

THE EFFECTIVE USE OF ICT IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ORAL ENGLISH IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Immersion with the target language is considered one of the significant factors for successful second language learning. This situation requires the learner to live in the environment where the target language is spoken and totally immerse with the society and culture of the people in order to gain linguistic competence in the language. But the situation whereby learners are unable to take advantage of study abroad opportunities, the use of blended learning approach where the learners can have access to the voice of the native speakers through technology can suffice. The advent of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) ushered in the application of smart technology in language learning; most especially, oral English and it has become an inevitable tool towards achieving accelerated digitalization. This paper examines the effective use of ICT in the teaching and learning of oral English in Nigerian secondary schools. It is hinged on the social learning theory which sees the learner as learning better by imitation and interaction. Five research questions were used to elicit information from respondents. The responses point to the Unavailability and inadequacy of some ICT facilities in secondary schools as the core hindrances towards the effective teaching and learning of oral English. It is recommended among other things that teachers be equipped to explore the use of technology in their language learning classrooms in order to prepare students to learn in this era of digitalization.

Keywords: ICT, language, digitalization, blended learning.

Introduction

The most common means by which human beings communicate with one another is language. Intuitively, language exists in three forms, speech, gesture and writing. However, language primarily exists in the spoken form such that any other representation of language such as writing is only of secondary importance since all human interlocutors normally claim to know a language once they can speak the language very well. This has led Pinker (1994:16) to the conclusion that “the real engine of verbal communication is the spoken language.

Generally, when speech sounds are produced, they are perceived by the ears before they are transmitted via the natural network to the brain for possible interpretation. In order to adequately characterize the sound system of a given language, scholars who are interested in the spoken aspect of the language often distinguish between phonetic and phonological analyses. The domain of phonetics is concerned with the description and classification of speech sounds. By attempting to analyze speech sounds through a three way classificatory system, phoneticians normally rely on the state of the glottis, place of articulation and manner of articulation to account for the full range of possible speech sounds within the human language.

Phonology on the other hands is the branch of linguistics that is concerned with the systematic organization of sounds in languages. Phonology employs the work of phonetics to describe sound systems and by extension, explain sound processes (Sloat, Taylor & Hoard, 1978: 7). If this is the case, the Nigerian users of English should aim at pronouncing English words in a way that brings out their messages best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of communication will not be lost.

Hence, as important as it is, the English language teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools should not be handled lightly. The teaching and learning of the English language here do not only refer to grammar but also oral English. Iyiola (2010:2) affirms “to say that English of Nigerians is appalling is to state the obvious, this is because over the years attention has not been paid to the teaching of the speech sounds of English in schools... he further observes however, the emphasis in recent times on the phonic method of teaching English at the primary school level, and the inclusion of an oral English component in the SSCE Syllabus is an indication of a renewed interest in correct pronunciation”. Oral English is now an integral and essential part of the English Language syllabus that also carries reasonable mark in the school certificate Examinations.

Oral English is integrated in the school curriculum, not only for the purpose of examination but also to teach students how to speak English language correctly and meaningfully for effective communication (Omosowene and Akindolire 2003:126). The study will necessarily demand intensive practice, not only within the classroom but also outside it at home, among friends and so on.

Hence the advent and widespread of the use of information communication Technology (ICT) as the developed nations of the world have recognized the digital information era as the era of great changes both in education and other sectors of human endeavors .The present era is characterized by the fusion of the digital, biological and physical words, as well as the growing utilization of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, robotics, 3D printing, the internet and advanced wireless technologies, among others.

Owing to this, they termed ICT a veritable instrument of change. Undoubtedly, information and communication Technology (ICT) has influenced greatly the academic work and performance of students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions both at the international, national and state levels. Information and communication Technology (ICT) applied to education enhances the delivery and access to knowledge and improves curriculum. It produces richer learning outcomes compared to education without ICT. It encourages critical thinking and offers unlimited means of achieving educational goals.

Objectives

- ❖ To examine the available facilities for teaching and learning of oral English in selected secondary schools.
- ❖ To examine the benefits of ICT in the teaching and learning of Oral English in secondary schools.
- ❖ To find out the factors that militate against the effective use of ICT in secondary schools.

The Discourse/ Concept of ICT

Information and communication Technology simply means the use of application, the study of development and support or management of the computer based information system. The term is commonly used as a synonym for computers and computer networks but it also comprises other information distribution technologies such as television and telephone (Chandler, Daniel et al 2012).

According to UNESCO (2004), Information and communication Technology is defined in three ways. First, it is the technology, application of information technology to the society. Secondly, it is the science dealing with design, realization and evaluation. It is also the use and maintenance of information processing systems, including hardware, software organization and human aspects, and the industry,

commercial, government and political implications of these, and thirdly as the combination of information technology with other related technologies. UNESCO added that “these definitions of ICT have been collapsed into a single, all-encompassing definition, which implies that ICT will be used, applied and integrated in activities of working and learning.

According to Adebayo (2005) cited in Egbe (2010), in education, this technology covers the use of computers, radio, satellites, online self-learning packages, tele- presence system, interactive CDS, video, internet, optical fiber technologies and all types of information Technology (IT) hardware and software. Egbe (2010:168) affirms that “using tapes, television and videos, the teacher can make the children listen and watch the enunciation of the standard varieties as well as other forms from across the world, thereby creating versatility and flexibility in their speech”. He further states that language laboratories with at least a radio cassette player, television with a multimedia receiver like the DSTV, as well as the video compact disk player should be installed in all public schools for use in teaching English pronunciation.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is hinged on the social learning theory. The behaviorists who propounded this theory were of the view that learning was better achieved by imitation, interaction and modeling. This theory which is propounded by Albert Bandura (1963) emphasizes that learners pay attention to the crucial details of the model’s behavior. He identified three core concepts at the heart of the social learning theory. They are: observational process, modeling process and interaction process.

Dixon-Kraus (2006) confirms that interactions between learners and peers are necessary part of the learning process. Mcinery (2002:35) writes “There are capabilities that are beyond the learners on their own, but are able to carry them out with the assistance of more knowledgeable peers”. Such form of interaction is evident on internet and local net rooms which provide both multimedia interactions for peers, teachers and learners. Jonassen (2002) writes that the use of modeling environment on the computer (ICT facility) allows learners to develop a very deep sense of understanding of the concept involved. ICT facilities allow learners to share varieties of file using the World Wide Web (WWW). Social learning theory serves as a means of improving academic outcomes for students, since some elements of lessons and techniques are not always apparent to students. It is important to help students to know what an unfamiliar practice actually consists of and what the rationale for learning it is. By emphasizing the teachers’ role as model and encourage the students to adopt the position of observer, the teacher can make knowledge and practices explicit to students, thereby enhancing their learning outcomes.

Review of Related Literature

Information and communication Technology (ICT) according to the Nigerian National policy for information Technology (2000) is defined in two ways: first, as computer auxiliary equipment, software and hardware and similar procedure, services (including support services and related resources), and secondly as any equipment that is used in the automatic acquisition, storage, manipulation, management or reception of data and information.

There is interference of the sound system of Nigerian languages on English. Since each language has its own set of distinctive sounds, one can expect that where two languages are very dissimilar, the second language learner may perceive or produce a particular sound in the target language like the most similar sound in his own language. Nigerians, therefore substitute the sounds of English for those that are similar in their native language. These affect the consonant and vowel sounds. Voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ is substituted for voiced labio-dental fricative. /v/ eg ‘van’ as ‘fan’, verse as ‘ferse’ etc. voiceless alveolar fricatives /s/ is substituted for voiced alveolar fricatives /z/.

Also, there is the absence of dental fricatives in many Nigerian languages. So such phonemes like /θ/ - th, /ð/ - they are often produced as /t/ or /d/ or /z/ by some Nigerian speakers of English. /t/, a voiceless alveolar plosive and /f/, a voiceless labio-dental fricative are substituted for the voiceless dental fricative /θ/

English	Nigerian language
Tenth	tent
Teeth	teet
Theory	teori
Thank	tank
Thing	tin
With	wit

/d/, a voiced alveolar plosive and /z/ a voiced alveolar fricative are substituted for the voiced dental fricative /ð/

English	Nigerian language
Brother	broda
Father	fada
Mother	moda
They	dey

Most Nigerians substitute the vowel sounds of their mother tongue for English vowel sounds. The long vowel /i:/ is substituted for the short vowel /i/. Nigerians pronounce 'seat' as 'sit, sheep as 'ship', steal 'still' etc.

The central vowels /ʌ/, /ə/ /ɜ:/ are not in Nigerian languages. They use the nearest sound of their mother tongue to represent them.

English	Nigerian Language
Bus /bʌz/	/bɔ:s/
But /bʌt/	/bɔ:t/
Doctor /dɒktə/	/dɔktə/
Learn /lɜ:n/	/lɛ:n/
Word /wɜ:d/	/wɔd/
Work /wɜ:k/	/wɔk/

English differs in syllabus structure from Nigerian languages. This is because different languages have different ways of combing their sounds to make words. English syllable structure is represented as (C⁰⁻³) V (C⁰⁻⁴). This means that there can be between one and three consonants in a cluster at the beginning of a word before a vowel and maximum of four consonants in a cluster at the end of a syllable (C) V. The result is that when a Nigerian speaker of English comes across a consonant cluster in English, he tries to make it fit into the pattern he already knows very well. They insert vowels otherwise known as word epenthesis. So the word 'spy' becomes 'spai'.

English is a stress-timed language; this means that the stressed syllabus occur at equal interval of time. Hence English is rendered in a fast way. In English, not every word is given equal prominence in speech. However, most Nigerian languages are syllable-timed. The syllables occur at equal intervals of time. Nigerians therefore transfer the way they speak their mother tongue to the English language.

The use Information and communication Technology in the Teaching and learning of Oral English.

The wide use of information and communication Technology in Education has equally affected the teaching and learning of Oral English. No wonder, Butter-Pascoe as cited in Akabogu (2007) argues that technology can provide students with language experiences as they move through the various stages of language acquisition. She points to the limitless opportunities that students using the online database have access to the native speakers of the English language which allows the second language learners to access the voice patterns of their speech with that of a native speaker.

Otagburuagu and Eze (2007) equally notes that computer programmes such as Microsoft word, Microsoft power point, Microsoft publisher, Coral-draw, etc can be brought to the aid of language teaching and learning. Again, internet programmes such as Microsoft internet explorer, goggle, encyclopedia, dictionary, voice command etc can offer tremendous assistance in the teaching and learning of the English language. Hence, through the use of internet, word processor, multimedia drill and practice programmes, students can engage in individualized instruction designed to meet their specific needs and participate in corporative projects that foster communication with peers in their classrooms and throughout the global community. Pope and Golub posit that in this ICT dominated era, language arts teachers must be ready to step into the status quo as well as to advance the teaching profession by infusing technology into their teaching.

Challenges to the Effective Implementation of ICT in Secondary Schools

- Cost of Infrastructure
- Paucity of ICT infrastructure and lack of access
- Unsteady and inadequate electrical power supply
- Lack of skilled manpower.

The Data/Area of Study

The study consists 138 final year students (SSIII) in selected secondary school in Owerri North LGA. The schools include: Girls secondary school, Akwakuma, Comprehensive secondary school, Amakohia, Uratta secondary school, Orji comprehensive secondary school and Emekuku high school.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data was collected through the use of questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was designed to elicit required information from the respondents that is seeking information on the available ICT facilities in secondary schools how far the ICT facilities are used in teaching and learning of Oral English as well as its benefits and implementation.

Method of Adata Analysis

The data collected was analyzed according to the research questions formulated for this study. The researchers used simple percentage and mean rating to analyze the data. Mean score of 2.50 is accepted as positive response. The researchers used the following simple percentage formular.

$$\text{YES} = \frac{\text{Number of positive response}}{\text{Total number of responses}} \times 100$$

$$\text{NO} = \frac{\text{Number of Negative responses}}{\text{Total number of responses}} \times 100$$

Discussion of Findings

Question 1:

What are the available ICT facilities for the teaching and learning of Oral English in your school?

Table I: Responses of students and teachers on the available ICT facilities for the teaching and learning of Oral English in their schools. S is for students and T is for teachers.

S/N	ICT facilities	% Responses of Availability	% Responses of Non Availability	Decision
1.	Computer	S = 72, T=4=76	S = 66, T= 4=70	Available
2.	Internet	0	S =138, T= 0	Not available
3.	Software services	0	S-136, T= 2	Not available
4.	Voice synthesizer/ recognition	0	S-138 T=0	Not available
5.	CD ROM	S-55, T=3=58	S=83, T=5=88	Available
6.	Projectors	0	S=138, T=0=138	Not available

From table I, the available ICT facilities in the secondary schools in Owerri North are computers and CD ROM, others are not readily available.

Question 2: What are the benefits of ICT in the teaching and learning of Oral English in your school?

Table 2:

S/N	Question Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Score	Remark
1.	It allows the Students to have access to reliable audience	S T 114 +6 = 120	S T 19+1 =20	S T 5+1 =6	S T 0	138	3.7	Accepted
2.	It allows the students to access the voice patterns of their speech with that of a native speaker	S T 114+6 =120	S T 19+1 =20	S T 5+1 =6	S T 0	138	3.7	Accepted
3.	It creates collaborative learning environment in which students can acquire and practice new language	S T 144 +6 =120	S T 19 +1 =20	S T 5+1 =6	S T 0	138	3.7	Accepted

Table 2 shows the mean responses of students on the benefits of ICT in the teaching and learning of Oral English in schools. The responses show their agreement on the benefits of ICT. 3.7ST agrees that it allows the students to access the voice patterns of their speech with that of a native speaker. It also creates collaborative learning environment and enhances all L₂ learners contact with the target language.

Question 3:

What are the factors that impede the effective use of ICT in the teaching and learning of Oral English in schools?

Table 3 Responses of students and teachers on the factors that impede the effective use of ICT.

S/N	Factors	% Responses of YES	% Response of NO
1.	Knowledge of ICT	S=124, T=7=131	S=14, T=1 =15
2.	Constant electric power failure	S=113, T=6=119	S=25, T=2=27
3.	Absence of language Laboratories	S=138, T =0	0
4.	Access to internet facilities	S =138, T=0	0

From the table, the responses agree that the following impede the effective use of ICT in the teaching and learning of Oral English, lack of knowledge of ICT, constant electric power failure, absence of language laboratories etc.

Conclusion

This paper is primarily concerned with the impact of the effective use of ICT in the teaching and learning of Oral English in secondary schools. Also to ascertain the readiness of students and teachers on the use of ICTs as the world turns digital. From the analysis and discussion of findings, the researchers observed that ICT facilities are not adequately provided for the schools and the available ones are not even used by the teachers. A good number of the students and the teachers possess some basic ICT Skills such as booting of computer, saving of document, recording and playing of tape etc point, retrieving information from the internet, and the use of projector.

Recommendations

1. The school administrators should request government’s assistance to provide ICT facilities in the schools.
2. There should be constant supply of electricity to secondary schools or generating plants as alternatives, for effective use of ICT facilities in case of power failure.

3. The students should be encouraged to use the technological resources available for effective spoken English practice like audio blogging, pod casting and video casting, video conferencing, and voice chatting.

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