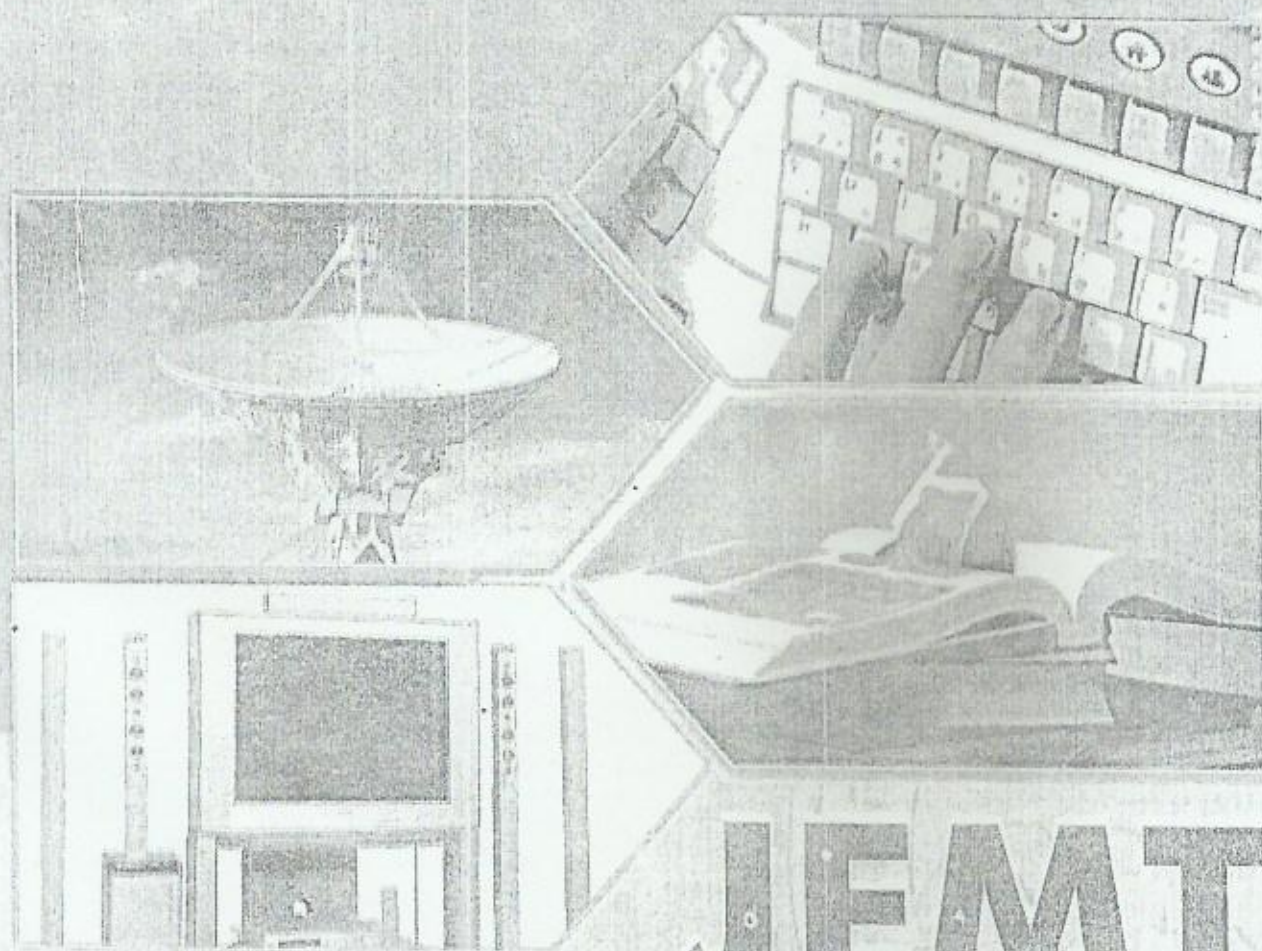


44

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TABLE OF CONTENT

TITLE	PAGES
1. Enhancing Methodological Skills in Teacher-Trainees Using ICT MaterialsDr. NYENWE, Eunice and Dr. (Mrs.) ACHUONYE, A. Keziah	1
2. Language Teacher Education Curricula and the Demands of the 21 st Century. Dr. IZUAGBA, Angela	4
3. Targeting Teachers on Teacher-Made CAI-Package and their Perception on Integration of ICT in Education.... Dr. (Mrs.) IKUKINAM, Thelma U. and Dr. (Mrs.) UDOSEN, Idongesit N.	9
4. Information and Communication Technology Literacy and Science Teacher Education in Akwa Ibom State.... Dr. NVOUSU, N. Stella and UDOFIA, Theresa	15
5. Emphasizing the Use of Information and Communication Technology among students in Open and Distance Education Programmes Dr. (Mrs.) IHEBEREMB, I. Chionna and ONWUAGBOKE, B.B.C.	21
6. Computer: A Tool for Enhancing Primary School Science Instruction Dr. ASUQUO, N. Eno (JP) and Dr. EDINYANG, S. E	25
7. Integrating Information and Communication Technology in Distance Education: A Study of IMT/UNI-AIR Programmes, Enugu. OBBETTA, K. Chukwuemeka and AGBOEZE, Matthias Ugwu	29
8. Global System for Mobile Communication as Effective Channel for Electronic Learning Revolution in Nigerian Schools. Dr. TOLORUNLEKE, Reuben Tunde	37
9. Integrating ICT in Teacher Education in Nigeria: Myth or Reality. Dr. OFOEFUNA, M.O. and ¹ Dr. (Mrs.) EBEOGU, U. M.	41
10. Integrating ICT in the Teaching of Difficult Concepts in Biology in Secondary Schools in Imo State. Dr. (Mrs.) EZEKOKA, K. Gertrude	45
11. The Essence of Integrating Information and Communication Technology into Higher Education. IHEONUNEKWU, Solomon, NWAMUO, C.N.N. and Ag. Provost, AMARAIHU, Stephen	50
12. Integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into Nigeria School Systems OBILOR, F.N.; IHEONUNEKWU, Solomon and UBGUTA, J. K	56
13. Integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTS) into Teacher Education Programmes. IHEONUNEKWU, Solomon; UMEBALI, Catherine and Dr. OKUNAMIRI, P.O	61
14. The Integration of Information Communication Technology in Library Operations for Effective Library Services UMEBALI, Catherine Oluchi and NWANKWO, Charles	68
15. Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into Primary Education System in Nigeria: How Sincere is Government? Dr. AFOLABI A. O.; AFOLABI R. A. (Mrs.) and ADEDAPO Y.A.	73
16. Areas of Specialisation, Access Competence, Qualifications of Academic Staff and Use of Internet Services in Federal Colleges of Education in North Central Nigeria. ¹ Dr Tr. USHIE, B. C., Dr OKWORO, G.S. and Dr. AKPAN, S.J.	77
17. Emerging Issues on Implementation of National Policy on Education and ICTs Integration in Science Education ETIUBON, Rebecca U. and UGWU, Anthonia N	85

18. Pedagogical Use of ICT in Science Education: The Constructivist Perspective Dr. OKORAFOR, P. N. and OKORAFOR, A. O	89
19. Conceptual Change in Teaching Methods and Learning Styles Through ICT Devices AKINOLA, Olu Victor	95
20. Use of Information and Communication Technology: An Imperative in the Indigenous Communicative French Teaching Method (INCOFT Method) EZENWA Prisca Colette Nkechi	102
21. Utilization of Educational Resource Centre in the Teaching and Learning of Biology: Its Challenges and Way Forward, UDO, Agnes Lambert; HARRISON, Ubong Edet and BASSEY, Archibong Bassey	109
22. ICTs 'Blessing' or 'Curse' in Developing Countries? ANATUSI, C. Tina	116
23. Effective Integration of Instructional Technology for Improved Teaching and Learning of History in Nigerian Schools UKPANUKPONG, Richard A. and UGBE, A. Ugbe	121
24. The Gender Pattern of Learner's Enrolment in the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) AJADI, Timothy Olugbenga.	128
25. Utilization of ICT for Effective Teaching of Fine Arts in Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State Dr. (Mrs.) NSISONG E. Eshiet	134
26. Computer Application in Secondary School: Constraints and Implications for Social Studies Instruction JIMOH, Akinola Salin and AKINDOJU, Olugbenga Gabriel	139
27. Adaptation of Learning Nigerian Languages on the Internet: An Opportunity for International Learners MAKINDE, S. Olanrewaju (Ph.D) and ALABI, B. Olaide	143
28. Integrating ICT in Educational Technology: A Means for Effective Teaching and Learning in Teacher Education Programme. ONWUMERE, O. Augustine	147
29. Computer Aided Instruction in Public Secondary Schools: Which Teachers; Which Students? SANNI, RI (PhD)	151

Adaptation of Learning Nigerian Languages on the Internet: An Opportunity for International Learners

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the research issues associated with the use of Nigerian Languages on the internet. It is proposed that international communities should be provided with the opportunity to learn Nigerian Languages as second languages (L2), however the use of internet has not widely covered the people whose literacy level is at the ability to read only in the indigenous languages. It is a common knowledge that the language of computer is foreign especially English or French, also the language of communication is related to the rate at which people use internet. The researchers are of the opinion that if Nigerian languages are made available on the internet as languages of communication there will be a great increase in the rate at which Nigerians interact with other people in the global village.

Introduction

Many Nigerian languages are among the languages that have been classed as unwritten ones. Nigerian has over 500 ethnic groups with various languages and dialects (Ayelaagbe, 1998). The earliest attempt to reduce the languages to written forms was made when it became necessary to translate the English Bible to African languages, this was when the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) with Rev. Henry Venn as Secretary, organized a mission to the Yoruba country under the leadership of Henry Townsend, an English clergyman of the C.M.S also at work in the same place.

This first language to be written is the Yoruba spoken by the people of Nigeria and the West African sub-region. The traces of the language are found in Brazil, Australia and some generation of ex-slaves in the new world.

The other important language that is widely spoken in West African countries is Hausa language. The Igbo language is dominantly spoken by people of Eastern Nigerian. These languages have been termed local languages or been derogatory termed "vernacular" but one needs to realize the fact, that these different ethnic groups have been very relevant in international commerce. It can be deduced that these languages need international recognition, and need to be widely projected for the benefit of international friends who might turn out to be international learners. Wider orientation will expose the languages in the field of commerce education, politics and spiritual affairs.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) becomes important because it creates opportunity for the global community to interact at any level. It also gives room for easy access to information, knowledge, manipulation of skills, sharing of ideas and appreciation of new discoveries and culture. It also makes it easier to understand different kinds of languages for the beneficiaries. This is in relation to the findings of Gerjets, Scheiter and Schub (2008) where they stress that information comparisons in example based hypermedia environments; supporting learners with procession prompts and an interactive comparison tool.

Apart from Swahili that is spoken by a large group of people in Africa, many African languages have not been able to find their bearings among the languages of other continents. It is pertinent to know that some African languages including the major Nigerian languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) are studied L2 in some Universities of the United States of America.

The orient languages: Chinese, Japanese, Indian etc are finding their feet in the global economy; a good reference can be made to the fact that their products are packaged with instructions in these languages. Effective communication is very important, the wider the scope of language of communication, the easier it is for the common man to be carried along.

Emphasizing the effect of global interactivity, it is obvious that the Internet plays a major role in this direction. The Internet is the large system of connected computers around the world which allow people to share information and communicate with one another using electronic mail. The most common language on computer is either British or American English with French language.

In essence, to interact on the Internet you must have a knowledge of English or French languages. Inability to communicate in any of these languages makes it difficult to interact with other members of the global village. The question is for how long will indigenous Nigerian languages speakers remain behind? To be relevant as members of global village, one will go along with the findings of Gerjets (et al) (2008) which note that learners can select themes and compare multiple instances of them (i.e. scenes) with regards to their commonalities and differences.

This example signifies that African languages on the Internet will bring people of common interest together.

The irony of it all is that the letters of Nigerian languages have not been included in computer keyboard, the effort made so far are few software packages, prepared in local languages. For example to have a complete representation of the Yoruba vowels, the cognate sounds which are represented by diacritics dash or dot as in o (òw), e (è) (m) (s) (h) should be, included on computer keyboards, it is even more difficult to put intonation marks on Yoruba words if computer is to be used without the Yoruba keyboards.

Taking all these into consideration there is the need to give Nigerian languages wider exposure and good orientation. Instructional packages of Nigeria languages can be launched into the Internet, this will give room for learners all over the globe to start learning the languages. It will eventually open up avenues for indigenous Nigerians to interact globally. As cited in Odunsi (1991) cited by Makinde (2002) stated that there is no foreign language that can adequately or effectively take the place of the indigenous language and to disregard the indigenous languages will be tantamount to jeopardizing the mental development of the child. Therefore if Nigerian indigenous language is not incorporated into the Internet, the use of Internet will remain a mystery to a large groups of Nigerians.

Such words like "Chat on line" "Web browser" "Net space" "Navigator" "Microsoft" "Hyper Text" "Make up language" will remain riddle to a fraction of Nigerians who can only read in local languages. It becomes necessary for this research to create awareness on how indigenous Nigerian languages can be launched into the internet and how it can be packaged into software for non-Nigerians to learn.

In order to carry out this study effectively, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of probability.

1. The proportion of Nigerians who can read only the local languages and need to surf the net is not different from the people who have good knowledge of English language and need to surf the net.
2. Preference for surfing the net is not related to the effective knowledge of English language.

Methodology

The research design adopted is that of survey method which includes data collection from a defined population using the questionnaire. The Cybercafes in Lagos State formed the target population of the study. The stratified random sampling was used to select 24 Cybercafes and 480 local users from four Local Government Areas in Lagos State. The four Local Government Areas are: Badagry, Amuwo-Odofin, Ojo and Alimosho.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire titled "Nigerian languages on internet inventory" (NILAG II) was constructed by the researchers and administered to the sample selected. The NILAG II has two sections. Section A is made up of - items that elicited responses on the demographic background of the respondents while Section B has -items in the four point Likert format of Strongly Agree (S.A) Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (S.D.). Meanwhile the NILAG II was administered on a neutral sample of 30 using the test retest procedure of two-weeks interval. Using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient, a reliability value of .77 was established.

Table 1. Comparison of those who read only the local languages and those with the knowledge of English language who need to surf the net.

Nigerian Tribes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Yoruba	60 (19.38)	32 (27.6)	35 (41.3)	28 (9.04)	155
Igbo	45 (16.88)	60 (22.5)	40 (15)	35 (13.13)	180
Hausa	55 (5.2)	25 (2.6)	30 (9.06)	35 (10.6)	145
Total	160	117	105	98	480

The statistical tool adopted is chi-square

• Applying the formula

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

$$= \frac{(60-19.4)^2}{19.4} + \frac{(32-27-6)^2}{27.6} + \frac{(35-11.3)^2}{11.3} + \frac{(28-9.04)^2}{9.04} + \frac{(45-16.88)^2}{16.88} + \frac{(60-22.5)^2}{22.5} + \frac{(40-15)^2}{15} + \frac{(35-13.13)^2}{13.13} + \frac{(5-5.2)^2}{5.2} + \frac{(25-7.6)^2}{7.6} + \frac{(30-9.06)^2}{9.06} + \frac{(35-10.6)^2}{10.6}$$

$$= 2.1 + 0 + 12 + 2.09 + 2.097 + 1.67 + 1.67 + 1.67 + 1.67 + 1.67 + 9.59 + 2.29 + 2.31 + 2.30$$

$$X^2 \text{ Calculated} = 29.6$$

(No of rows - 1, (no of columns - 1) = 4, X^2 table value at 0.05,

X^2 tab = 11.070 at (two tailed value) alpha level with DF = 4

Hypothesis II: showing the preference of surfing the net is not related to the effective knowledge of English language.

Table 2

Nigerian Tribes	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Constant users	60(23.5)	45 (17.6)	55 (21.5)	28 (10.96)	
Occasional users	32 (10)	60 (19)	25 (7.9)	35 (11.1)	
Non users	32 (10)	60 (19)	25 (7.9)	35 (11.1)	
Total	35 (10.2)	35 (10.21)	35 (10.21)	30 (8.8)	

$$X^2 \text{ calculated} = 24.8$$

• Applying the formula

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

$$= \frac{(60-23.5)^2}{23.5} + \frac{(45-17.6)^2}{17.6} + \frac{(55-21.5)^2}{21.5} + \frac{(28-10.96)^2}{10.96} + \frac{(32-10)^2}{10} + \frac{(60-19)^2}{19} + \frac{(25-7.9)^2}{7.9} + \frac{(35-11.1)^2}{11.1} + \frac{(35-10.2)^2}{10.2} + \frac{(40-11.7)^2}{11.7} + \frac{(35-10.2)^2}{10.2} + \frac{(30-8.8)^2}{8.8}$$

$$X^2 \text{ Calculated} = 29.6$$

(No of columns - 1, (no of rows 1) = 4, X^2 table value at 0.05, alpha level with DF = 4

T table = 11.070 (two tail value)

Findings and Discussion

The Chi-square statistical tool was used to test the null hypothesis of no significant difference between observed and expected situations at 0.05 level of significance and one degree of freedom (df as presented in the tables.

For instance, in table 1 and 2 the X^2 calculated is 29.6 while the X^2 table is 11.070. Since the X^2 -calculated is greater than the X^2 -table, the null hypothesis that the proportion of Nigerians who can read only the local Nigerian languages and need to surf the net is not different from the Nigerians who have good knowledge of English language and need to surf the net. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. In addition, in tables 3 and 4 the X -calculated is 24.8 while X^2 table is 11.070 the evidence shows that X^2 -calculated is higher than the x^2 table, the null hypothesis which states that the preference for surfing the net is not related to the effective knowledge of English language is therefore rejected.

The findings of this study showed that there are people who are literate at the levels of Nigerian languages alone and as a result find it difficult to interact on the Internet. There is an indication that the introduction of Nigerian languages, on the Internet will be effective in including the large percentage of the indigenous Nigerians in web-based interactivity and international identity. This is in line with the findings of James and Rhetoric (2008) on persuasion on political communication where it was pointed out that as an approach to persuasive political communication, interactivity promotes identification. The introduction of Nigerian languages as language of computer will not only provide international learners for Nigeria languages, it will also increase the number of Internet users in Nigeria, in essence most of our cultural values will be exposed to international assessment. This is in agreement with the contribution of Michele and Wylie (2008) in a research conducted on the debate over what factors lead to the significant

differential performance - seen between African American and European American candidates in all forms of assessment.

The findings indicated that standardized assessment had adverse effect on individual of particular racial, ethnic and language background. To avoid this kind of adverse effect, Nigeria needs to take a serious precaution by launching her languages into the global village, because this will expose indigenous people to high level of knowledge acquisition and wider information. Also Karen (2007) buttress this point further, he is of the assertion that explicit and implicit, knowledge can be regarded as distinguishable construct.

Since English is regarded as second language (L₂) in Nigerian communities, Nigerian languages can also be projected to a level where they can be learnt as second languages in international communities like we have in the USA. Projecting Nigerian languages will actually promote Nigerian culture because according to Allen (1976) cited in Essien (2006), he who controls language controls destiny. For Africans to control their destiny, African languages must be promoted in all ramifications. In a nutshell Nigerian languages must be helped encouraged and well propagated to make the languages high in value.

Conclusion and Recommendations,

It is note worthy to know that Nigerian languages are learnt as foreign language along with some African languages in the United States of America.

It will be advantageous if Nigerian languages are taught at international level. This will lead to positive improvement in cultural, social and economic relations, which will contribute in no small measure to our national development.

Language curriculum planners need to project the languages, by designing an approach that can make the languages to be taught as L₂ in other parts of the world. Effort should therefore be geared towards ensuring that the languages are fully integrated into the net for global accessibility especially, for teaching and learning.

Information communication technology should be employed. Effort should be made to design the computer keyboards with Nigerian alphabets.

Nigerian languages resource centres should be established where intellectuals will meet for discussion. On Nigerian Open-University, Nigerian languages must have packages that will attract international learners. Nigerian languages must also have an impact on the level of disseminating information to learners.

Also relevant text books on Nigerian languages should be made available on the websites. Nigerian languages dictionary on the websites will be of immense assistance.

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