



**FEDERAL UNIVERSITY
STAFF SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION
OF NIGERIA (FUSSAN)**



Collection Of
PAPERS PRESENTED

AT THE

15th Annual National
Conference/Workshop

Held on

25th - 29th August, 2014

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**FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
MINNA, NIGER STATE.**

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**A NEW APPROACH TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING
FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The learning of foreign language has become a necessity for every Nigerian child who hopes to acquire western education. In fact, even our parents who were not opportuned to go to school for formal education now battles to speak or use words in foreign language(s). This implies that the proper teaching of the foreign language, particularly the one highly recognized by the government and the international communities, is a must. The child needed to be trained at the lower of education on how to learn and use the language properly so as to be in tune with the dynamic world. It is in the light of this that this paper takes a look at the strategies for teaching foreign languages and settles on the use of technology as a means of improving the use of these strategies for teaching of these languages. The paper looks at technology, its types, and their benefits in language teaching. Some these benefits include: active engagement and Participation, frequent interaction and feedback, connections to real- world context. These roles notwithstanding, the use of technology in foreign language teaching is bedeviled by challenges such as absence of the required technologies, unstable electricity, phone lines, internet facilities, and lack of sufficient qualified ICT teachers. As a result, recommendations such as provision of the needed technologies by the government, training of teachers of foreign language on the use of technology, and maintenance of the available technologies were offered.

Introduction

The English language is generally acknowledged as a global language, in view of its numerous functions and preference over several other languages around the globe. Apart from being a language of global unification, English is also seen as a veritable tool for learning, business and interactional purposes, among other functions. In view of its relevance, English is not only the mother tongue in Britain but also the mother tongue of several other countries like Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand, to mention just a few. It is also used as a second and a foreign language (EFL) in many countries like Nigeria, Ghana and many other developing countries. Musa (2012) opines that Primary or basic education is the first level of education which a child undergoes before he/she moves on to the other levels. It is the bottom line education upon which every other education whether formal, informal or non-formal can be built without which any educational structure erected will not have chances of success. The core objectives of primary education in Nigeria are the universalization of access and quality in the delivery. Other objectives include, inculcating in the school children permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively. The primary school in Nigeria is the foundation for formal school learning with the entry age for children at age 6. This level of education stands as the pillar of school based teaching and learning which, according to Maduewesi and Eguabor(2005) in Musa (2012) taps and root into the millennium development goals(MDGs) of:

- i. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger;
- ii. Achieving universal basic education;

- iii. Promoting gender equality;
- iv. Reducing child mortality;
- v. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and ensuring environmental sustainability.

These lofty goals have implication for inculcating in the citizen the right type of values and attitudes for his life- long survival and that of his society and these values are enshrined in language.

Aims of primary education in Nigeria

To achieve functional primary education in Nigeria, the Federal Government in the National Policy on Education (2004) sets the aims of primary education as follow:

- i. To inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively;
- ii. Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- iii. Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribute to the life of the society;
- iv. Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
- v. Develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment;
- vi. Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him function effectively in the society within the limit of his capacity; and
- vii. Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

Language teaching has been a fluctuating field as it is not as steady as subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Geography, etc., where a new theory takes years to make space. Yet, in language

teaching there is so much instability in the writers' eyes due to the fact that many teachers don't know the history of changes in teaching approaches and methods. Approaches in language teaching are directly linked to the demands of the learners in a dynamic society. The following is a list of the eight language learning approaches put forward by Snow (1992).

Grammar-Translation Method

The Grammar-Translation Method focuses on developing students' appreciation of the target language's literature as well as teaching the language. Students are presented with target-language reading passages and answer questions that follow. Other activities include translating literary passages from one language into the other, memorizing grammar rules, and memorizing native-language equivalents of target language vocabulary. Class work is highly structured, with the teacher controlling all activities.

Direct Method

The Direct Method allows students to perceive meaning directly through the language because no translation is allowed. Visual aids and pantomime are used to clarify the meaning of vocabulary items and concepts. Students speak a great deal in the target language and communicate as if in real situations. Reading and writing are taught from the beginning, though speaking and listening skills are emphasized. Grammar is learned inductively. Piller and Skillings (2005) refer to this method as pictorial illustration. This is the use of blackboard drawings, diagrams, sketches, match-stick figures, photographs, maps, and textbook illustrations. These are used for presenting words and structures that stand for concrete ideas.

Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method is based on the behaviorist belief that language learning is the acquisition of a set of correct language habits. The learner repeats patterns until able to produce them spontaneously. Once a given pattern – for example, subject-verb-prepositional phrase – is learned, the speaker can substitute words to make novel sentences. The teacher directs and controls students' behavior, provides a model, and reinforces correct responses.

The Silent Way

The theoretical basis of Silent Way is the idea that teaching must be subordinated to learning and thus students must develop their own inner criteria for correctness. All four skills – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – are taught from the beginning. Students' errors are expected as a normal part of learning; the teacher's silence helps foster self-reliance and student initiative. The teacher is active in setting up situations, while the students do most of the talking and interacting.

Suggestopedia

This method seeks to help learners eliminate psychological barriers to learning. The learning environment is relaxed and subdued, with low lighting and soft music in the background. Students choose a name and character in the target language and culture, and imagine that person. Dialogs are presented to the accompaniment of music. Students just relax and listen to them being read and later playfully practice the language during an “activation” phase.

Community Language Learning

In this method, teachers consider students as “whole persons,” with intellect, feelings, instincts, physical responses, and desire to learn. Teachers also recognize that learning can be threatening.

By understanding and accepting students' fears, teachers help students feel secure and overcome their fears, and thus help them harness positive energy for learning. The syllabus used is learner-generated, in that students choose what they want to learn in the target language.

Total Physical Response Method

Total physical response approach begins by placing primary importance on listening comprehension, emulating the early stages of mother tongue acquisition, and then moving to speaking, reading, and writing. Students demonstrate their comprehension by acting out commands issued by the teacher; teachers provide novel and often humorous variations of the commands. Activities are designed to be fun and to allow students to assume active learning roles. Activities eventually include games and skits. Total response approach is also known as demonstration (Piller and Skillings, 2005). According to them, it includes the use of real objects, performing actions, using gestures, and facial expressions. It is used for presenting words like toy, bracelet, or hat. Demonstration can be used for sentence patterns that stand for concrete ideas. For example, saying "I am looking at my watch," or "I am cleaning the chalkboard" while performing these actions. The teaching strategy includes the teacher doing the demonstration and students practicing with feedback from the teacher.

The Communicative Approach

The Communicative Approach stresses the need to teach communicative competence as opposed to linguistic competence; thus, functions are emphasized over forms. This approach views language learning as a system thus resolving to each as a system. Students usually work with authentic materials in small groups on communicative activities, during which they receive practice in negotiating meaning.

There are several other approaches and strategies to teaching foreign language such as dictation method, integration of language and content, project-oriented approach, use of ellipsis, questioning method, choral drill, read and say, narration or story telling approaches by Piller and Skillings(2005). Others are reading approach, oral and situational approach, audio-lingual approach, cognitive approach, affective humanistic approach, and comprehension approach by Snow (1992). Many teachers now share the belief that a single right way does not exist. It is certainly true that no comparative study has consistently demonstrated the superiority of one method over another for all teachers, all students and all settings. How a method is manifested in the classroom will depend heavily on the individual teacher's interpretation of its principles (Bowen, 1992).

Technology in Teaching Foreign Language in Nigerian Primary Schools

The teaching of foreign language in the days gone by, in public schools was bedeviled by over-reliance on language course books(Ohia and Adeosun, 2002), teacher-centred method of teaching (Ogunniyi and Famuyiwa, 2011) the motivation to pass the language and master (Obanya, 2002), and the inability to use the available local materials as teaching aids (Ogunniyi and Famuyiwa 2011) . These situations made learners inactive in the teaching-learning situation. According to Brown (1980) in Viatonu and Kayode (2012) second language education has changed considerably, pointing out the importance of the use of an “electric enlightened approach” to theory building but cautions that classroom contact is still very necessary for second language learners to give real-world validity to their theory building. Brown’s theoretical comments about the classroom vignettes contribute to the attainment of this goal as major methodological approaches and current issues in language teaching are depicted in these vignettes, first with the direct method, grammar translation and the Audio-Lingual method.

Similarly, Randall (2006) in Viatonu et al (2012) has admitted that technology has become a major component; a must-have in many homes around the world, with its concomitant influence permeating all facets of human lives, including education. This is a welcome development by many as it shows the direction in which language instruction will be driven by new advancements in technology.

Technology has become a greater part of everyday life. It is therefore natural that it becomes a central and essential part of 21st century learning. Learners are already engaging extensively with technology and would make it easier for teachers to use it in learning in schools. Technology allows for easy duplication of many types of media. For instance, with a videocassette recorder, a teacher can record a television program for re-use in the classroom. Art work, photos, and articles can be scanned and reproduced digitally.

Technology, however is just a tool the skilled teacher, like the skilled craftsman, matches the tool to the task in order to accomplish an important purpose. Technology especially the internet can provide access to authentic sources of language that are simply unavailable any other way. Wikipedia (2012) identifies ten reasons for using technology in foreign language teaching to include:

1. Students are generally technology –literate and have become accustomed to using computers, videos, and other technology- based means of acquiring information.
2. Students learn at different rates and have different learning styles. The use of technology helps teachers reach all students in different ways.
3. Technology helps to relate the curriculum to life outside the classroom.

4. Technology helps to involve students in worthwhile, interactional activities, such as interpersonal exchanges, information gathering, and problem-solving projects.
5. Technology helps students to be active participants in the Information Age.
6. Using different aspects of technology helps motivate students to learn.
7. Technology adds many dimensions of foreign language learning, particularly with the use of multimedia programs.
8. Technology helps to make the study of foreign languages very practical and significant in children's lives. With technology, students can communicate readily through e-mail with children in a foreign country.
9. Students have the opportunity to work collaborative manner.
10. Technology gives students opportunities to use their productive and receptive abilities for real purposes, such as publishing a newsletter or writing interactive journals. Teachers can also use technology such as video recorders, blogs and wikis to gather material for continuous assessment of students' target language skills and competence. Student' work, text, audio files, animated posters or video clips, can be presented on the whiteboard and used to develop criteria-based peer assessment skills in whole-class discussion.

Roschelle, Pea, Hoadley, Gordin and Means (2000), cited by Spielvogel et al (2005), identify four fundamental characteristics of how technology can enhance both what and how children learn in the classroom:

- i. Active engagement.
- ii. Participation.
- iii. Frequent interaction and feedback.
- iv. Connections to real- world contexts.

They also indicate that the use of technology is more effective as a learning tool when embedded in a broader education reform movement that includes improvements in teacher training, curriculum, student assessment, and a school's capacity for change. In addition, any vision of learning through technology should emphasize the importance of all students having equitable access and use of technology- females, special- needs students, minority students, disadvantaged students, students at risk of educational failure, rural and urban students, etc. According to them, all students need opportunities to use technology in meaningful, authentic tasks that develop higher- order thinking skills.

Sharma (2009) opines that technology has a major influence on the teaching and learning of languages but with some reservations, particularly in areas such as grammar, vocabulary, language skills and testing. For instance, even though the internet has provided a vast range of materials offering many opportunities to authentic materials, both audio and text, most of the materials are clearly unsuitable for language learners. Also, the influence of technology on the productive skills of speaking and writing is positive but arguable. This is because if one wishes to improve fluency, it is better in face-to-face language lesson or a discussion class with the teacher. Sharma argues that in the area of grammar, the increase in the number of interactive exercises on CD-Rom and the web has undoubtedly benefitted the analytical learner, so students can practice and receive instant feedback. He, however, argues that this practice is based on an outdated, stimulus-response methodology. According to him, these grammar exercises 'skewer' the language. He argues that the use of technology in language learning encourages digital divide such that when those with access to the technology are exploring how best to exploit it in the classroom, for some others using technology such as interactive whiteboard (IWB) is a distant

dream. He, therefore, provides four key principles which can help teachers implement technology in language classrooms:

- i. Separate the role of the teacher and technology in language learning process.
- ii. Teach in a principled way, that is, whenever a new technology emerges, it is important to think about the pedagogical reasons for using it rather than 'rushing' to use it.
- iii. Use the technology to complement or enhance what the teacher does.
- iv. It's not what it is; it's what you do with it. That is, it is not the type of technology per se that improves learning experience, but the use to which it is put.

Depending on the ages, language experience of the students and technology resources of the school, many of the following possibilities can enhance learning in a thematic unit:

- i. Create a menu using a word processing programme.
- ii. Create a greeting card in the target language using clipart with a cultural element.
- iii. Students use scanned or digital photos to design a poster with which to introduce themselves to the class.
- iv. Create a story, an episode from a story, or a poem to illustrate with clip art. All projects are printed and compiled into a class book.
- v. Develop a book report by creating a book jacket that includes a front cover designed to reflect the content, flaps to summarize the story, and information about the author on the back cover.
- vi. Create a class newspaper or newsletter.
- vii. Create a brochure about a city or a country in which the target language is spoken. Information can come from research from the Internet, and be enhanced with images downloaded from the Web.

- viii. Create an advertisement for a culturally significant product, using scanned or clip-art images to illustrate the text.
 - ix. Develop a "picture dictionary" of words (or phrases) in the target language, using clip art or scanned images to illustrate meanings rather than translations into English.
 - x. After researching a famous person from the target language, using a variety of resources, create a poster or a "Who am I?" poster for other students to guess.
 - xi. Use interactive story books in CD-ROMs, other CDs give students vocabulary practice or listening.
 - xii. Students create a PowerPoint or Hyper Studio presentation about themselves or any other topic, using learned vocabulary and following a format provided by the teacher. The students illustrate the presentation with scanned photos and clipart.
- (Wikipedia, 2012)

The importance of technology notwithstanding, it is advised that it should be used under the following conditions such as when it:

- i. Is appropriate for the lesson
- ii. Is age-appropriate
- iii. Provides authentic aspects of culture
- iv. Demonstrate authentic cultural regalia and documents
- v. Motivates students
- vi. Is consistent with world Language Standards
- vii. Offers a better format of instruction
- viii. Gives students opportunities to interact with each other and the programme.

- ix. Gives the teacher a chance to observe students' reactions and performance.
- x. Appeals to different students' learning styles and intelligences.
- xi. Is user-friendly for the teacher and the students.

A technology- rich environment can support all these conditions and thus become an optimal setting for language acquisition. Technology, mobile or otherwise, can be instrumental in language instruction. Ultimately, though, they are not in and of themselves instructors; rather, they are instructional tools. And the effective use of any tool in language learning requires the thoughtful application of second language pedagogy.

The most relevant technology in language teaching and learning is termed information and communication technology. There is no more doubt that the use of ICT has positive effects on foreign language teaching/learning. Its impact is highly dependent on the way it is used, the teachers' motivation and his "savoir-faire". Isisag (2012) opines that most obvious impacts of using ICT to support foreign language teaching include the possibility to adapt easily the teaching materials to circumstances, learner's needs and response; ICT offers access to authentic materials on the web; makes it possible to combine/use alternately (basic) skills (text and images, audio and video clip...); makes lectures more interesting and less ordinary which boosts learners' engagement. Similarly, Padurean and Margan (2009) in Isisag (2012) list the advantages of ICT usage in foreign language teaching to include:

1. Capacity to control presentation. This capacity marks the difference between computers and books. Books have a fixed presentation, unlike computers, which can combine visual with listening materials, text with graphics and pictures.

2. Novelty and creativity. A teacher can use different materials for each lesson, not like in teaching with textbooks, where all classes presenting a certain topic are the same.
3. Feedback. Computers provide a fast feedback to students' answers through error correction. It not only spots the mistake but also corrects it, sometimes even giving the appropriate advice.
4. Adaptability. Computer programmes can be adapted by teachers to suit their students' needs and level of language knowledge. Unlike books, which are produced in a single uniform format and need to be taught irrespective of students' problems, computer programmes are more learner- friendly.

ICT is also a very good way to captivate students' interest. Students are able to search for information and pursue their own individual interests and hobbies by finding target-material online.

Categories of ICTs

Arolasafe (2008) categorizes ICTs into three groups, namely

1. Information technology uses computers, which have become indispensable in modern societies to process data and save time and effort;
2. Telecommunications technologies which includes telephones, the radio and television often through satellites;
3. Networking technologies, the best of which is the internet, but which has extended to mobile phone, voice over IP telephony (VOIP), satellite communications, and others.

Rouse (2014) sees ICT as an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application encompassing :radio television, cellular phones, computer, and network hardware and software, satellite systems, and so on as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as video conferencing and distance learning. ICT, particularly, the internet provides language learners with the opportunity to use the language that they are learning in meaningful ways in authentic contexts. A second important benefit derived from the use of ICT in a language classroom is based on the opportunities it affords for cooperation and collaboration with one's peers. A third major benefit of the use of ICT in blended language learning classrooms is the opportunity that ICT-based tools give to language teachers so that they can tutor their learners more effectively. With the help of ICT-based tools and the constantly growing number of available educational resources language teachers are able to give individual and personalized guidance to the learners. Oyinloye (2008) opines that the Nigerian government has showed much interest in the introduction of ICT in primary education which necessitates the National Policy on Education to make it mandatory for schools to involve ICT as well as use it in the teaching/learning process. Information and communication technology opens up opportunities for a more individualized form of teaching in which students can control the learning process when the teacher is not necessarily present. It can assist in organizing teaching in such a way that learners can be helped to learn effectively and accept responsibilities for their own education. In addition, education courses can be designed to be information technology-based, which will cater for both the weak and endowed learners in more effective ways especially in the learning of basic skills such as reading, writing and mathematics. Information technology is capable of creating opportunities for everyone to participate in educational activities, if conducive environment is provided.

Use of Technology in Foreign Language Learning (case study)

1. Computer

Olibie (2010) opines that the critical role that computers play in language learning is best understood in terms of CALL. CALL involves applying the principles of computer-assisted learning to language learning context. It is the use of computer programmes to enhance learning. Huizhong (1985) in Olibie (2010) also adds that computer-assisted CALL is when the computer is used as an instructional tool to improve learning by helping learners to acquire a better understanding of the learning content. "It includes the use of simulations, tutorials, word processing authored programmes, games, database search/ inquiry methods and programmed instructions" Kearsley (1983) in Olibie (2010). Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2005) defined CALL as an approach to language teaching and learning in which computer technology is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement, and assessment of material to be learned, usually including a substantial interactive element.

Computer technologies provide access to digital versions of these references—and to libraries worldwide. Encyclopedias on CD-ROMs provide information, digital images, video, and audio, and also provide links to websites where students access tools such as live web cameras and global positioning satellites. Dictionaries and thesauruses are built into word processors. Through the Internet, students can gain access to a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, including government documents, photographs, and diaries. Students use handheld computers and wireless networks to create joint writing exercises and read electronic books that allow them to explore related topics. Concept-mapping software provides all students with the opportunity to build the framework for a story or report and to map out linkages among complex characters, such as those in a play by Shakespeare. In the arts, students can explore images of

original artwork through the Internet; with appropriate software they can create original digital artwork or musical compositions. Basic uses such as e-mail exchanges and web logging, as well as more sophisticated applications such as videoconferencing, can provide students with extended, in-depth interactions with native speakers of the languages they are learning.

2. The internet

The internet offers the best way to learn language other than immersion in an English speaking milieu. The Internet provides easy access to digital images, movies, music, and written works from all over the world; these can be downloaded and used in multiple formats, raising not only questions about copyright, but also plagiarism.

The advantages of internet can be summarized under the following headings:

- 1) Access – the internet offers the possibility to experience English without the need of travel. Even without the need of leaving home or bedroom.
- 2) Flexibility – the internet allows for users to learn language when they want, where they want.
- 3) Response – the internet offers the possibility of instant feedback to learners. This greatly enhances the learning experience.
- 4) Repeatability – the learner can encounter the language in a repetitive fashion until mastery is achieved.
- 5) Durability – the internet is available all days of the week. It never tires.
- 6) Modality – the internet is a multi-modal learning tool. It stimulates in a rich sensory and cognitive and thus fertilizes language acquisition successfully.

- 7) Specificity – the internet allows the language learner choice and variety in both what and with who will be learned. Learning can be tailored to the language learner's precise makeup and needs.
- 8) The internet-mediated communication allows users to share not only brief messages, but also create lengthy documents - thus facilitating collaborative writing (learning). Furthermore, learners can share graphics, sounds and video. Thus, the internet helps create an environment where authentic and creative communication is integrated into all aspects of the course. The internet is a very good authentic material as it is in constant update. It provides the opportunity for authentic communication. For instance, having a relationship with someone from Argentina is different from just learning from a book.

Blake (1997) opines that the internet allows communication without limits of physical distance between students and improves their comprehension and intrinsic motivation to learn. It encompasses speaking, listening and reading skills. The teacher can search for sites that focus on a specific topic, set questions and post them online. The students can now answer them on their own. They can later discuss the questions and answers in the class and write them down.

All these activities expose students to real language use and emphasize on content rather than form. Berardo (2006) observes that the role of the teacher is not to delude the language learner but to prepare him, giving the awareness and necessary skills to understand how the language is actually used. For according to Hwang's (2005) study, language classrooms should have 70% exposure to speaking activities for students to stimulate their language acquisitions and 30% teachers' explanations. This division of student-oriented activities and teacher-oriented demonstrations is a better way of learning. Therefore, students should talk and act more in class, while English as second language teachers should talk less. This is the best environment for

teaching and learning English as a second language. In terms of practical classroom activities to exploit the Internet Bowen (1992) opines that, if teachers have access to several Internet-linked computers for use within their classes, there are numerous possibilities. Learners can fill-in on-line questionnaires, research specific topics, prepare presentations using on-line information, graphs and diagrams, find the answers to questions set by the teacher, do interactive grammar, vocabulary and even pronunciation exercises, read and summarize the latest news, and contribute to on-line discussions and debates.

Challenges facing the use of technology in language teaching

The use of technology in foreign language teaching in Primary school in Nigeria is bedeviled by the following challenges:

1. Absence of the required technology such as computers and mobile technologies
2. Electricity, phone lines, internet facilities etc. are sometimes, unavailable, unreliable or expensive.
3. Lack of sufficient qualified ICT teachers due, among other reasons to the fact that, some quit teaching for more lucrative jobs because teaching is not attractive especially in Nigeria.
4. Poor maintenance of the existing ICT gadgets (where provided)
5. There are no language and computer laboratories in virtually all schools in Nigeria.
6. Large or overcrowded language classes may interfere with the use of ICTs in language learning.

Conclusion

The paper has taken a detailed look at foreign language teaching strategies as well as dwelt on the use of technology in foreign language teaching pedagogy. The impact of technology in

education in general and language teaching in particular cannot be over emphasized. Technology using CALL (computer-assisted language learning or MALL (mobile-assisted language learning) can be used for every learner category of learner with the aim of, not only motivating and arousing the interest of learners, but also to ensure learner-centred learning. In this situation, the learner is in control of the learning situation and can learn anytime and everywhere even when the teacher is absent. This kind of situation is suitable for primary school pupils who are in dire need of encouragement and motivation to add a new/ foreign language to their first language or language of the community.

Recommendations

In view of the challenges facing the use of technology in teaching foreign language in Nigerian Primary schools, the following recommendations are necessary:

1. The government should provide the necessary technologies needed for proper teaching of foreign language in primary schools and also ensure that such technologies are properly maintained.
2. Educational planners, school administrators, especially those involved with the teaching pupils in primary school levels should carefully plan and include ICT in teaching and learning language.
3. Teachers of Foreign language(s) should be trained on the use of technology in teaching so as to prepare the students for the task of using gadgets like computer, in the later days of language use.
4. Language teachers should collaborate with the language development centre of the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to produce CALL materials suitable for Nigerian learners.

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