

BRIDGING COMMUNICATION GAPS TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

English language has been established as an official and medium of instruction for all learners at all levels of education in Nigeria. It is the uniqueness of this medium of communication that leads to endless controversies on the effectiveness in its teaching. With the advent of modern technologies, social media networking has proved to be an effective medium through which learners acquire meaningful supplementary lesson in all disciplines. The teaching of English language in Nigerian schools has been stigmatized with enormous communicative gaps which include: incompetence in the use of language, distractions, deficiency in listening skills, wrong use of available means of communication, etc. The paper seeks to explore the many possibilities of using social media to make teaching of English language more effective. However, solutions were proffered to the predicaments i.e. government should make provisions of learning facilities such as computers, instructional radios, and a host of others in all schools. Students should use their free time to make research through networking to understand more of what they have learnt inside their classes and at the same time make research in other fields of knowledge.

Introduction

Doka (2010) sees language as the means by which any social group or individuals interact, either orally or in writing. Language proves its importance in human endeavour because without it, there will not be any meaningful development in any field of human life. Thus, the teaching and learning of English language become necessary in Nigerian schools because, human beings learn through the use of language, and English language is Nigeria's lingua-franca. This assertion implies the place language generally occupies, as a vehicle for expression and exchange of thoughts, concept, knowledge and information as well as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge, though, subject to societal and historical change development.

Every language is a tool for social identity and integration. The use of social media to perpetrate the proper acquisition

and proficiency of English language in our school system becomes a collective task that must be accomplished. Considering the place of English language in the process of teaching and learning in Nigeria's educational system reflects the fact that, the success or failure of teaching and learning may depend on the use of English language.

No wonder, the complaint on the incessant falling standard of education mostly associated with poor use of English language to express subject matters. With the advent of modern technological developmental change i.e. social media, the present deplorable situation in our educational system is fading away and a better educational system is surfacing.

Concept of Social Media

Jesugbemi (2017) defines social media as online communities of internet users who want to communicate with other users about areas of mutual interest, whether

from a personal, business or academic perspective.

Social networking sites are termed as web based services that allow individuals to create their own personal profile with the choice of their own list of users, and thereby, connect with them in an altogether public forum that provides with features such as chatting, blogging, video calling, mobile connectivity and video/photo sharing.

Social media although has been recognized as an important resource for educational studies where students and teachers can conveniently transfer and receive lesson materials for use. Moreso, Ebner (2010) confirms that, the use of social media in academic course work can increase the knowledge acquired by students. Ebner further explains that, students who participate on coursework that utilize social media demonstrate an increase in overall GPA when compared with others and develop strong relationship among peers.

Chen and Bryer (2012) are of the view that, using social media fosters long term retention of information and develops a deepened understanding of content that is discussed in class.

The significance of social media cannot be overemphasized, because it has a great impact on education, particularly in language teaching by creating and promoting vertical learning environments for augmenting classroom learning. Learners, thus, formulate their virtual communities and interact freely with each other. They can exchange their learning experience, research findings and academic opportunities.

Some Types of Social Media for Teaching and Learning

Kayode (2008), after observing and analyzing hundreds of social networking media sites, pointed out and explained eight

most popular social media used by students. A summary of them are as follows:

- 1) **Facebook:** Among its functions are accessing full contacts to religious and schools activities.
- 2) **Twitter:** As a simple service provider, is used to post and receive messages to a network of contacts.
- 3) **Badoo:** Its registration is free, it deals with up-loading photos, videos and information. It connects its users to several communities.
- 4) **My Space:** This social networking is all about searching for friends to become part of the network.
- 5) **Whatsapp:** It is all about using internet to send text messages, images, videos and audio-media messages.
- 6) **2GO:** As a free tool to use, is a mobile messenger that allows one to communicate, share files and pictures.
- 7) **Blogs:** This social media deals mostly with graphics or videos, and its entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order.
- 8) Other social networking includes; Youtube, messenger, instagram, palmchat, caricare, Aha, hps office, etc.

All the above mentioned social networking services contribute a lot to the social media.

Incorporating Social Media into English Language Teaching

Methodology, if properly applied to teaching, will enhance effective teaching and learning of English language. Mirohunkade (2012) was of the view that, methodology is that which links theory and practice, and the emergence of the concept of methods of language teaching. It is a notion of a systematic set of teaching

practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning.

With the advent of modern technological advancement, access to information via internet, by both students and teachers of English, is very essential. Muhammad (2014) claims that, the use of electronic devices like the internet, computer, most social media connections cannot be ignored by the teachers, and that using such materials will facilitate teaching, and students on the other hand would learn very fast with ease.

In the same vein, Muhammad (2014:28) re-emphasized that, the incorporation or use of computer, internet (social media) and presentation of software as sources of knowledge or means of lesson delivery need not to be over-emphasized. That modern gadgets enable the teacher to handle large classes far and near.

Abdulahkim (2015) referring to the basic language skills of English and other languages as medium/media of communication, stipulated that, the four (4) language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing have to be practical. The involvement of social media can help to enhance these skills through learning to listen by listening, to speak by speaking, to read by reading and write by writing. Therefore, for an effective communication to take place in teaching and learning of English language, social media use is very pertinent.

Mobile learning devices e.g. Mp3, Smartphones, e-readers, tablets and other electronic devices can easily be used to share information and communicate between teachers and students. These devices provide students with easy access to classroom activities and information in and outside a classroom setting. Video-conferencing, whatsapp, etc, help to create a chatting forum, where information can be disseminated and received easily for

teaching and learning purposes. It helps to create out all the problems of class control, discipline, arrangement, etc, of the classroom setting.

The aims of incorporating ICT or social media into English language curriculum as stipulated by Ayantoyinbo (2016) are to:

- i. Promote positive attitude and develop an appreciation of the value of language-spoken, read and written.
- ii. Create, foster and maintain the child's interest in expression and communication.
- iii. Develop the child's ability to engage appropriately in listener-speaker relationships.
- iv. Develop confidence and competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- v. Develop cognitive ability and the capacity to clarify thinking through oral language, writing and reading.
- vi. Enable the child to read and invite independently.
- vii. Enhance emotional, imaginative and aesthetic development through oral, reading and writing experiences.

The use of social media sources like songs, movies, TV series, magazines, internet, newspapers, e-mail and a host of others help a great deal to improve learning languages. Songs are used sometimes to communicate feelings, TV series to express or relate events or demonstrate, magazines to learn to read printed matters, internet to learn to interact with spoken and written languages, and of course, newspaper and e-mail to express matters in written forms for communication.

The internet begins the major outlet for pervading social networking and ranges of technologies including; telephone, fax machines, televisions, video, audio recorders, CD players, CD ROMs, personal

organizers, programmable and remote operated toys, radios, computers and handsets can enhance the processes of exploring, analyzing, documenting, exchanging and presenting instructions which help to compliment classroom learning. To Agada (2018), through the internet, English language learners can communicate directly inexpensively and conveniently with other learners or speakers of the Target Language (TL). Agada, citing Desden and Carter (1996), observed the internet helps to accommodate a variety of learners by eliminating the hindrance of time and distance.

Moreso, is the use of electronic-mail (E-mail), which means linking individual learner with their counterparts in other parts of the globe. It provides enabling environment for learners to interact and share ideas with a group of learners.

All these social media networking services help the learners of English language to develop and improve their language skills and also empower the knowledge of the teachers on the best strategies for effective communication for teaching.

Communication Barriers Against Effective Teaching of English Language

Language communication, which is the process of information exchange between two or more individuals could be hindered directly or indirectly. Indirect hindrance to communication offers to psychological noise factors impinging on an individual when the information is being given. These include; hunger, absent-mindedness, bad mood, feelings of superiority and a host of others. Direct hindrance to communication, on the other side, refers to misinterpretation of message due to language factors, lack of listening skills, incompetence in the use of language, non-application of the available means of

communication, use of unsuitable curriculum content.

The question, what is the implication for teaching in English language? Among all the multi-ethnic languages in Nigeria, English has been the official language due to problems of choosing one among the multi-lingual languages. Again, what language do we employ in schools, where we have children from various communities and ethnic groups? This question can be best answered by considering an official and popular language in the country i.e. English language, which has been used mostly as the authentic medium of communication. However, it should be noted that, mother tongue seems to be a better link to communicate in and around various communities. Hence, there is the barrier of the issue of discrimination and recognition by the speakers who regard English as foreign language. This factor, goes along way to distort the dissemination and comprehension of the language. Awoniyi (1978) remarked that no other subject taught in schools has a greater influence on a child's all-round education than his mother tongue.

Most students who interact with the social media, due to their language incompetency, end up not benefiting in online teaching and learning process and so divest their attention to browsing other areas of fun to satisfy their desires with browsing for music, blue films, etc. These have a lot of damages done to the young learners morally and intellectually. It signifies a barrier or hindrance to communication.

Other impending barriers include inadequate funding, lack of training (i.e. both teachers and students), the non-availability and non-utilization of planned instructional packages and materials, lack of maintenance culture, poor power supply and the cost of computer or smartphones which cannot be affordable for some learners.

The Rationale for the Use of Social Media for Effective English Language Teaching

The use of social networking services for the teaching and learning purposes has been a wonderful development. It is a paradigm-shift from traditional method that is, teacher-centred to the modern methods that is, learner centred approach. In the new trend, collaboration and interaction between teacher and the learner give rise to mutual benefits accruable.

According to Ayantoyinbo (2016) citing DFEE (2000:5) reported that:

Good teaching and effective learning have always been about making lessons interactive, relevant, memorable, fun... the extraordinary pace of change in information and communication technologies (including social media networking) is offering teachers, parents and pupils exciting new opportunities.

This implies that teaching can be extended beyond classroom instructions in the school. The student's interaction and participation with other learners in other parts of the world, access to educational facilities and the creation of learning forum for diverse information on subject matters help to broaden the knowledge and horizon of the learners.

The use of social media provides motivational values and competency in the teaching and learning of English language. It helps to improve reading, writing and development of speaking and listening skills. It creates interactive and collaborative fora to explore the language dictions and the use of vocabularies. Sequel to this assertion, Ayantoyibo (2016:180) posits that:

You Tube videos can be used in an English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom for various aspects of English as to enhance vocabulary,

accents, pronunciations, voice modulation and many more. The real advantage of using You Tube in teaching English is that it offers authentic examples of everyday English used by everyday people. When a You Tube is used for the purpose of the subject matter or students, they learn faster and know better even beyond their scope of studies and environment.

With the wide variety of applications, smartphones have been known to be learning tools for teaching. There are softwares abound in these mobile phones. Remote areas and far distances can be easily connected to internet even where there's no internet, connection can be done with computers through tethering via bluetooth internet to go online for browsing and learning. Some difficult areas in English language for students such as synonyms can be searched on the net for easy understanding.

Using social media helps to keep learners of English abreast of recent developments in the language. As the trend of things keep changing, also the usage of words, spellings, pronunciation, etc used in English continue to change with time on tide. This development leaves the teacher and student to search for innovative methods and strategies to acclimatize with the changes. Else, the teacher would not be relevant and the students will end-up learning nothing new and beneficial to their studies.

The shift of emphasis of activities away from teachers and towards the students i.e. from teacher-centered approach to learner-centred approach has substantially increased social interaction. It has allowed the teacher to assume the role of a facilitator, and on the other hand, make the learners to participate, interact and

collaborate to search for knowledge independently.

The use of teaching social media such as e-mail, web quests, video, discussion boards, e-movies and smartphones for delivering of class instructions can help to create interactive dialogues within a group and beyond the class to the school at large using activities like wikis, bloogs, 2go, etc.

Recommendations

Considering the strength of English language in learning, it is a welcome idea to teach in English language, owing to the fact that, it is a universal language in some countries, which Nigeria is one. To this end, the rationale of social media in the teaching of English language at any level cannot be disregarded due to its impact in creating innovative and sustainable teaching and learning in and out of the classroom. However, the writer recommends the following:

- i. Government should provide schools i.e. mostly secondary schools (Junior and Senior) with computers, televisions, instructional radio, series of smartphones and internet connections for enabling environment for usage by teachers and students. Moreso, there is the need for adequate provision for qualified English teachers with good knowledge and skills in ICT and social media networking.
- ii. The government through the Ministries of Education should always conduct conferences, seminars, workshops, etc on the use of management and storage of social media for teaching English language education. Another point to consider is, the curriculum for English language teacher education

should be redesigned and fashioned to provide teachers with modern knowledge in the use of the social media networking.

- iii. Parents should endeavour to provide with learning needs including mobile or smartphones to learners or children in the secondary and higher institutions to aid their learning process, especially in English language. Students, on the other hand, should make good use of social media to enrich them with knowledge instead of disabusing it for nefarious and immoral use e.g. for watching blue films, etc.

Conclusion

To achieve the goals of effective teaching of English language which has turned out to be a universal language, teachers need to realize their new role as facilitators and guide to learners. The learners are now the participants in the teaching and learning process.

Social media can be used in many ways to teach students at any level of education effectively owing to its relevance and indispensable role. Any modern teacher must realize this fact and incorporate some of the utilizations of the social media in their teaching methods, or else the communication barriers will remain unbridged.

The way-forward, therefore, is the full integration and implementation of social networking to deliver English language instructions. This way, the benefits of social media would be derived and harnessed for success of teaching and learning of English language.

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