

# Application of ICTs in Teaching and Learning English (ELT) in Large Classes

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## ABSTRACT

Information and communication technologies today have transformed the way humans communicate as well as doing things. In education, ICTs play vital roles in facilitating teaching and learning. They have transformed classroom communication methods and modified instruction strategies. Also, ICTs have made teaching and learning interactive and collaborative instead of the traditional teacher- talking and students listening approach. Large class sizes are common phenomenon almost world-wide. In order to achieve quality education in large classes, teachers have to take extra steps. Teachers of English Language utilize ICTs in teaching almost every aspect of English Language teaching. This study through qualitative approach has described the way multimedia devices are used to facilitate the teaching and learning of English Language in large classes. It has also pointed out the how the internet technologies (email and websites) can be utilized in teaching learning English in Large classes. Therefore, in spite of large class sizes, the teacher can still perform as in small classes with the aid of information and communication technologies.

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## Introduction

The acronym "ICTs" (Information and Communication Technologies) tagged in plural is a common core. It encompasses various technologies that are used for facilitating communication such as Cellular Phones, radio, video, television, computers, and satellite systems among others. Blurton (1999) opines that ICT is an accepted acronym of the word information communication technology. It is a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store and manage information.

Similarly, Wiki media project (2013) considers ICTs as "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store, and manage information." ICTs have transformed the way humans communicate and carryout different activities within and across national boundaries. They have brought innovations in the way humans carry out many activities. As human fields of endeavour are diverse, so are the uses made of information and Communication Technologies. Today, ICTs touch almost every sphere of human life. They are used in education, politics, health, judiciary, libraries, banks, security, and commerce and so on. The role of ICTs in transforming the society therefore is indisputable able.

In the teaching of English Language, tape recorders, videos, televisions, radios and projectors use to be the most common technologies at the disposal of the teachers of English language. Today, the computer and internet technologies have brought into the learning and teaching of English language indisputable transformation/revolution. The different information and communication Technologies do not themselves transform the learning and teaching of English language. It is their appropriate utilizations or manipulation by the teacher that will transform their teaching methods/strategies. Teachers therefore must combine the knowledge of the ICTs with practicing or professional knowledge in order to bring innovations into the classroom. The various traditional methods of teaching the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) for instance still remain important for teachers of English Language. However, ICTs tenable the teacher to modify teaching and learning strategies in order to create student centred learning environment instead of the traditional teacher centred which persisted for long. With the help of ICTs, teachers can challenge some of the problems posed by large classes in Nigerian institutions of learning. ICTs complement or support the teacher's efforts in tackling challenges posed by large class sizes. In other words, they re-enforce traditional practices in the classroom, that is, chalk board and teaching –talking tradition. One of the challenges in Nigerian Educational sector today is achieving quality education in large classes which is

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imminent at all levels. The extremely large classes affect the performance of the teacher negatively and the way students learn. Both multimedia and Internet technologies today have made it possible for teachers of various disciplines to modify their professional practices to achieve quality delivery.

ICTs such as, television, Radio, video and multimedia computer software are indispensable tools that teachers of English Language can use to teach language skills and other aspects of English Language. Multimedia computer software for instance provides real life situations in learning and teaching of English Language. They combine sounds, pictures/images and texts which draw the learners' attention or compel them to watch, listen and become engaged in the lesson. Similarly, multimedia use in classroom will provide the learners with opportunity for interacting with diverse texts that give students a solid background in the tasks and content English language courses designed improve their proficiency in English and interaction with learning texts. Furthermore, since ICTs are now technology integral part of the curriculum, students learning English Language must become proficient in accessing and using electronic resources. This study describes how information and communication technologies could be utilized to facilitate the teaching and learning of English Language in large classes.

### **What is Large Class?**

There is no universally accepted number of students that constitute a large class; some institutions use the term "large" to refer to classes of more than fifty students, while others regard a large class as one with more than one hundred students (UNESCO, 2006 cited in Bradley and Eric 2011). This means that a class that is considered as large in one country may be considered as small or normal in another. In Nigeria for example, a class of 50 in higher institutions is considered small due the fact that most classes even in engineering and sciences have more than 50 students. A large class irrespective of number is one in which the teacher feels his performance and what he is supposed to is hampered by the population of the students. Centre for enhancement of learning and teaching 2003 cited in Agbatogun (2007), points out that large class syndrome has been attributed to the expansion in annual students' enrolment. At any rate, education as old as man has been characterized with mass instruction and this is the peculiarity of large classes in various institutions. Students, as many as three or four hundred, often cluster in a small hall tending to pay attention to the "talking and chalking" lecturer who occasionally scribbles on the chalkboard, while it is mostly assumed that, as the lecturer passes the necessary information through verbal means, learning takes place.

Large class phenomenon does not come about accidentally. Sometime financial constraints, lack of space and shortage of teachers gives no option to the government and school proprietors other than running large.

The rapid increase in school enrolment and acute shortage of resource persons, learning materials and structures to match the growing population of students are factors responsible for abnormal class sizes in educational institutions. Shortage of resource persons, learning materials, and structure give lecturers no option other than to use lecture method which gives little or no room for learners to collaborate, explore or share ideas. This option of course should have been the case as there are actions that a teacher can take to making learning in a large class satisfactorily.

With the advent of information technologies, a tutor can handle 400-500 students in class without stress in delivery and assessment. While public address system can be used to aid communication and learning activities, Computer based test (CBT) can be used to ease evaluation. This implies that a teacher who has the knowledge of using ICTs can still make his lesson in a large class interactive and collaborative. In summary, a large class could mean one of the following:

- 1 Large class has more students than the recommended class size.
- 2 Large has more students than learning materials and physical structures.
- 3 A large class has number of students in that can stop the teacher from working as expected and at the same time hampers students' learning.

Large class sizes are therefore is a common phenomenon which is often perceived as one of the main barriers to achieving quality education as it poses numerous problems of teaching and learning. In spite of several efforts made to overcome the challenges, large classes remain a reality in institutions of higher learning. This does not however mean that there are no ways of making learning easy in a large class. ICTs

have brought innovation in teaching and learning by transforming teacher-talking and students-listen traditional approach to interactive, explorative and collaborative learning.

### **English Language Teaching with ICTs**

This subsection attempts to present harnessed views of scholars on the teaching of English Language with information and communication Technologies. As there are many of such technologies, the discussion will be done under two headings “multimedia and Internet.”

#### **Multimedia**

Multimedia as a concept has diverse definitions. Some scholars consider multimedia as devices that combine texts with images. Stemler(1997) cited in Parveen and Rajesh(2011) considers multimedia as devices that incorporate text, graphics, animations or real video into English lesson. Similarly, Chunjian (2009) refers to multimedia as encompassing texts, graphics, image video, animation and sounds together and they are dealt with and controlled through computer. However diverse the opinions of scholars on multimedia may be, the concept refers to computer controlled devices that combine sound, images and texts. Through multimedia, real life situations are brought into the classroom.

The application of multimedia in the learning and teaching of English creates opportunity for the teacher to bring almost real life situation in to the classroom. Multimedia can be used in different ways by teachers of English Language in Large classes. The British Council's ICT in Schools project (2006) points out that Language teachers have been avid users of technology for a very long time. Among the old technologies used in the teaching of English Language were gramophone records used by language teachers in order to present students with recordings of native speakers' voices, and broadcasts from foreign radio stations which were used to make recordings on reel-to-reel tape recorders. Others commonly used in Nigerian urban schools where teachers have access to these technologies and power supply include slide projectors, film-strip projectors, and film projectors. Videocassette recorders and DVD players are also used by language teachers that have access to simple power supplies like portable generators. There are literature books especially Shakespearian plays that have videodiscs which teachers of English Literature use to supplement their lessons. The problem militating against the use of these technologies is not only procuring them but many teachers have limited knowledge of how to use them.

The British Council's ICT in Schools project (2006) notes that the arrival of the multimedia computer in the early 1990s was a major breakthrough as it enabled text, images, sound and video to be combined in one device and the integration of the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Davies 2011: Section 1) The application of multimedia computers in the teaching of language enabled language teachers to make the lesson practical and authentic. By combining texts, images, sound and video in one device, learners are made to internalize more than one thing at a time. Experienced teachers can teach the four skills simultaneous as the students are automatically engaged in listening; acquiring speaking skills as they observe speakers; as well as reading and writing skills through the texts accompanying sounds and images. CD-ROM and DVD are also simple technologies that a language teacher even in the rural areas can utilize for facilitating teaching and learning of English Language in large classes. There are many programmes that can be published on CD-ROMS to be used with computers. Also, there are many text books that are accompanied by CD-ROMS containing exercises/activities. Some CD-ROMS are complete lessons or texts that a language teacher manipulates to facilitate the learning and teaching of English Language.

#### **Utilizing Multimedia in Large Classes**

Audio Videotapes for a long time have been the most common device that language teachers used in the classroom for teaching oral English and reading comprehension. Today, audio software which contains options such as play, stop and record is at the disposal of the teacher. Although audio visual software does not contain images or animations, students can easily use it on their own. One of the disadvantages of audiotapes / audio soft ware is that the students are placed in the position of passive receivers as they are utilized for teaching receptive skills mostly. The introduction of computer and videodiscs has made the students as active users of the devices and offered greater interactivity between them and learning.

- Appropriate use of multimedia by language teachers in large classes facilitates communication and offers solution to some of the challenges of learning and teaching English in large classes. Multimedia can provide a sensory and real learning experience and provides greater opportunity for learning (Lindfor1997 cited in parveen and rajesh(2011). The following are some ways of utilizing multimedia facilities to facilitate the learning and teaching of English language in large classes.

### **Videodiscs**

#### **Teaching literature**

1 Videodiscs contain authentic documentations that if manipulated well by the teacher will facilitate learning and teaching of English in Large classes. This technology helps the teacher to bring almost real life situation into the classroom. Interactive videodiscs are suitable for teaching literature. The teacher for instance can introduce a novel or play; explain the settings, the themes and characters. After introducing the novel or play, the teacher assigns the students to read the text which will be followed by showing the film version to the students. The class can be divided into groups so as to create conducive viewing environment as viewing in large class could be noisy and students sitting far away may not have clear viewing or hearing. During the viewing, the teacher could select major themes and characters and discuss them through forwarding or playing back. As activities, the students can be grouped to work with the CD-ROM containing the complete text. Each group should be allowed to browse through the text and take note. The leader of the group may report their experiences when the class meets next.

Alternatively, students may be allowed to watch a complete text and take note on the major characters. In a large class the teacher may divide the class into groups. Each group is given a character and is encouraged to listen and take note on the character. After note taking, the students exchange their notes to make comparison. By comparing the notes, the students then develop them into full fledge notes.

#### **2 Teaching Spoken English**

Power point projector is also good for teaching spoken English. Documentation of formal speech or debate can be made on CD-ROMS. The students in a large class for instance can be taught the art of public speaking through slide presentations with power point projector. The use of power point projector enables almost all the students to see the points projected in slides and sometimes even images accompanying the texts. After the presentation, the students will be made to watch formal speech or debate on certain issue/topic that has been documented. This will offer them training in public speaking and expressing themselves in English Language. As an activity, the large class can be grouped in order to have formal speech presented by each group or debating teams representing the groups. Doing this will widen the students' vocabulary as well as elaborate sentence structures.

#### **3 Teaching of writing**

Students of Tertiary institutions where English is used as language of Education study English for Academic purposes or communication skills at entry point. Writing is one of the Language skills taught at the entry point to improve the students' proficiency in English being language of Education so that they can function well in their fields of study. The teacher can utilize power point projector and Videodiscs to teach the different writing tasks that students may be engaged in. The teacher prepares his lessons to be delivered in slides for projection to the students. Projectors are visual aids that enable the teacher to display information or lecture points to the students. Materials or diagrams can be displayed to a large class thereby enabling more time for teaching and class discussion. However, the teacher must select appropriate existing method as the power point projector will only facilitate viewing and understanding of the major points. The teacher for example may prepare and present outline, introduction, body and conclusion of an essay in slides. In order to be elaborate, the teacher explains all the strategies/methods of presentation of each to the students. In a similar way, all the components of informal, semi-formal or formal letters may also be presented in slides when teaching letter writing. Projection in slides can as well be done when teaching the writing of memorandum or e-mail. In addition to power point presentation, the teacher could use Videodisc containing complete documentation of writing task. This will offer the students opportunity to listen and see the structuring of the writing task as well as language style. Large class could also be grouped in order to create conducive viewing environment. The teacher should allow the students to browse through the documentation in group. Each of the groups should be engaged in writing task which a group leader will

present on behalf of the group at the next lesson. This grouping will also ease assessment, although weak students will be hidden under the auspices of the strong ones.

In a situation where soft ware for writing tasks can be procured, the teacher can do his presentation with overhead projector. Where computers are limited, the class can be grouped for laboratory work. The teacher allows them to browse through on their own and goes around playing the role of consultant or facilitator. Proper utilization of technologies in the teaching and learning of English changes the teacher's role from transmitter of knowledge as in the traditional classroom to a consultant.

### **Utilizing the Internet Technologies**

#### **1 Email**

The emergence of the internet has revolutionized the humans communicate and do things. Many teachers have started to utilize the internet to facilitate teaching and learning. Teachers of English language are not exceptions. Email can be used by a teacher to reach many students at a distance once the students provide their email addresses. The teacher can use email to send learning materials to students; give assignment; assess and post the feedback to the students' email boxes. Through the use of e-mail for instance, the students interact with their lecturers and friends at a distance. By sharing files, students collaborate and work together with their lecturers and colleagues. In this way, there is transformation from traditional teacher-centred approach which makes learners passive receivers to students-centred or democratic approach which makes learners active discoverers and explorers.

In English medium universities in Africa, large class sizes are common phenomenon especially the use of English classes. Due to the large size of the classes, the teacher finds difficulties in treating individual student's problems. Email can be utilized by the teacher to interact and attend to the students' individual problems. Through exchange of email, students expand their vocabulary, structures and expressions. The challenges teachers of English in large classes face is access to the internet facilities in laboratories. Due to the large number of students in the classroom, the teacher has to group the students in order to be able use the meagre resources (computers and laboratory space).

### **Utilizing the Website for Teaching English**

Website as an internet technology is an essential tool that the teaching can use to facilitate the teaching and learning of English Language in a large class. It provides a lot of opportunities for teaching and learning. The teacher for instance can combine offline and online teachings in order overcome some of the challenges of teaching and learning in a large. Teachers of English in large classes can use the website for different purposes in order to facilitate the teaching and learning of English Language. In a large class, distribution of prepared or developed learning materials may be difficult as it will waste a lot of time. In addition, there is the tendency that the class will be ruddy as students may scramble for the materials. The teacher can post the material to his website for the students to download for use in the class. However, the students should be given two or three days to down load the materials before conducting the lesson. Website materials for teaching English language may include texts for reading such as novels, plays poems e.t.c or samples of writing tasks such as letters, essays, memorandums or emails. Beginning teachers may as well browse websites for teaching English to find prepared materials that are relevant to the topic being treated. Lesson plans, exercises and reading materials are available on English language teaching websites e.g [www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk).

Website can also be used to post assignments or exercises for the students. Large class size can be reduced by posting group assignments to the website of which students will be instructed to down load only the one of their group. The students decide their meeting hours for the assignment and post to the result to the website for the teacher on completion.

Websites provide working materials for the teacher. There are abundant learning materials that experienced English Language teachers post to the websites. Teachers of English lacking working materials can browse and download them. Website materials that English Language teachers can download and include printable English worksheets, English lesson plans, dialog ideas, crossword puzzles, colour pictures, texts for reading and gap filling, vocabulary and grammar exercises, class management instructions among others.

In addition to website, students can access e-library materials at a distance. E-library has reduced congestion in traditional libraries and made it for students to obtain library materials even at home. In a large class, the teacher of English Language can use e-library to facilitate teaching and learning. The teacher can use multimedia technologies such as the videodisc and power point projector to facilitate the teaching and learning of English Language offline. Students may be referred to a material in e-library which they can access at any time and place convenient to them other than the classroom. Access to internet facilities may however constitute a problem especially in the developing countries where many students do not have access to the computer and internet facilities.

### Conclusion

This study has examined the role of information and communication technologies in facilitating teaching and learning of English Large in Large classes. It harnessed several views of scholars which established the fact that ICTs are indispensable tools that facilitate the teaching and learning of English Language in large classes. The paper has pointed out how multimedia technologies such as the videodiscs, CD-ROMS, DVD, and power point projectors can be applied in the teaching of different aspects of English Language such as literature(plays, prose or poems), writing, vocabulary development and grammar. It has as well highlighted how e-mail, websites and e-library can be utilized by the teacher of English Language to facilitate teaching and learning in large classes. The study therefore, has shown that information and communication technologies encompasses several devices that the teacher can manipulate appropriate on for a lesson being taught to facilitate delivery, learning activities as well as evaluation.

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