

Improving the Teaching of English Language through Internet Resources in Nigerian Schools

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Abstract: *The important status accorded to English language in Nigeria and many countries of the world has made many educators strive to make their students attain proficiency in it through an effective teaching of the language. Against this backdrop, this study is aimed at creating the awareness of teachers of English to numerous Internet resources that can be utilized to improve the teaching of English language. To achieve this aim, this study discusses the advantages of using Internet resources for the teaching of English language. In addition to this, a research was made into various Internet resources that can facilitate effective teaching of English language together with another discussion on the available websites that can serve as resource centres for teachers and learners of English. The findings of the study reveal that Internet resources are inexpensive and useful tools that can be employed by teachers of English worldwide to ensure an effective teaching of the language. The study suggests that if the Internet resources suggested and discussed in this paper are effectively utilized, there will be a great improvement in learners and teachers' proficiency in English language.*

Key words: *Internet, Internet resources, English Language Teaching & proficiency in English language.*

Introduction

With the spread and development of English around the world, it is used as a second language in Nigeria and many countries in the world. Presently, the role and status of English in Nigeria and other countries of the world has increased to that of the language of social context, political, social interaction, cultural expression, business, education, industries, media, library, communication across borders, a key subject in curriculum and the medium of instruction at all levels of education. It is also a crucial determinant for university entrance and processing of well-paid jobs in the commercial sector. Despite the importance of the language, many students still lack proficiency in it. As observed by Okoye (2012), most school leavers in Nigeria, especially those in Government schools do not possess the required English language competence skills for both cognitive and communicative functions. He states that statistics churned out by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), which conducts the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination, indicates that less than ten percent of secondary school leavers pass English at credit level. Not only that, at the tertiary level of education, students have so much difficulty with their communicative skills in English such that they cannot function effectively in the academic use of English. All these can be attributed to

federal and state governments' failure to invest appropriately into primary and secondary education. As a result of these factors, physical structures have crumbled; libraries, computer centres, and science /language laboratories are either nonexistent or unequipped here by making the teaching of English language more difficult. These pathetic situations in the education sector gave the motivation to research into means of improving the teaching of English language and an insight that Internet resources can help in solving the problem of inadequate teaching materials in English language.

Therefore, as a result of the importance of English language, the need to improve the teaching and learning of the language and a need for learners of the language to achieve proficiency in it, this study has conducted a research on Internet resources that can facilitate the effective teaching and learning of English language at all levels of education in Nigeria and other countries where the language is used as a second language.

Literature Review

The Internet encompasses a lot of opportunities and has in-built search engines and social networks. As stated by Olomo (2011), the Internet is an international computer network that connects other networks and computers across the globe. Because of technology advancement, the emergence of the Internet cannot be denied because it has become more and more useful in language teaching and learning. It offers a vast amount of resources that are otherwise not available in any one geographical location. In addition to increasing resources, the Internet also fosters and enhances various skills of its users. Various researches have shown that communication skills and writing skills can be directly affected through the use of the Internet. The Internet has proved to be a very useful resource for teaching English. With its presence in the classroom, teachers can use it for gathering information for their classes and download teaching plans and materials for classroom use.

According to Rajasekaran & Palaniappan (2009), the Internet enables teachers subscribe to mailing lists related to TEFL/TESL and exchange information with other teachers. It also allow them subscribe to electronic journals or newsletters either by e-mail or using the World Wide Web, keep up with new trends of English teaching and find new or interesting publications. They add that the Internet enables teachers consult with publishers on teaching materials and enable them select appropriate materials for their students' interests and level of English proficiency. In a related study, Qureshi, Shahzadi, Iqbal & Islam (2012), state that the Internet has a lot of benefit for students, parents and teachers. As observed by them, the interactive learning that the Internet provides can help students and parents with little or no skills learn. They add that the Internet can make parents become more involved in their children's education by connecting the school with homes, libraries or other access ports and help learners adjust to the different learning styles in the classroom. According to them, the benefits of the Internet in the teaching process are:

- a. Flexibility and variety in mode and appearance.
- b. Ease and low cost of access for learners worldwide.
- c. Ease of putting students' information online.
- d. Ease of updating course information.
- e. Increase in ubiquity and indispensability.
- f. Access to interactive and dynamic material on a daily basis.

Furthermore, in terms of English Language Teaching, the Internet has provided many sites as the resources for teachers of English in many countries where English is spoken as a second language. According to Solanki (2012) a teacher can take advantage of various Internet resources or technological resources such as the Radio, TV, CD Rom, Computers, C.A.L.L., Electronic Dictionary, Email, Blogs and Audio Cassettes, Power Point, Videos, DVD's or VCD's to teach English. In a related study, Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni (2000); Fotos & Browne, (2004) observes that globalization and the advancement of ICT have had a profound impact on the teaching of English as a second and foreign language. In another study, Cabansag (2013) notes that the Internet has emerged as an important teaching-learning tool due to the fact that learners better appreciate the learning process whenever it is mediated. He therefore stress the fact that teachers should be provided with professional development opportunities to help them model an effective use of the Internet as a tool for students' learning and include integrating Internet learning with regular classroom learning. To emphasize the importance of Internet in the teaching of English language, Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, (2000) present a list of five reasons to use the Internet for teaching. These reasons are listed below:

- (a) It provides authentic language materials;
- (b) It enhances the student's level of literacy in conducting on-line communication;
- (c) It enables the student to interact with native and nonnative speakers for 24 hours on end;
- (d) It makes the learning process lively, dynamic, and interesting;
- (e) It gives both the student and the teacher the power to work efficiently.

Apart from the fore mentioned, e-learning tools are Internet facilities found useful in the teaching of English language. Chhabra (2012) observes that the need of the day is to equip people with proficiency in the English language through a proper blend of edification and e-learning tools which he refers to as modern technologies. He defines e-learning as diverse range of technological tools and systems that can be utilized by capable and creative teachers to enhance teaching and learning situations. He observes that these tools are used to make learning more interesting, motivating, stimulating and meaningful to students. To him, the Internet is not merely a source of authentic material in English but also a source of information in the form of articles, courses, conferences and much more. In another study, Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni (2000) describe ways in which the Internet can be used for various types of teaching activities. According to them, these include collaborative assignments, student research and student-

managed publishing of their work. They also discuss a wide variety of technologies which includes e-mail, threaded discussion boards, Web authoring, search engines, course management software, multimedia authoring software and various other related technologies.

The Web Quest is another Internet resource that can improve the teaching of English language. According to Shelton (2011) the Web Quest is an Internet resource that is both learner centred and teacher active. It is an option which potentially involves learners in practice of all skills and systems in English while at the same time promotes learner independence and collaboration. He describes it as a mini-project that uses authentic language and carefully staged steps, which, as learners work through them reach pre-set goals and work towards the production of original output, which is finally cemented of a presentation of some kind. He adds that it helps the participants navigate the web while involved in a variety of skill enhancing activities. He states further that the teacher plays an important role as a facilitator who provides support, feeds in language as necessary, monitors and eventually takes on a role in an evaluating capacity when using the WebQuest.

To emphasize the importance of Internet resources in teaching, Walsh (2009) lists ten (10) Internet technologies that educators should be informed about. According to him, there are so many different tools and technologies available on the Internet today with so many associated terms and concepts. These tools are:

1. **Video and Podcasting:** According to him, this is one of the most widely adopted Internet technologies for use in instructional settings. It contains an abundance of lectures, how-to videos, and supporting materials available in the form of web based video.
2. **Presentation Tools:** He states that there are hundreds (perhaps thousands) of tools on the Internet that can be used to create and share presentations from simple PowerPoint slide players like Slide share to multimedia timeline tools like Vuvox and OneTrueMedia. He adds that these tools can be used to support classroom teaching or distance learning and students' reports and presentations.
3. **Collaboration and Brainstorming Tools:** According to him, this is another wide ranging category that includes thought-organizing tools like mindmap and bubbl.us, web based interactive whiteboards, wikis, virtual worlds and Google Documents.
4. Blogs and Blogging.
5. **Wikis:** As stated by him, an example of such site is Wetpaint that allow users create free wiki web sites. He adds that this is a great way to get started with using wikis for educational applications.
6. **Social Networking:** As stated by him, examples of social networking sites are: Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn which is a professional social networking site.

7. **IM:** This Internet facility is used via Aim, IM aggregator site Meebo which allows users to combine messaging from Aim, Yahoo, MySpace, Facebook together with other sites and tools.
8. Twitter
9. Virtual Worlds
10. RSS Feeds.

Apart from the fore mentioned, social networks have also proved to be an Internet resource centre for the teaching of English language. Google plus, Twitter and Facebook are examples of social networks where relevant resources, materials and ideas can be gotten for the teaching of English language. According to Yunus & Salehi (2012), social networks have captured the attention of educators and policy-makers as an alternative tool for language teaching and learning. In their study, they notice that Facebook page enables proficiency in the use of the English. Apart from this observation, Mason and Frank (2008); Buzzetto-More (2010), observe that social network services provide new opportunities for enriching existing curriculum through creative, authentic and/or flexible, non-linear learning experiences. In another study, Akinjobi (2013) suggests that social network sites should be explored by English language teachers as complements to the physical classroom activities to enable extensive and effective knowledge transmission as well as self-motivated learning, especially in this age when virtual interaction is fast becoming more realistic than physic. In addition to these, Ivanovic (2012) opines that teachers of English can use the Facebook social network as a tool to motivate students to learn the language. As opined by him, if teachers don't have access to Internet at schools, they can, nevertheless, recommend the links during class and in this way give students the freedom to explore them on their own at home while on Facebook. He adds that as feedback exercises, teachers can, after a few days re-initiate the discussion in classrooms either through group discussions or as a part of a writing exercise.

Methodology

Since the aim of this study is to expose teachers and learners of English, as well as other users of the language to the prospects of improving the teaching and use of English through Internet resources, the study adopts a descriptive research methodology. The study researches into the means of using Internet resources to generally improve the teaching of English language. The data/Internet resources found useful in the teaching of English language were gotten through constant research on the websites useful in the teaching of English language and on other Internet resources available for the teaching of English language.

Findings

The purpose of this study is to identify the various Internet resources that could aid the teaching and learning of English language in Nigerian schools and other countries where English is spoken and taught as a second language. The findings made in the study reveal that Internet

resources are inexpensive but useful tools that give learners and teachers of English access to up to date learning resources and make the teaching of English language more interesting and impactful. The findings also reveal that the Internet can be a powerful tool for learning if used correctly. In addition to these, my findings reveal that Internet resources can be utilized to improve the teaching of English language in the following ways:

1. The use of e-mails.

The e-mail is a method of exchanging digital messages from an author or individual to one or more recipients. The use of e-mails gives the teacher an opportunity to send assignments, important electronic text books and other relevant information to students on line. It also enables teachers and students subscribe to educative data bases that can improve their proficiency in English language. To achieve this, the teacher can collect the e-mail address of all the students in his or her class and subscribe them to such data bases.

2. Use of YouTube.

YouTube is a video-sharing website. As observed by Chhabra (2012) YouTube videos can be used in the classroom for various aspects of English language to enhance vocabulary, accents, pronunciations, voice modulation and much more. He adds that the real advantage of using YouTube in teaching English is that it offers authentic examples of everyday English used by everyday people. The teacher can use it as a tool for improving students' Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. The teacher can also select a part of a movie appropriate to the level of the students and s/he can show the movie clippings to the students.

3. Useful websites

With research, the following websites were found useful for the teaching of English language:

1. **UsingEnglish.com** (<http://www.usingenglish.com/>): UsingEnglish.com is a site that contains an incredible collection of tools and resources for learning and teaching English as a second language. These resources include a grammar glossary together with printable and teacher hand-outs.
2. **One stop English** (www.onestopenglish.com): This is a resource site for teachers to source for materials on grammar, lesson plans, worksheets, audio, videos and flashcards.
3. **EverythingESL** (<http://www.everythingsl.net>): EverythingESL is a site where teaching resources ranging from lesson plans to teaching tips and resources can be found.
4. **ESL Cyber Listening Lab** (<http://www.esl-lab.com/index.htm>): This site contains study guides, quizzes, listening conversations, vocabulary development tips and other teacher features.
5. **Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL)** (www.tesol.org): This site advance professional expertise in English language teaching and learning for speakers of other languages worldwide. They do this by sharing links that improve learners' Writing, Speaking, Reading and Listening skills in English.

6. **TOEFL:** This is an official language test for education. Their website is: http://www.ets.org/toefl/english_programs.
7. **Vocabulix (<http://www.vocabulix.com/framer.html>):** This is an online tool designed to help jumpstart students' vocabulary skills. It contains more than 90 vocabulary lessons. The site gives teachers the option to create lessons of their own.
8. **Teflent (www.teflnet.com):** This is an independent resource site for teachers of English. TEFL resources include worksheets, articles, advice, forums, job ads, lesson plans, lesson planner, a glossary and fun games to aid learning.
9. **Word steps (<http://wordsteps.com/>):** This site makes it easy for students to build their own vocabulary collection and access their vocabulary through a mobile device for English language learning on the go.
10. **National Council of Teachers of English (<http://www.ncte.org/>):** This is a site for Professional Association of Educators in English studies, Literacy, and Language arts at all levels of education. The site offers plenty of benefits for bilingual teachers. The site is also available on twitter and Facebook.
11. **BBC Learning English:** This is a website from BBC that helps students with their grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation. Their website is <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/>.
12. **Oxford University Press Learning Resources Bank:** The site is a service of Oxford University Press. It is a learning resource bank for English language teaching. The site contains courses, titles and interactive English reading tools. Their website address is http://elt.oup.com/learning_resources/?cc=global&selLanguage=en.
13. **English-Test.net (<http://www.english-test.net/>):** This website encourages students to self-test as it offers free English tests, grammar exercises, and worksheets.
14. **Dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com/>):** This is a site that offers a word of the day, games, quotes, translation, and much more.
15. **Thesaurus.com (<http://thesaurus.com/>):** This website is synonymous to Dictionary.com but goes beyond simple reference as it offers inspiration and fun in the form of synonyms, word origin, educative quotations, fun word facts, and search trends.
16. **Common Errors in English Usage:** This website enables viewers read Paul Brian's *Common Errors in English Usage* and get links to the book's blog, calendar, and entry-a-day in Common Errors in English Facebook page. In addition, this website has an on line dictionary. Their website is <http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html>.
17. **Idiom Site (<http://www.idiomsite.com/>):** This website contains a number of English idioms in an alphabetical order. With the help of this site, learners and teachers of English language can make sense of common English idioms.
18. **Fonetiks (<http://www.fonetiks.org/>):** This website is an on line pronunciation guide for learners and teachers of English. It contains instant sounds and samples by native speakers of English language.

19. **Vocabulary.com** (<http://vocabulary.com/>): This is a website filled with puzzles, games, lesson plans and activities to build willing individuals' vocabulary.

4. The Facebook Social Network

Many research works have shown that Facebook is a dynamic social network that teachers of English should take advantage of. My findings reveal that various educative materials can be sourced on Facebook for the teaching of English language. Examples of such materials are: educative pictures and materials useful as instructional materials and games together with the use of videos containing recordings of important English lessons aimed at improving the teaching and learning of English language most especially in second language contexts. In addition to these, Facebook gives room for interactions and dissemination of information as it gives viewers of the page room to make comments and share the available information on a page for others to read. Many educative English pages on Facebook give viewers links to their main websites. Apart from these, administrators of these pages post or share tips that can improve their viewers' proficiency in the language. Educative English pages on Facebook found in the course of writing this article are:

1. **The English Language Clinic Forum:** This is a Facebook group designed to meet with the problems associated with communication in English language in the colloquial as well as the technical sense of it. It is a virtual interactive learning forum aimed at making members learn by interaction with the end goal of assisting them approximate to Standard British English. The intervention covers the basic aspects of language, such as grammar, spelling, lexis, writing and pronunciation.
2. **Learning English-British Council:** This is a Facebook page that shares British Council website for learners of English. Their page shares links helpful in improving learners' of English proficiency by giving viewers tips on how to improve their vocabulary, grammar, writing and speaking skills. Their website is <http://learnenglish-britishcouncil.org>.
3. **English club Facebook page** (<http://www.englishclub.com>): This page helps viewers learn or teach English as a second language. The page offers resources such as free English lessons, articles, tips, videos, forums, games, quizzes and chat pages.
4. **English Idioms** (<http://english-idioms-usage.blogspot.com>): This page shares link from its site and gives the meaning, explanation and origin of English idioms.
5. **Learn English Teens-British Council:** This is the British Council's Facebook page for teenage learners of English. The page provides resources and tips for improving teenagers' Reading, Speaking, Listening and Writing skills. The page also helps in improving teens' grammar and vocabulary through the provision of grammar and vocabulary exercises and spellings through spelling bee games.
6. **Online English World:** This Facebook page improves the spoken English of interested learners of English. The administrators of the page can be contacted at onlineenglishworld@yahoo.com.

7. **English is fun** (<http://vk.com/englishisfun>): This Facebook page shares link from their website and give viewers tips on how to improve their vocabulary. The page is a resource site for getting instructional materials on vocabulary and grammar.
8. **National Council of Teachers of English** (<http://www.ncte.org>): This page shares NCTE's vision. It helps to connect English language educators with their colleagues, discover expert resources and exchange ideas about literacy education.
9. **Real conversations** (<http://englishconversations.org>): This page share links from their site to provide learners of English language with real conversations, dialogues, interactive stories, bilingual recordings, lessons and courses.
10. **Teaching English-British Council** (<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>): This page share ideas and resources that aid the teaching of English language.
11. **English Speaking Club** (<http://www.eng.cilacapedu.com>): This page share ideas that help in improving English language through daily lessons on various topics of public interest.
12. **Applied Linguistics, English Language & ELT at Reading** (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/english-language-and-applied-linguistics>): This is a Facebook page of the University of Reading, UK that gives news about Applied Linguistics, English and ELT. They focus on English language and applications of applied linguistic theory to the use and learning of English as a first and second language.
13. **For Teachers' of English Language Learners**: This page is a resource sharing and networking site where teachers and educators around the world share ideas. Their website is <http://www.uta.edu/faculty/carlaaj>.
14. **English Second Language Chat Page**: This page serves as a forum for individuals speaking English as a second language and want to practice and improve their proficiency in the language. The page give viewers tips on how to improve their grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation of English words and other aspects of English language.
15. **Learn English as a Second Language** (<http://www.falibo.com>): This page share links that show how learners of English can increase their English vocabulary. The page also helps viewers improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
16. **English language Skills** (<http://www.english-language-skills.com>): This is an educative page operated by Troy Simpton and Dennis Sutherland. The tips posted on the page helps to prevent spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. The page also post tips that aid vocabulary development and improve writing skills.
17. **Free ESL Handout** (www.esltopics.com): This page is usually updated with high quality ESL classroom handouts that could be downloaded by teachers or learners of English.
18. **VOA Learning English (Special English)**: Sharing links from <http://www.learningenglishvoanews.com>, this page presents news, features, programs and activities for learners of English.

19. **English Language Development Centre –ELDC:** This page helps learners of English achieve greater success at university through better English language communication and critical thinking skills.

Conclusion

For a proper utilization of these resources, Internet facilities should be adequately provided in schools for students' and teachers' use. Also, to improve the teaching and learning of English through Internet resources, teachers of English should be encouraged to have a positive attitude to the Internet and encourage their students do the same. They should direct their students to these websites and guide them in using the resources there improve their proficiency in the language rather than visiting other websites that are of no educational benefits. In addition, these Internet resources should be explored by teachers of English language as complements to the physical classroom activities to enable extensive and effective knowledge transmission. It is believed that if the Internet resources contained in this article are properly utilized by both teachers and learners of English in Nigeria and other countries where English is spoken and taught as a second language, then students will pass the subject with good grades and increase their proficiency in the language.

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