aids and assists

English students and teachers compare and classify information and then work in team.

ICT and the Teaching of Literature in English

The learning of literature in any language requires the learner to read various literary texts. To be able to do this, the learner must have a good reading culture which unfortunately is lacking in many 21st century students. Nwosu (2010), Onwubiko (2010). ICT as a resource helps in motivating learners to read wide and be able to accomplish their goals. With the use of ICT, learners are exposed to information about varied authors and their texts.

Teachers and parents consider computer and internet as threats to education and indeed reading culture however, they are useful resources for teaching literature and reading. No wonder Ulmer (2007) according to Margan (2012) observed that some children compensate their limited literacy with what he called electracy (i.e electronic or computer literacy). Ulmer further predicts that in future, there will be four types of people: those well equipped with both literacy and electracy skills, those doing better in the world of literacy, those doing better in the world of electracy and those left out of both worlds. Since many 21st century children are more interested in electronic information rather than reading literary works, it becomes necessary that they are motivated to source for and gather valuable information through ICT for their study of literature in English. One of the ways of achieving this is through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and the Teaching of Literature

VLE is a teaching method meant to encourage curiosity among students. It has to do with those websites designed like spider webs, and organized to sustain students'

interest in a given reading material. It also provides relevant information on the literary text and the author as well as exposing the learner to the adequate learning environment that spores him/her to search for further information on such topics they have been exposed to.

Some examples of (VLE) are the Victorian web and the Romantic Circles. These make available for readers numerous links and references such as e-texts of almost any literary production of the period to detailed descriptions of the social, political, historical and economic context. VLE also provides cross-references to major literary works. One major advantage of the VLE is that it makes teaching child-centered. It also encourages the learner to go beyond the traditional classroom setting while activating in the learner what Greenwood (2007) called "Kinaesthetic learning".

Kinaesthetic learning is an essential feature of ICT use in English because it enables the use of different types of fonts, wide use of colour, the addition of sound and imported graphics and kinetic effects. Kinaesthetic learning as a resource for learning literature draws the teachers' attention to the importance of visual elements in motivating students to become involved in the study of literature.

Other uses of VLE include online discussions on a literary topic moderated by the teacher or set up by him. Such discussion makes it possible for students to formulate their ideas in response to literary texts and to share such with other students. It encourages students to engage in reflective activity with somebody outside their normal social group while at the same time providing them with additional mode in text response.

Advantages of ICT in the Teaching and Learning of Language and Literature

It enhances the teaching and learning of literature and language by serving as a library resource for learners. By this, we mean that ICT

opens access to rare resources such as manuscripts, rare printed works, books already out-of-print, works of art and other media. ICT motivates the learners to read extensively and gather more information than would have been the case, particularly in this era when learners prefer electronic reading to that of hard copy.

With the use of ICT, teachers can make their notes available on the web in advance of the physical lectures. This allows the teacher to include all relevant information that he may not be able to mention in class within the duration of the lesson. Furthermore, this method helps in providing the students with prior knowledge of what to be discussed in the lecture and to prepare their questions in advance.

ICT provides computer-mediated communication (CMC) which makes it possible for small group teaching to take place such as email discussion list and conferencing system. Others include capacity to control presentation, novelty and creativity, feedbacks, adaptability, storage and retrieval, and reaching the world in a moment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the application of information Communication technology to language and literature gives better opportunities for global learning and communication and greatly enhances English Language and Literature learning as discussed above. Most importantly, ICT though it has tremendous potentials in English and Literature teaching and learning should not be considered a replacement or substitution for classroom teachers.

Finally, technology is indispensable in language and literature teaching but it is never a substitute for good teaching. Without skilled instructors who can control and manipulate technology, no electronic delivery can achieve good result. If technology can be used

effectively to improve the delivery of English and Literature, they offer worthwhile prizes.

Recommendations

In view of the importance of ICT in language and literature learning, we therefore recommend as follows:

1. ICT centers be established in schools and colleges in Nigeria.
2. That all English teachers as a matter of urgency should endeavour to become computer literate.
3. That English language and literature teachers should apply CALL and VLE in their language and literature teaching.

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