

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Effective Teaching/Learning of Arabic Language in Southwest Nigerian Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities and effective teaching/learning of Arabic in public universities in Southwest Nigeria. The study specifically examined the level of use of ICT facilities and the challenges facing the use of ICT facilities in the teaching/learning of Arabic language in universities in Southwest Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the use of ICTs in schools have a great impact on teaching/ learning of Arabic Language. Despite the roles ICTs can play in education, schools in Nigeria have yet to extensively adopt them for teaching and learning. Efforts geared towards integration of ICTs into the school system, have not had much impact. Problems such as lack of training opportunity in the use of ICT, obsolete equipment, phobia for using ICT tools , fast changing of ICT tools, limited access to ICT facilities, lack of operational knowledge, dearth of technical staff, poor funding, irregular power supply, insufficient time to practice, lack of funds to procure ICT facilities among others. In order to ensure that ICTs are widely adopted and used in Nigeria's school system, the following efforts should be taken. Government should ensure that ICT policy statements are translated into reality. An ICT policy implementation commission should be created. This commission should be funded and given the power to provide ICT facilities in the schools and monitor their use. Computer/ICT education should be made compulsory for all universities lecturers. There should be ICT training for lecturers.

Keywords: Arabic Language, Teaching, Learning, ICT, use of ICT, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

ICT comprises of information technology, telephony, electronic media, and all types of process, transfer of audio, video signals, all control and managing functions based on network technologies as known as the Internet (Celebic & Rendulic, 2011). ICT can be assigned as getting information to personal life such as information about health, hobbies, recreation, and spiritual, and for profession sector namely science, technology, trade, business, and news of the association profession (Gulhane, 2016). As seen today, the use of ICT in education has caused introduction of substantial changes in learning and teaching (Lee, 2001).

In addition, ICT has brought many benefits to higher learning institutions, and it is evident that any university shunning ICT is imperilling its survival (Ansah, 2013). Countries in Southeast Asia can be divided into three stages of ICT development. Some countries have already integrated the use of ICT in the higher education system (such as Singapore). Others are starting to apply and test various strategies (such as Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand) (Hong & Songan, 2011). Nigeria is included in the group of countries that have a low use of ICT, due to the distribution of computer and Internet users which are not evenly distributed (Hermana, 2014).

Moreover, the development of ICT in the institution of higher education in Nigeria is a minus value of the use of ICT (Perbawaningsih, 2013). This condition makes the country expressed as lower-middle income (Hong & Songan, 2011). This is due to the occurrence of the digital divide (Hermana, 2014) which is caused by several factors. These factors include the infrastructure facilities and affordability (Madhubhashini, Salman, Mahmood, & Ahmad, 2013), also the inability to operate a variety of existing information technology (Zulham, 2014), caused by lack of skill or knowledge (Yulfitri, 2008), and motivation (Dijk, 2012).

ICT usage in the teaching-learning environment can bring a rapid change in society and has the potential to transform the nature of education. Therefore, the role of lecturers in the learning process should be emphasized at this point. It is essential that teachers/lecturers must have basic ICT knowledge and competencies (Fathima, 2013). Without qualified

educational personnel's (i.e. lecturers), learning process—which is the main service to the students as the primary customers—will not be able to take place properly (Danarwati, 2013).

Arabic Language Lecturers appear not effective in the teaching of Arabic language in classrooms. They seem not performing as expected in incorporating ICT to their academic activities knowledge and skills appears not apply by the lecturers to improve the lives of Arabic students, and so on. The services of lecturers are numerous and if the ICT facilities are not properly utilized, there might be ineffectiveness in the teaching /learning of Arabic language in the universities in Southwest Nigeria.

The perceived ineffectiveness in teaching/learning of Arabic language, in Southwest Nigerian universities could be predicated on a number of factors. These include: poor use of ICT, and challenges facing the use of ICT.

Concept of University Education

The prime of place education occupies in the developmental effort of nations has never been doubted the world over. Perhaps this is why the renowned Professor Blaike remarked that education is the biggest industry that touches on every fabric of our human endeavour Blaike (2002). Various nations, including Nigeria, have been making conscientious efforts to harness this important sector for optimal development. Although much has been achieved in this regard, much still needs to be done in order to confront effectively the ever-increasing challenges of our time.

University education is an important form of investment in human capital. It can be viewed as a high level or a specialized form of human capital, contribution of which is very significant to economic growth in any society Schultz, Theodore (1961). This is why is rightly refers to it as the engine of development in the new world economy Castells, Manuel (1994). Nevertheless, it is by adequate university education that people get to know their basic rights and seek to get them enforced.

This is because part of the reasons for the smooth ride of the unscrupulous ruling elite - lies in the fact that they have constantly worked on the emotions of an ignorant population Kukah, Matthew Hassan, (2007).

Lack of adequate education limits the horizons of the masses and therefore restricts the capacity of the oppressed to extract their rights from state. However, in spite of the pertinence of university education to any nation, Nigeria has been bedeviled by many woes in her university education sector, such that anyone who has the good of the country at heart would agree that the sector need a divine touch. This write-up, will therefore have as its kernel, to consider the situation of the Nigerian university education - the history, relevance, successes and failures as well as areas that need to be touched and how this should be done in order to salvage the university education in Nigeria.

The benefits derivable from a good and functional university education system can never be overemphasized. The entire developmental apparatus of the socio-economic structure revolves around a good university education. The contribution of university education to development comes in varied forms. Firstly, it helps in the rapid industrialization of the economy. This it does by providing manpower with adequate professional, technical and managerial skills Tilak, Jandhyala (2009). In another vein, a good university system helps to boost the transformation of societies into knowledge societies. University education is more than the next level in the learning process; it is a critical component of human development worldwide. It provides not only the high-level skills necessary for every labour market but also the training essential for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, humanists, entrepreneurs, scientists, social scientists, and a myriad of other personnel. It is these trained individuals who develop the capacity and analytical skills that drive local economies, support civil society, teach children, lead effective governments, and make important decisions which affect entire societies. This function of education can be seen vividly in action in Nigeria.

Concept of Teaching and Learning Arabic

Learning process is defined as an interaction process between students and lecturers to share and process information with learning resources in a learning environment

(Suharsaputra, 2015 and Abi, 2012). A good learning process will form the intellectual abilities, critical thinking and the emergence of creativity and change in behaviour or practice or private person based on certain experience (Abi, 2012). The teaching quality encompasses definitions and concepts that are highly varied and in constant flux, there is a growing number of initiatives (actions, strategies, and policies) aimed at improving the quality of teaching (Hénard, 2010). On the other hand, during the last decades, ICT has been introduced in a dynamic way in society and a far lesser degree in education (Tsolakidis, 2004). By using ICT, the lecturer has potential to improve and develop the quality of education by providing curricular support in difficult subject areas (Amin, 2013). ICT can be applied at all stages of the innovative teaching and learning activities ranging from the creation of a learning plan, preparation of materials, presentation materials, learning implementation, to evaluation (Surjono, 2013). ICT has the possibility to develop, enrich, and deepen skills of students, also to help work practices, as well as strengthen teaching (Amin, 2013). In short, ICT usage was perceived to be an instance that is affecting the learning process quality (Amin, 2013; Cannell, 2013; Obahiagbon & Osahon, 2014).

The arrival of Islam and the revelation of the Al-Qur'an made Northern Arabic more recognized (see Omar, Ali, Salleh & Abdullah, 2017). Teaching Arabic Language in Universities using information and communication technologies (ICT) must predicated on Education supervision, school leadership training, upgrading facilities and resources, and integrating technologies in the teaching and learning of Arabic (Alhumaid, 2014). The United States is a good example of a non-Arab country where the teaching and learning of critical languages have increased since year 2000. Amongst the critical languages taught are Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahilli, Turkish and also Arabic (Al Alili & Hassan, 2017). Arabic fluency can lead to jobs in business, diplomacy, journalism, public policy, defence, engineering, health care, and many other competitive fields (Edwards, Ander & Herda, 2015).

Arabic language is closely related to the Islamic religion because in order to understand Islamic teachings, it requires the understanding of the Holy Qur'an (which is in the Arabic language). The history of the teaching

and learning of Arabic began with the arrival of Islam on the Malay Peninsula in the 13th century (Omar, Ali, Salleh & Abdullah, 2017). There are many evidences that show the arrival of Islam on the Malay Peninsula but the most important was the discovery of 'Batu Bersurat' Hulu Terengganu written on February 22nd, 1303 AD (4 Rejab, 702 Hijrah). The inscription on the stone tablet shows that the coming of Islam to the Malay Archipelago was earlier than the date it was mentioned (Mat Teh, Firdaus & Nasir, 2019).

From their findings, students learn Arabic to enhance their confidence and motivation to read and write Arabic texts such as to recite the Qur'an correctly. Not to mention, learning Arabic improves their reading sub-skills and memorization techniques of Arabic words and phrases. The researchers found that Arabic is a significant language in the international arena, and students felt that it is crucial to learn Arabic so that they are able to communicate and mingle within Arab communities if they further their studies in Arab nations. In another research by Yusri, Rahimi, Shah & Wan Haslina (2011), they sought to determine students' attitude level in learning oral Arabic. From their interviews, several interviewees showed positive attitudes to oral Arabic. They think that Arabic is unique, beautiful, and they felt excited and fascinated when speaking Arabic, despite uttering simple words and phrases. The respondents affirmed that oral Arabic was important to them.

The positive status of the language might be due to the respondents' religion: Islam. Practice favoured novice students in terms of subject difficulty especially when they had prior lessons of Arabic. Thus, university students felt that Arabic was easy to learn, and they could master certain topics because they had previously learned it in school (Adnan, 2017a, 2017b).

New technologies to teach the Arabic language Integrating technology to ease the process of learning and teaching has become an important part of today's classroom. The integration of technology in education is not just about allowing learners to learn, but about being able to think rationally, engage in knowledge-seeking, and ensure their survival in the real world. Nawi, Hamzah & Abd Sattai (2014) highlight that the teaching and learning approaches for learners of this digital age must be creative and effective to

make sure that these targets are met. In the field of languages and linguistics, technology is taking over traditional methods of language teaching. Technology is now used to support and develop the learning of languages immensely. This trend can be seen in Arabic language classrooms too, as it is the lingua franca of the Arab world (Al-Jallad, 2018).

Use of ICT and Effective teaching/learning of Arabic Language

In teaching the Arabic language, integration of technology allows teachers to adjust classroom practices to encourage the language learning process. It is necessary for teachers to integrate technology in Arabic language teaching for several reasons. First, the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) can help to enhance the culture of critical thinking among learners; it can shape learners' understanding of the real world better. This would later prepare learners to be more adaptive to global trends efficiently and effectively so that they will not be left behind. It is the educators' responsibility to develop sets of individuals who are keen to face changes around them. Abu Samak (2006), states that the importance of education technology is a global issue that leads to the progress of developing nations.

Second, the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in Arabic classrooms is a must as it enables learners to create meaningful contents and connections by seeking information as they learn. Mills (1999) mentions how learners' interest and involvement in language learning increase dramatically with the introduction of ICT in the classroom. The teaching and learning of Arabic has undergone many changes in line with improvements in technology. With the introduction of new methodologies and approaches, Arabic language learning and teaching are becoming dynamic and resourceful (Lawal, 2017). However, it is quite a challenge to adapt new technologies to Arabic language teaching as most technology advancement in the field of language teaching are dominated by the American-English language, be it in software or hardware (Ditters, 2006). Among the most common of technologies that can be found in Arabic language classrooms in Nigeria are computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and blended learning (BL).

In Arabic language learning environment, researchers claim that CALL is still in its early stage especially in Nigeria (Sahrir, Yahaya & Nasir, 2013). This can be seen in the lack of cooperation between Arabic learning content developers and instructional designers. Zawawi (2008), states that CALL is such a strange concept in Arabic language classrooms, because Arabic teachers prefer to use traditional methods of teaching to modern methods. Besides that, the incompetency in handling ICT facilities especially amongst 'veteran' language teachers is a barrier in employing CALL in Arabic language teaching and learning in Nigeria. That being said, (Mohd, K. N., Adnan, A. H. M., Yusof, A. A., Ahmad, M. K., & Mohd Kamal, M. A. 2019). The result shows that the participants believe that there are a plethora of applications and technologies that can be used to help them to learn the Arabic language, with only a negligible amount that do not share the same sentiment. Thus, it can be concluded that the participants believe in the concept of using technologies in the teaching and learning process, especially for Arabic language class.

Blended learning (BL) is widely used in teaching Arabic language in higher learning institutions. Banditvilai (2016) defines BL as an education approach that incorporates online education materials and interaction opportunities with traditional classroom medium. BL requires both the teacher and learners to be present, and learners are allowed some control over time, location, medium or pace of their learning. Alasraj and Alharbi (2014) in their paper found that the integration of blended learning in the Arabic language classroom has made learners less dependent on teachers. The learners are allowed to explore the educational materials on their own using multiple approaches, hence they do not have to rely on their teachers in completing lessons.

Trends and principles Fisk (2017) identified nine trends related to Education:

1. Diverse time and place meaning that the learning process can happen anytime and anywhere. Flipped classrooms can also be applied as these allow interactive learning to be done in class, while the theoretical part is learned outside the classroom.

2. Personalized learning where students will be given harder tasks and questions after they achieved a certain level. If they did not reach that level, more practice will be provided.
3. Free choice which means that students can decide how the learning process should be done and they can modify their learning with tools they feel are necessary. They can learn with different devices, programs and techniques based on their choices.
4. Project based where students are required to apply their skills and knowledge to finish learning projects in a short time. These projects will help them to learn about collaboration and time management skills which are useful in their future careers.
5. Field experience since technology can assist the learning of certain domains effectively, then curricula will provide more opportunities for students to obtain real world from internships, mentoring and collaboration projects.
6. Data interpretation because students are required to apply their theoretical knowledge and human reasoning to infer logic and trends from big data.
7. Exams will change completely because factual knowledge is best tested during the learning process and whilst working on projects in the field. The traditional method of assessment through pen and paper might become irrelevant and not sufficient enough to gauge overall learning.
8. Student ownership because they will be involved in forming and updating their own curriculum.
9. Mentoring will become more important as teachers play the role of mentors or facilitators who guide students through the learning maze. Students will become more independent with the help from teachers as their mentors.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is really changing the world (Adnan, 2018, 2019). Artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, big data and the Internet of things will combine to impact learning and working. Some changes have been embraced by institutions to make Education a reality. For instance, students can use collaborative software and apps to complete group tasks and

assignments online, then upload them (Adnan, Ahmad, Yusof, Mohd Kamal & Mustafa Kamal, 2019; Mustafa Kamal, Adnan, Yusof, Ahmad, & Mohd Kamal, 2019).

Hence, the teaching and learning environment is truly going paperless, abolishing chalk and talk and is conducted via open platforms such as Google Classrooms. A normal classroom will look differently in the next five years; there will be a huge change in the layout of the class, virtual and augmented realities will change education, flexible assignments will accommodate multiple learning styles, and online learning options will impact education on all levels (Dunwill, 2016). As Shahroom and Hussin (2018) argue, things have become more complex. The younger generation today, the 'Millennials' or 'Generation Z', are equipped with digital literacy and they have their own styles and characters in terms of understanding, articulating and communicating. This complex generation leans towards intelligent learning, which comprises pictures, sound, video, recreation, games and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Hence, educators must go online and create teaching and learning innovations in order to fulfil the needs and wants of the younger generation (Mohd Kamal, Adnan, Mustafa Kamal, Ahmad & Yusof, 2019; Ahmad, Adnan, Yusof, Mohd Kamal & Mustafa Kamal, 2019).

Challenges facing the use of ICT in Teaching/Learning of Arabic Language

Barriers to ICT inclusion in education could be either teacher or school related. The literature states a number of obstacles at teacher and school level, (Alev, 2003, Jones, 2004 Almaghlouth, 2008, Cox,. Preston, and Cox, 1999, Al-Alwani 2005, Bingimlas, 2010)

However, the most important and common teacher level barriers are: teachers' attitude towards technology, teachers' resistance to change, lack of time, teachers' lack of confidence in using technology, and lack of knowledge and skills in using technology, while school level obstacles are: lack of access to technology, lack of effective training, lack of technical support, the high cost of hardware and software, and so on. Indeed, facing just one disabler is sufficient to prevent a teacher from using ICT due to the close relationship among the barriers. According to Jones Almaghlouth,

(2008), each barrier to ICT use could influence a number of other barriers. He gives an example of how “teacher confidence” in using ICT is directly impacted by different disablers including the level of technology access, level of personal access to technology and the amount and quality of training available for teachers. For the purpose of this paper, some of both school- and teacher-level barriers will be highlighted. More specifically, lack of access to technology, lack of effective training and lack of time will be discussed with special reference to Saudi literature.

ICT help to advance education but Nigeria still experience a lag in its implementation, and this continue to widen the digital and knowledge divides.

The challenges facing the use of ICT facilities which was believed hindering effective teaching/learning of Arabic language in university as submitted by various scholars include lack of training opportunity in the use of ICT, obsolete equipment, phobia for using ICT tools , fast changing of ICT tools, limited access to ICT facilities, lack of operational knowledge, dearth of technical staff, poor funding, irregular power supply, insufficient time to practice, lack of funds to procure ICT facilities among others.

The following are challenges facing implementation of ICT in Arabic language in universities education in Nigeria:

1. Lack of Electricity: Many schools are still not yet connected to electricity; Nigeria being a developing country, the government has not been able to connect all parts of the country to the national electricity grid. Consequently those schools that fall under such areas are left handicapped and may not be able to offer computer studies.

2. Lack of Internet or Slow Connectivity: Most schools are not able to connect to the World Wide Web, due to the high costs involved in the connectivity. On average, it may cost approximately \$150 per month to connect to about 15 computers on a bandwidth of 128/64kbps. This is considered as very expensive for a very slow speed.

3. Increased Moral Degradation Internet pornography, cyber bullying and other anti-social behaviours is a worrying emerging problem. The dilemma which arises in providing educational technology stems from a lack of financial resources and a limited distributive capacity. In addition, many

African countries have not been able to employ teachers, and provide resources to keep up with this demand.

“The Role of Information Communication Technology in Nigeria Educational System” compromised quality of education. Further, Governments face the predicament of educational expansion that corresponds with economic development. Despite the setbacks, access to education is a strong focus of most governments.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that the use of ICTs in schools have a great impact on teaching/ learning of Arabic Language. Despite the roles ICTs can play in education, schools in Nigeria have yet to extensively adopt them for teaching and learning. Efforts geared towards integration of ICTs into the school system, have not had much impact. Problems such as lack of training opportunity in the use of ICT, obsolete equipment, phobia for using ICT tools , fast changing of ICT tools, limited access to ICT facilities, lack of operational knowledge, dearth of technical staff, poor funding, irregular power supply, insufficient time to practice, lack of funds to procure ICT facilities among others.

In order to ensure that ICTs are widely adopted and used in Nigeria's school system, the following efforts should be taken. Government should ensure that ICT policy statements are translated into reality. An ICT policy implementation commission should be created. This commission should be funded and given the power to provide ICT facilities in the schools and monitor their use. Computer/ICT education should be made compulsory for all universities lecturers. There should be ICT training for lecturers.

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