IMPACT OF THE DIGITAL AGE ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS (ECS): EXPLORATORY OBSERVATIONS FROM A NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY

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Presented
@
The 7th International Conference on ICT for Language Learning
Grand Hotel Mediterraneo, Florence, Italy

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Background Information

- All over the world, the concern is very high on the impact that electronic communication is having on language development in general.

- Some people are very concerned that the written standards will decline because of the impact of electronic communication language phenomenon, with all its abbreviations and nonstandard spellings.

Problem Statement

- Electronic communication has evolved as a twenty-first-century phenomenon with its own distinctive graphic style, which is full of abbreviations and deviant use of language which some believe is fostering a decline in literacy and affecting language development (Crystal, 2008).

- This situation has definitely generated a sense of moral panic in many countries. It has also generated great debates (Tomita, 2009).

- In particular, integrating information communication technologies into teaching and learning has also pose its peculiar challenges in some developing economy.

- Therefore, bridging the gap between highly developed educational systems and developing ones like Nigeria and the larger parts of Africa calls for an evaluation of what is available and how these developing educational systems might leverage the ICTs for their good (Aborisade, 2012).

Review of Literature

- Andrews(2004), documents a review of the impact on English language teaching and literacy learning between 1990 and 2003. Similarly, researches on implementing ICT integration have continued at great pace across the globe.

- Spargo and Larkins(2012) reported that SMS has fast become one of Australia's most popular forms of communication, especially amongst teenagers.

- It has been observed that Nigerian children are beating Australian students' record of teenagers' SMS communication.

Review of Literature *Contd.*

- Crystal (2008) gave a very interesting but unconfirmed example of a widely reported story of a teenager who had written an essay entirely in textspeak, which her teacher was 'totally unable to understand':

  My smmr hols wr CWOT. B4, we used 2go2 NY 2C my bro, his GF & thr 3:-@FTF. ILNY, it's a gr8 plc.

When translated it reads:

  My summer holidays were a complete waste of time.   Before, we used to go to New York to see my brother,   his   girlfriend   and   their   three screaming kids face to face.   I love New York. It's a great place.

Review of Literature *Cont'd.*

- Clough(2012) has also observed that this younger generation's extensive use of abbreviations to communicate quickly in text messages may be a sign of a major change in the English language.

  ... a mother asks her daughter who she has been texting so much and the girl responds in textspeak: 'IDK MBF Jill (I don't know, my best friend, Jill.).

Research Experiment

- At the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, the use of electronic media has been integrated into the teaching and learning of the ***Use-of-English*** **and** ***Writing and Literary Appreciation*** **(**GNS 101 and 201) courses covering aspects of ***Grammar, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills*** for first and second year students respectively.

- The e-learning experiment by Aduradola and Bodunde was conducted within a period of four consecutive sessions (2009/2010 to 2012/2013).

- Students are divided into a group between 10 and 15, later between 20 and 25 when the class size increased.

Objectives of the Research Experiment

- improvement of learners' performance

- promotion of individualised and interactive learning

- management of large classes

- promotion of the use of ICTs in Language and communication skills' development

Mode of Operation /Research Methodology

- members of each group went online and consulted books and journals for information on their topics

- responsibilities were shared among group members

- pieces of information were collated on the given topics

- sourced information were prepared into power point for group presentation

- any member of the group was called upon to make the group presentation

Mode of Operation /Research Methodology *Cont'd.*

- two- three groups presented per lecture of 2 hours duration

- observations based on presentation were made by the class members

- presenters were taken up on their presentations

- questions and observations were made as responses

- any of the specified group members was called to respond

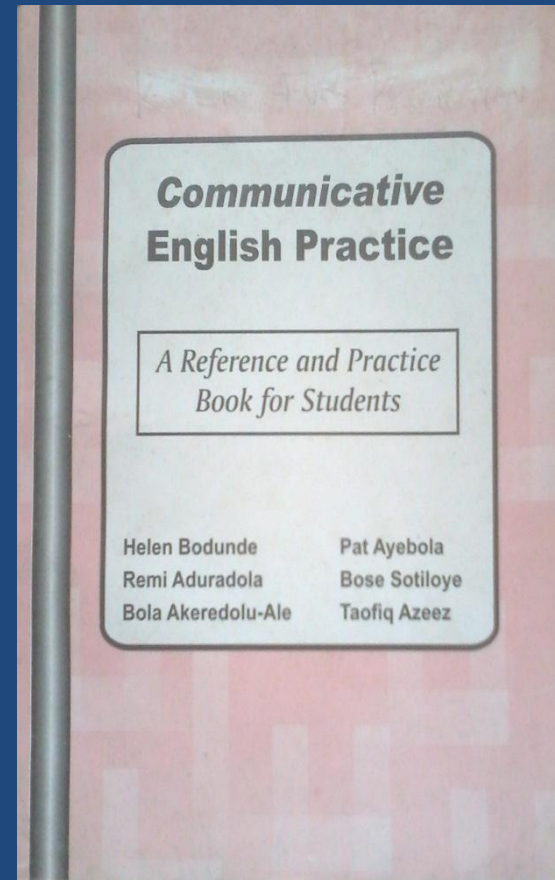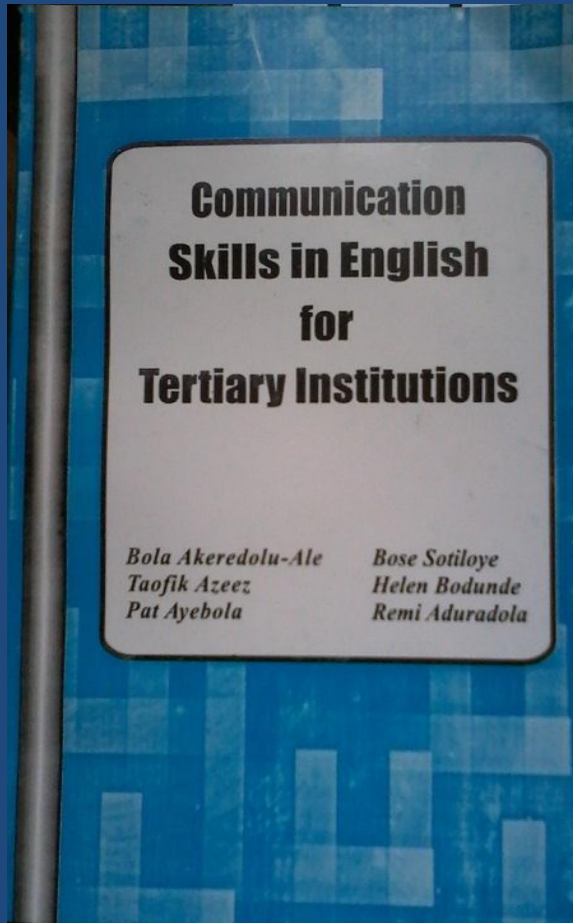- course lecturers explained knotty areas.

Scenes from a literary work
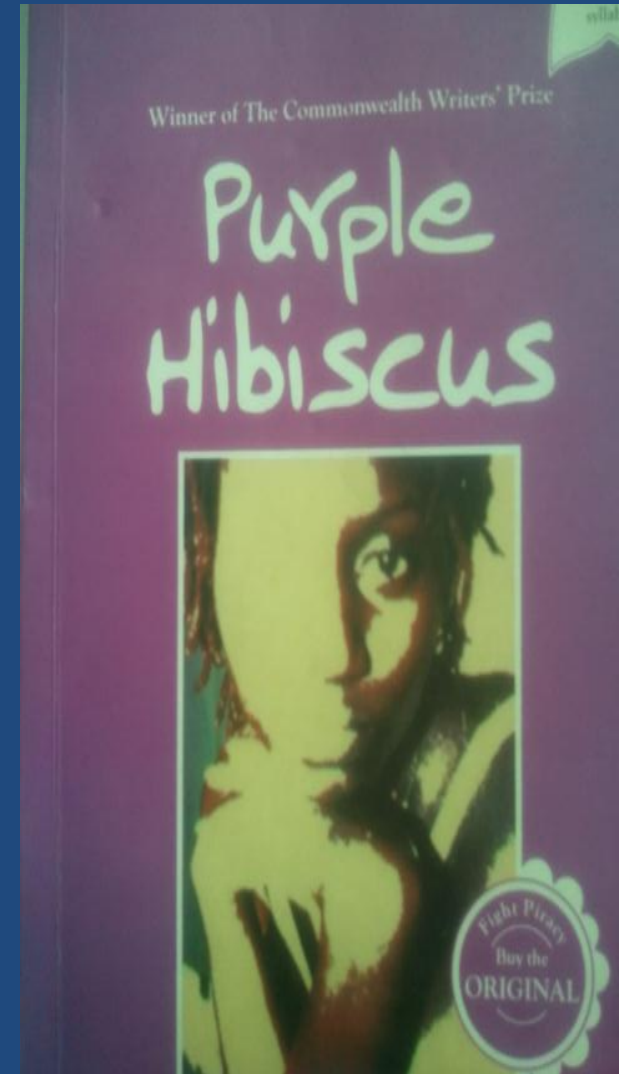
Some of the Recommended Texts for Literary Appreciation
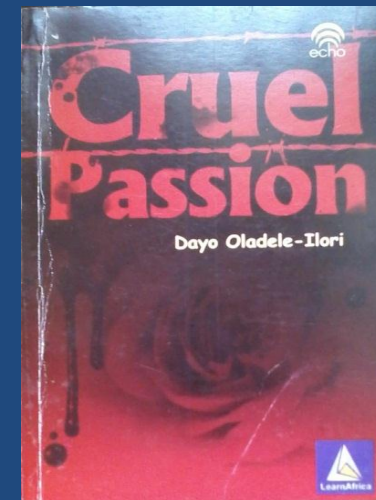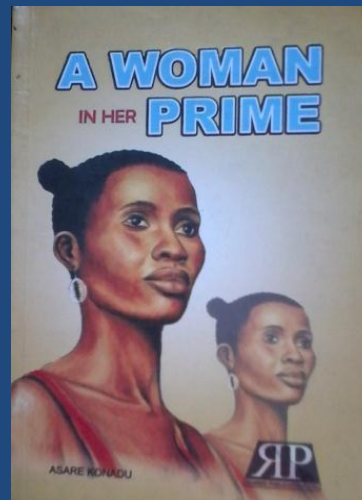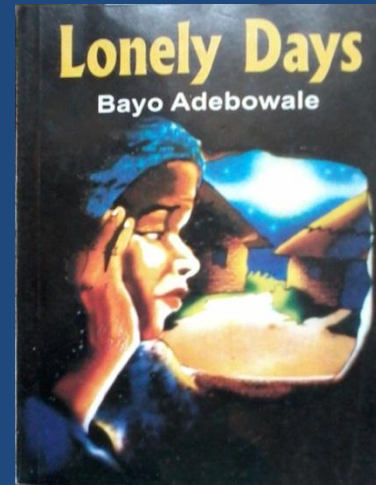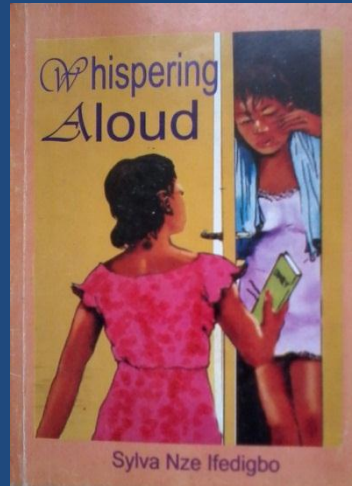
Departmental Communication Skills' Books

Results and Discussion of Findings

➢ **Lecturers' Observations**

- Students participated actively in information sourcing, preparation of presentations and reading from the screen

- The students' attitude to the learning of GNS 101 and 201 was positive.

- Active participation of 85 % of the class members was recorded.

- PowerPoint and class presentations enhanced the art of public speaking thereby removing stage fright/fear from students.

Results and Discussion of Findings *Cont'd.*

➢ Lecturers' Observations *Cont'd.*

- The presenters were able to present with partial reliance on the prepared slides.

- All the group members paid attention to presentations, questions and discussions.

- The few students that failed to contribute did not participate in the preparation of the document for presentations.

- Such students obtained low scores.

- Students' performance in message delivery and examinations became very encouraging.

Results and Discussion of Findings *Cont'd.*

➢ **Students' Opinion about the Integration**

- The students confessed that they were challenged and highly motivated to participate in preparing for the presentation.

- Initially, they perceived the method as tedious but after the first two groups' presentations, they were encouraged.

- They also learnt the power-point preparation and presentation from each other because any of the members of the group could be called to present.

- The system thereby encouraged collaborative and individual learning thereby aiding self-development.

Results and Discussion of Findings *Cont'd.*

➢ **Students' Opinion about the Integration *Cont'd.***

- They felt fulfilled because the impossible was made possible.

- They were able to retain better what they learnt, read and presented.

- Projected presentations made other groups' presentation accessible to class members thereby facilitating understanding and assimilation.

- A positive transfer of knowledge from GNS 101 and 201 learning methodology to other courses was experienced.

Challenges Faced in the Experiment

- The major challenge encountered was epileptic power supply.

- Occasional discouragement among students and teachers was experienced thereby inhibiting motivation.

- Inadequate resources (hardware and software) to support integration.

- Lack of infrastructural amenities.

- General attitude and resistance to change in some quarters.

Conclusion

- Technological innovations have gone hand-in-hand with the growth of English and are changing the way in which we communicate, work, trade, entertain and learn.

- The growth of the internet has facilitated the growth of the English language and this has occurred at a time when computers are no longer the exclusive domain of the dedicated few, but rather widely available to many .

- English language teacher and learner aiming for success must embrace and integrate technological tools with their teaching and learning.

- The situation in Nigerian institutions is that intricate blends of the use of ICTs with effective teaching has become very essential.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING