Using ICT in Learning English Language as a Second Language for Ukwuani L1 Speaker

Florence Etuwe Oghiator

College of Education, Agbor, Nigeria

Anyone who reflects on the future agrees that the world is undergoing a process of social and technological changes for economic development and advancement. ICT (information and communication technology) is a dynamic force of those changes, and language is the principal tool for communication technology in both verbal and non-verbal forms. This study examines the use of ICT in learning the English language as an L2 (second language) for Ukwuani L1 (first language) speaker. This paper also discusses some information about the Ukwuani language. We go further to discuss the role of the English language in Nigeria, which includes: solving socio linguistic and ethnic problems in communication, used as a national lingual Franca, used as a medium of instruction in schools, and used for administration and commerce. We also examines the importance of ICT in language learning, which among others; facilitates intercommunication of the learners and the teachers and also offers opportunity for learners of English language to practice outside the classroom. This study also delves into the ICT facilities for English language learning; which are: Internet, FAX (facsimile transmission), teleconferencing, E-mail (electronic mail), VRC (voice recognition computers), and electronic organiser. Finally, we look at Ukwuani L1 speaker using ICT for learning English as an L2.

Keywords: ICT (information and communication technology) language learning, national lingual Franca, developmental breakthrough, linguistic super-ordinate

Introduction

English language wears an imposing look among other subjects that are learnt. This has made English language teachers to have the belief that English language is the most important element in the school system. In Nigeria in general and in Ukwuani speaking areas in particular, the English teacher lords it over teachers of other languages, for example, secondary and primary schools in Ukwuani linguistic environment are filled with the injunctions like "anyone who speaks vernacular other than English language in the school or class, will pay a fine". At the higher institutions of learning in Nigeria, English is superior to any other language; therefore, if a student speaks any other language apart from English language, that student is taken to be inferior.

English is the official language and a language of commerce and industry in Nigeria, and it is also used as a means of instruction at all levels of educational system in Nigeria. Therefore, learning English language through

Florence Etuwe Oghiator, Ph.D. student, School of Languages, College of Education.

ICT (information and communication technology) will facilitate and enhance the learning of English as an L2 (second language) by an Ukwuani L1 (first language) speaker.

Language Information

Ukwuani language is spoken by the people of Ukwuani or Ndokwa in Delta State of Nigeria. Ndokwa is a coinage from the names of two former district councils in Aboh division, namely, Ndosumili and Ukwuani district councils, which later became Ndokwa Local Government Area. Today the people occupy three local government areas. These are Ndokwa West, Ndokwa East, and Ukwuani Local Government Areas.

The Ukwuani people live in the southern part of Delta North and have slight dialectal differences in the language based on their closeness to the four ethnic groups at their borders. These are: Igbo, Urhobo, Isoko, and Izon. The influence of these languages is manifest in their pronunciations.

There are different dialects of Ukwuani language. These are Onu-Aboh, Ukwuani Akashi, Utagba dialect, and Osissa dialect. The one spoken by most of the Ukwuani people is the dialect that is regarded as the standard dialect, and it is the Utagba dialect that is spoken by the people occupying Ndokwa West Local Government Area and part of the group that occupy Ukwuani Local Government Area. The standard dialect is easily understood by speakers of other dialects.

From the varying accounts of the elders, three waves of migration appeared to account for the present population of the Ukwuani people. Okolugbo (2004, p. 2) stated that the first wave are represented by the clans of Umu-Akashiada, Ebedei, and Akarai who claimed to have migrated from Benin. Second waves of independent settlers are those whose ancestors migrated from the Eastern Nigeria. The clans in this group include: Abara, Utu-Otu, Umu-Obarauchi, Ndoni, Onya, and Adawai, and they settled along the banks of river Niger. A third wave is in the form of a well organize expedition of Edo conquerors and this group include Aboh, Amai and Umukwata (Okolugbo, 2004, p. 3). Ogbe-Ani in Utagba-Ogbe also claimed to migrate from ancient Benin kingdom.

Okolugbo (2004, p. 4) stated that apart from those three major waves of immigration, there are also mixed eastern and western Igbo origin Edo immigrant. Ukwuani people like other ethnic groups in delta state had a colonial encounter, English, which is the colonial masters, language is used for formal education, commerce, government establishments, and public places.

The Role of English Language in Nigeria

Oghiator (2011), stated that the role of English in Nigeria dated back to the colonial period, when English became an useful tool for colonial masters. She further referred that English which was used by European traders to facilitate commercial interactions with Nigerians centuries ago, became linguistic superior/super-ordinate while other Nigerian languages formed the subordinates.

Consequently, Oghiator (2011) asserted that English is the language of communication among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. She also posited that since Nigeria is a multilingual nation, English is used to solve the socio-linguistic and ethnic problems in communication. English integrates Nigeria, not only in education, but also in the area of sports, culture, government, and democracy.

Onyelaran in Obodeh-Oghiator (2011) emphasizing the importance of English in Nigeria, asserted that: "The 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic does not recognize that right of an individual Nigerian to receive information in language of his choice other than the English Language, except when he is alleged to be a criminal" (p. 2).

Also, Sofunke asserted in Obodeh-Oghiator (2011) that: "The needs of international viability in modern world, among others dictate the adoption of English as the official national language" (p. 3). She further quoted Sofunke (2004) that:

> Although spoken by majority of the educated, one can rightly say that English being the official language of administration, commerce and education is our national lingual-franca because it serves as official medium of linguistic communication between people with about 268 languages. (p. 34)

Similarly, Achebe in Obodeh-Oghiator (2011) affirmed that: "We can believe in the value of English to the very survival of the Nigerian nation without feeling like deserters" (p. 3). Consequently, since Nigeria is a multilingual nation, English is used to solve the socio-linguistic and ethnic problems in communication. Akpojisheri (2009, p. 114) cited Akindele and Adegbite's posits that apart from being a medium of social and inter-ethnic communication, English is a national language since it is used to conduct legislative, executive, and judicial functions at the three tiers of government.

English language has been adapted for home use in Nigeria. Many writers have suggested that Nigeria should adopt English to suit its purpose. As Jowit (1999) said: "We might regard Nigerian English as English that has England as first mother and Nigeria as its second, and has defied nature by undergoing gynecological re-processing" (p. 46).

In the same vein, Akpojisheri (2009) quoted Osakwe that:

> If England lays the first claim to English, she will not deny that nativization of the language in Nigeria soil, entitles Nigeria to some claims of its ownership. Is it not for similar reasons that foster parents are often granted custody to the disappointment of some biological parents? English is not just deeply rooted in some homes… it actually flowers and bears fruits, as fascinating hybrid, unique in Nigeria. (p. 144)

English is the center of intra-national and international intelligibility. The English language is widely accepted for usage at national and international levels. Osakwe (2011) asserted that: "English is the vehicle which discharges Nigerian talents at strategic places of developmental breakthrough across the globe" (p. 28). Most books used in different subjects in Nigeria and Delta State in particular are written in English, especially major disciplines such as sciences, social sciences, and arts textbooks. In Ukwuani speaking area in Delta State, English is used as a medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools. It is learnt as a subject.

Importance of ICT in Language Learning

ICT speeds up language learning process by offering opportunity for learners of the English language to practice outside the classroom. ICT provides the English language learner and the teacher a relatively safe environment and also a strongly realistic use of language. ICT in learning English as an L2 will facilitate the intercommunication of the learners and the teachers. ICT learning facilitates global interactions among language users, providing opportunities for language use and participation in the L2 communication.

Information technology has positively impacted the learning of language. Braimoh (2008) posited that computers have made possible high-speed data processing and solution to complex statistical problems in offices, schools, and organizations. As Ntukidem (2005) put it, the amount of information contained in a pair of floppy

disk could fill an average size book. Some of these information's are interactive while others are not. But, the basic fact is that the information be interactive or not, is the means of language.

ICT Facilities for English Language Learning

There are some tasks faced in the challenges of ICT, an innovation in the language learning process. These tasks involved the use of some facilities and some of these facilities are: Internet, FAX (facsimile transmission), teleconferencing, E-Mail (electronic mail), VRC (voice recognition computers), and electronic organizer.

Internet

Internet is a worldwide computer network that provides information on very many subjects and enables users to exchange messages. Internet is super highway information between computer users worldwide. It enables all types of computers to share services and communication directly. Awake (1997) said through Internet, a user shares information transfer files and send messages Internet makes it possible for information to flow through any different interconnected computer networks. For instance, if a second English language learners' PC (personal computer) is connected to the Internet, he can access information on specific areas/topics in the language. For example, on English morphology, syntax, semantics, and the sound system which mostly affect his learning of English as an L2.

Teleconferencing

Akporowho (2000) in Braimoh (2008) saw teleconferencing as an activity where users converse with others in real time, speaking through the screen. If the PC has a webcam, the speakers can see themselves when they communicate with others. With teleconferencing group of users from different continent and different geographical locations are linked together. With this type of ICT, the Ukwuani L1 learner of English language will have adequate and direct access in learning English efficiently. The Ukwuani L1 learner of English as an L2 will have easy access with the native speakers/L1 speakers of English. This will help in solving the problem of transfer from mother tongue of the Ukwuani L1 learner of English.

The E-mail

This facility enables two or more persons to communicate by writing via computer. Pulliantti (1989) stated that "a letter or a memo from one person is typed into a computer which is sent to another via telephone and stored until the receiver asks for it" (pp. 5-7). This means that e-mail is like the surface mail with the computer acting as the post office. The e-mail provides every user with an electronic box with which they can search for their mail using a PC and a device called modern: What the parties involved need to do is using an address code for the message. This system of ICT also helps the second English language learners in getting the right information for their target language.

VRC

This is a type of computer that is capable of recognizing human voice into sensible form. The use of keyboard could be completely cut off by the machine. This type of device makes the learning of phonetics and phonology of the English language more flexible to learn as an L2 by the Ukwuani L1 speaker. This is because the correct sounds of the words in the language are heard by the leaner. Also this aspect of ICT in language learning facilitates the grammatical and syntactic and lexico-semantics aspects of the English language, because the learner hears the words, phrases, and sentences directly through the voice.

Ukwuani L1 Speaker Using ICT for Learning English as an L2

Language learning involves a major of many interrelated skills. The Ukwuani L1 speaker learning English as an L2 is faced with difficulties. Such difficulties include the morphological, phonological, syntactic, and lexico-semantic aspects of English language.

Morphological Problems

The Ukwuani L1 speaker finds it difficult in forming words and the structure of words in English. This results in deletion or addition of morphemes are in English words. Examples are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

English Words and Their Forms in Ukwuani

English	Ukwuani
Cup	Cupu
See	Seei
Jump	Jumpu
Give	Givu
Understand	Understandi
Bring	Bringi
Take	Taky
Start	Starti
Chulk	Chulku
Table	Tabulu
Boy	Boyi
Instruction	Instrution
Captivate	Caputivate/Cativate

The Ukwuani/English speakers also encounter problems with English inflections and derivations. But with ICT learning, the Ukwuani L1 speaker will improve on the study of English words.

Phonological Problems

Phonology refers to the way whereby speech sounds are used in a particular language. There are 44 phonemes of vowel and consonant description in English while there are 40 phonemes of vowel and consonant description in Ukwuani. The sounds (in Ukwuani) acquired by Ukwuani L1 learning English affects his learning of the English language negatively. For instance, the dental fricatives /0 ð/ are not present in Ukwuani language phonemes. The Ukwuani L1 learner of English therefore, realizes /td/ in place of the dental fricatives /0/ in words such as than /0in/ for /tin/, thank /0ænk/ for /tank/. Learning through ICT will minimize this problem.

Syntactic Problems

In learning English as an L2, the Ukwuani L1 speaker of English finds some problems in adopting the syntactic pattern in English sentence construction and English sentence rules. This is seen in Examples (1)-(2):

Example (1) English

Jane	is	a	big	girl
Noun	preposition	article	adjective	noun

Example (2) Ukwuani

Jane	b<u>u</u>	mg<u>oto</u>	shini	nne
Noun	preposition	noun	determiner	adjective

Learning through ICT will reduce or eradicate the problems of syntactic pattern which actually affect the Ukwuani L1 learner of English to a very great extent as can be seen in Examples (3)-(4)[1]: Example (3) incorrect sentence

*My father is at the back of the house (correct sentence)

My factor is behind the house

Example (4) (a) *We were told to pay two, two naira

(b) We were told to pay two naira each (correct sentence)

Lexico-Semantics

The Ukwuani L1 speaker, learning English as an L2 also encounter some problems in the meaning of words and sentences in the L2. Therefore, the influence of the meaning of the L1 is transferred to the meaning of the L2. This is seen in Examples (5)-(7):

Example (5) (a)* I am a big man (incorrect)

(b) I am a rich man (correct)

Example (6) (a) *The story is sweet (incorrect)

(b) The story is interesting (correct)

Example (7) (a) *The cake has good scent (incorrect)

(b) The cake has good flavor (correct)

Those language problems can be solved through ICT learning.

Conclusions

The author feels that knowing the English language is absolutely necessary for every educated man, every good specialist, and every professional. Therefore, learning English as an L2 by an Ukwuani L1 speaker has numerous advantages, because much information about English language is on the Internet. There are e-dictionaries, computer language learning programmes, video films, and various websites which help the Ukwuani/English language learners do learn English effectively. With ICT learning, one can communicate with people all over the world especially through microphone and web camera.

Finally, ICT is the cheapest and most comfortable way for people of different ages to learn languages; therefore, it is a perfect tool for foreign language learning in general and for English language learning in particular. ICT style of language learning and communication improves speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills for Ukwuani L1 speaker learning English as an L2.

References

Afolayan, A. (1984). The English language in Nigeria education as an agent of proper multilingual and multicultural development. *Journal of Multilingual Development, 5,* 134.

Akpojisheri, M. O. (2009). English language: A vehicle for national development. *Nigeria Journal of Research and Production, 14*(1), 114.

Atama, M. (2001). *Hints on communication*. Ibadan: Safinas Publishers.

---

[1] The asterisk followed means the sentence is wrong, that is, incorrect sentence.

Awake, W. (1997, June). *The role of information and communication technology in management theory and practice*. London: Ashford Color Press.

Braimoh, M. Z. (2008). Technology: Veritable tool for functional and qualitative polytechnic education in Nigeria. *Journal of Teacher Perspective Benue State University Makurdi, 2*(3), 375-386.

Ene, I. O. (2006). *Multilingualism in Nigeria and the challenges of education in 21st century knowledge review* (Vol. 13). Onitsha: NAFAK (National Association for the Advancement of Knowledge).

Jowitt, D. (1999). *Nigerian englis usage: An introduction*. Ikeja: Longman.

Ntukidem, E. (2005). Reforms in information and communication technology: Challanges and implications to business educators. *Business Education Journal, 1*(5), 1-10.

Obodeh-Oghiator, F. E. (2011). A contrastive analysis of the morphological structures of the English language and the Ukwuani language (M.A. thesis, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma).

Oghiator, F. E. (2011). The role of English language alonguage with Nigerian language in entrenching democracy and good governance in Nigeria. A paper presented in *First National Conference of the Schools of Languages, Arts and Social Sciencies*, Okene, Kogi State.

Oghiator, F. E., & Odia, A. U. (2010). English language in a multilingual environment and national development. *Benue Valley Journal of Humanities, 9,* 206-215.

Okolugbo, O. E. (2004). *History of the Ukwuani and Ndosumili people of the Niger Delta*. Benin City. Ethiope Publication.

Osakwe, M. (2011). *Tending, bending and breaking vagabond English for global needs*. Abraka: Abraka University Press.

Oyelaran, O. O. (2004). Language marginalization and national development in Nigeria (Multilingualism, Minority Languages and Language Policy in Nigeria, Agbor Central Book).

Pulliantti, F. (1989). Atenax—A computer network by the NGO's development communication report (Vol. 67, pp. 5-7) (NGO development communication report).

Sofunke, B. (2004). *National language policy for democratic Nigerian: Minority language and language policy in Nigeria*. Agbor: Central Books.