

ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL: THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, INNOVATION, AND CREATIVE PEDAGOGY.

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Abstract

The general objective of this study is to examine how the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), innovative technologies, and creative pedagogical approaches can enhance the effectiveness of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nigerian secondary schools, with the aim of improving students' language proficiency, engagement, critical thinking skills, and overall academic performance. English, being both the official language and a gateway to global knowledge, is central to Nigeria's educational success and socio-economic advancement. However, challenges such as teacher-centered pedagogy, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate resources, and poor integration of technology hinder effective English language learning outcomes. This paper explores the role of artificial intelligence (AI), innovation, and creative pedagogy in revolutionizing English language teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools. It argues that AI-powered tools, innovative instructional methods, and creativity-driven pedagogy can transform language classrooms into interactive, learner-centered environments. Furthermore, it highlights the implications of improved English proficiency for Nigeria's human capital development, employability, entrepreneurship, and global competitiveness. Conclusion and recommendations were made among which are organizing workshops and training programs to build teachers' capacity in AI integration, innovative teaching strategies, and creative pedagogy.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Innovation, Creative Pedagogy, English Language Teaching, Secondary Schools,

Introduction

Education remains a critical catalyst for socio-economic development, especially in developing nations like Nigeria where the demand for skilled manpower continues to rise. As the world transitions into a knowledge-driven economy, the role of education in equipping learners with communicative competence, problem-solving ability, and creativity cannot be overemphasized (Akinyemi, 2021). In this context, English language teaching (ELT) occupies a central place in Nigerian education. English is not only the country's official language but also the language of instruction, commerce, governance, and global communication. Thus, proficiency in English is vital for academic achievement, employability, and national development (Adegbite, 2020). The teaching of English in Nigerian secondary schools has historically been influenced by colonial educational models inherited from United Kingdom. As a result, instructional practices have largely followed conventional, teacher-centred approaches that emphasize content delivery, rote memorization, and examination preparation rather than communicative competence.

Despite this centrality, the teaching and learning of English in Nigerian secondary schools face persistent challenges. Studies reveal that many students graduate with weak communicative skills, poor writing ability, and limited vocabulary (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2022). Several factors contribute to this problem: outdated teacher-centered approaches, insufficient instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, limited access to technology, and teachers' inadequate exposure to innovative practices. Consequently, Nigerian students often lag behind their peers in global standardized assessments and in skills needed for 21st-century employment (Okebukola, 2021).

Globally, the landscape of education is being reshaped by digital transformation, particularly through artificial intelligence (AI), innovative teaching approaches, and creativity-driven pedagogy. AI tools such as intelligent tutoring systems, automated essay scoring, speech recognition software, and chatbots are now being integrated into classrooms to support personalized learning and enhance student engagement (Luckin et al., 2016). Likewise, innovative pedagogical strategies such as flipped classrooms, blended learning, gamification, and digital storytelling are helping to foster learner autonomy and critical thinking (Salmon, 2019). In addition, creative pedagogy emphasizes imaginative, participatory, and problem-solving approaches that go beyond rote learning to prepare students for complex real-world challenges (Craft, 2015).

In Nigeria, leveraging these trends is no longer optional but essential. The intersection of AI, innovation, and creative pedagogy provides an opportunity to address the long-standing challenges in ELT and align the education sector with the demands of a globalized economy. More importantly, improving the teaching and learning of English directly impacts Nigeria's socio-economic development by producing a workforce capable of effective communication, global collaboration, and digital innovation.

This paper therefore examines the role of AI, innovation, and creative pedagogy in enhancing English language teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools. It also discusses the implications of this transformation for national development. The discussion is conceptual, drawing from relevant literature, global best practices, and the Nigerian context. By situating English language teaching within the broader agenda of educational reform and economic growth, the paper provides a framework for policymakers, teachers, and stakeholders to rethink strategies for revolutionizing Nigerian education.

Conceptual Clarifications

In order to properly situate this paper, it is important to clarify the key concepts underpinning the theme artificial intelligence (AI), innovation, and creative pedagogy and explain their relevance to English language teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools. These concepts are interconnected, as each provides a pathway to improving pedagogy and achieving better learning outcomes.

Artificial Intelligence in Education

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, particularly computer systems, which can perform tasks that typically require human reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making (Russell & Norvig, 2016). In education, AI encompasses tools and applications that adapt learning to students' needs, provide instant feedback, and enhance the teaching-learning process (Luckin et al., 2016). Within the teaching of English language, AI applications include:

1. **Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS):** Programs that provide personalized instruction and feedback to students on grammar, writing, and comprehension.
2. **Automated Essay Scoring:** Software that evaluates students' essays and provides detailed suggestions for improvement (Shermis, 2014).
3. **Speech Recognition Software:** Tools such as Google Voice Typing and language apps that help students improve pronunciation and oral fluency.
4. **Chatbots and Virtual Assistants:** AI-powered chat systems like ChatGPT that can engage students in dialogue practice, vocabulary development, and comprehension tasks.

For Nigerian secondary schools, where teachers often face large class sizes and limited resources, AI offers an opportunity to supplement traditional instruction, personalize learning,

and expose students to interactive language environments that build communication competence (Akinwumi, 2022).

Innovation in Pedagogy

Innovation in pedagogy refers to the adoption of new and creative teaching approaches, strategies, or technologies that improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes (Salmon, 2019). Innovative pedagogy moves away from teacher-centered instruction towards learner-centered methods that emphasize active participation, collaboration, and critical thinking. In the context of English language teaching in Nigerian secondary schools, innovation may include:

1. **Blended Learning:** Combining face-to-face teaching with online resources, allowing students to access materials beyond the classroom.
2. **Flipped Classrooms:** Reversing the traditional approach by giving students learning materials (videos, podcasts, texts) before class, so class time is used for discussion and practice.
3. **Gamification:** Using game-based elements like quizzes, challenges, and reward systems to motivate learners and make language learning more engaging.
4. **Digital Storytelling:** Encouraging students to use multimedia tools to create and share stories, thereby enhancing writing, speaking, and creative skills.

Nigeria's educational system, often criticized for outdated rote-learning practices (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2022), requires such innovative pedagogies to prepare students for a knowledge economy that demands communication, creativity, and collaboration.

Creative Pedagogy

Creative pedagogy involves the intentional integration of imagination, problem-solving, and originality into teaching and learning (Craft, 2015). Unlike innovation, which focuses on new strategies and tools, creativity emphasizes flexible, open-ended approaches that allow learners to generate original ideas and apply knowledge in diverse contexts.

In English language classrooms, creative pedagogy can manifest through:

1. **Role-Play and Drama:** Helping students practice communication in simulated real-life situations.
2. **Debates and Public Speaking:** Encouraging critical thinking, persuasive language, and confidence in expression.
3. **Creative Writing:** Allowing learners to explore their imagination in essays, poetry, and storytelling.
4. **Collaborative Projects:** Group tasks that involve research, presentations, and problem-solving in English.

In Nigerian secondary schools, where students often perceive English as an examination subject rather than a tool for real-life communication, creative pedagogy can transform the classroom into a vibrant, participatory environment. This not only enhances language proficiency but also develops transferable skills such as teamwork, innovation, and confidence qualities essential for national development (Okebukola, 2021).

Interconnectedness of AI, Innovation, and Creativity

Although distinct, AI, innovation, and creative pedagogy are interrelated in practice. AI provides the technological backbone that supports innovative teaching methods, while innovation opens up new ways of applying AI tools creatively in the classroom. Creative pedagogy ensures that these technologies and methods are not used mechanically but in ways that inspire imagination, problem-solving, and real-world application. When strategically integrated into English language teaching in Nigerian secondary schools, these three elements

can revolutionize pedagogy, improve students' communicative competence, and prepare them for active participation in the global knowledge economy. The global educational landscape has witnessed significant shifts due to the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), innovative teaching approaches, and creative pedagogy. Across continents, scholars and practitioners have explored how these elements influence language education, particularly in English language teaching (ELT). This review situates the Nigerian experience within global trends, identifying both opportunities and challenges for integrating AI, innovation, and creativity in secondary school English classrooms.

Global Perspectives on AI in Education

Artificial intelligence has become one of the most transformative forces in education worldwide. In developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and China, AI technologies are increasingly embedded in classroom practices. Luckin et al. (2016) note that AI in education enables adaptive learning systems that tailor instruction to individual student needs, thereby improving learning outcomes. Similarly, Holmes et al. (2019) emphasize the role of AI in providing real-time feedback, automating assessment, and supporting teachers with data-driven insights. Language learning has particularly benefited from AI integration. Intelligent tutoring systems and AI-based language apps such as Duolingo, Grammarly, and Babbel have been widely adopted by learners to improve grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Speech recognition technologies, for instance, assist learners in acquiring near-native accents, while automated essay-scoring software reduces the burden of grading large volumes of writing tasks (Shermis, 2014). These tools also foster learner autonomy, allowing students to take charge of their learning outside the classroom environment.

In Asia, countries such as China and South Korea have aggressively integrated AI into their education sectors, investing heavily in digital infrastructure and teacher training. Zhang and Aslan (2021) argue that these investments are producing students with higher English proficiency and digital literacy, equipping them for global competitiveness.

Global Perspectives on Innovation and Creative Pedagogy

Beyond AI, educational innovation has been central to reform efforts in many countries. Innovative pedagogical strategies such as blended learning, flipped classrooms, and gamification have been embraced to make language learning more interactive and engaging. For example, Bishop and Verleger (2013) found that flipped classrooms in language education promote deeper understanding as students spend classroom time practicing language skills instead of passively receiving lectures. Gamification, the use of game mechanics in non-game contexts, has also been recognized as a powerful tool in language learning. According to Deterding et al. (2011), gamification increases learner motivation, engagement, and retention of language skills. Similarly, creative pedagogy emphasizing imagination, collaboration, and problem-solving has been identified as essential for preparing students for the uncertainties of the 21st century (Craft, 2015). Creative approaches such as role-playing, digital storytelling, and collaborative projects help learners use language in authentic contexts, thereby developing both linguistic and cognitive skills.

Nigerian Perspectives on English Language Teaching

In Nigeria, English occupies a unique role as both the official language and the language of instruction across all levels of education. However, research consistently shows that many Nigerian students struggle with English proficiency. Adegbite (2020) observes that students often leave secondary school with limited ability to write or speak fluently in English, which hampers their performance in higher education and professional environments. Several factors contribute to these challenges. Ogunleye and Adeyemi (2022) identify teacher-centered methods, rote memorization, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of instructional materials as major barriers to effective English teaching. In many schools, teaching still

emphasizes examination preparation rather than communicative competence, resulting in students who can reproduce memorized content but cannot use English effectively in real-life contexts.

Technology adoption in Nigerian schools remains slow. While some private schools experiment with digital tools, most public secondary schools lack the infrastructure, funding, and teacher training needed to implement AI or innovative practices (Okebukola, 2021). This digital divide not only limits the potential of English language education but also widens the gap between students in urban and rural areas.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing English Language Teaching

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increasingly become a transformative tool in education, offering solutions to long-standing challenges in teaching and learning. In English Language Teaching (ELT), AI provides unique opportunities to personalize learning, automate assessment, and enhance communication skills. For Nigerian secondary schools, where large class sizes, insufficient instructional materials, and limited teacher-student interaction hinder effective language learning, AI offers a powerful complement to traditional pedagogy.

Personalization of Learning

One of the greatest contributions of AI to education is its ability to personalize learning experiences. Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) adjust content and pace according to individual student needs, providing tailored support to learners with different proficiency levels (Luckin et al., 2016). In English language teaching, AI can help students struggling with grammar, vocabulary, or comprehension by offering exercises and feedback targeted at their weaknesses. For instance, language apps like Duolingo use adaptive algorithms to provide personalized lessons based on learner performance. Similarly, Grammarly provides individualized writing support by detecting errors, explaining rules, and suggesting alternatives. In Nigeria, where classrooms often exceed 50–70 students per teacher (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2022), AI-driven tools could help bridge the teacher-student gap by offering additional, customized learning support outside the classroom.

Automated Assessment and Feedback

Assessment is a core component of language learning, but Nigerian teachers often face challenges in providing timely, detailed feedback due to large class sizes and heavy workloads. AI addresses this problem by automating aspects of assessment. Automated essay scoring software, for example, evaluates students' writing and provides immediate feedback on grammar, coherence, and vocabulary (Shermis, 2014). Speech recognition technologies can assess pronunciation and fluency, giving learners real-time corrections. Such feedback systems not only reduce the burden on teachers but also motivate students to take responsibility for their learning. In Nigeria, where WAEC and NECO examinations emphasize written English, AI-powered assessment tools could significantly improve writing skills by giving students multiple opportunities to practice and receive feedback before formal examinations.

Enhancing Oral Communication Skills

Spoken English proficiency remains a weak area among Nigerian secondary school students. Many students are more comfortable with written English but struggle with oral communication due to limited practice opportunities and fear of making mistakes (Adegbite, 2020). AI tools such as speech recognition apps, chatbots, and conversational agents provide safe, non-judgmental platforms for students to practice speaking. For example, Google Assistant and Microsoft's Cortana can be programmed to engage learners in conversations, while AI chatbots like Replika or ChatGPT can simulate dialogue practice. These tools expose students to authentic language use, helping them develop confidence and fluency. For students

in rural Nigeria, where exposure to proficient English speakers is limited, such technologies could serve as virtual conversation partners.

Supporting Teachers through Data Analytics

AI does not replace teachers but rather supports them by offering data-driven insights into student performance. Learning analytics powered by AI can identify patterns of errors, track progress over time, and highlight areas where students need additional support (Holmes et al., 2019). This enables teachers to make informed decisions about instructional strategies and interventions. In Nigerian secondary schools, teachers often struggle to monitor individual learners due to large class sizes. By adopting AI-based platforms, educators can access dashboards that reveal students' strengths and weaknesses, making it easier to plan lessons that address collective and individual needs.

The Role of Innovation in Pedagogy for English Language Teaching

Pedagogical innovation in English Language Teaching (ELT) refers to the intentional adoption of creative, learner-centred, and technology-enhanced instructional strategies that improve language acquisition outcomes. Innovation in pedagogy moves beyond traditional teacher-centred approaches toward interactive, collaborative, and competency-based learning environments (Fullan, 2013). In the context of Nigerian secondary schools, pedagogical innovation is critical for addressing persistent challenges such as low communicative competence, examination-driven instruction, overcrowded classrooms, and limited learner engagement.

1. Learner-Centred and Constructivist Approaches

Innovative pedagogy in ELT is grounded in constructivist theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction and experience (Vygotsky, 1978). Instead of passively receiving grammatical rules, students engage in discussions, debates, storytelling, and collaborative problem-solving tasks that enhance communicative competence. Approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasize meaningful communication over rote memorization. Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that communicative competence develops when learners use language authentically in real-life contexts. In Nigeria, shifting from lecture-based instruction to communicative tasks can significantly improve speaking and listening skills.

2. Project-Based and Inquiry-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) represents another major innovation in ELT. Through projects such as writing school magazines, producing podcasts, or dramatizing literary texts, learners apply language skills in authentic contexts. According to Thomas (2000), PBL promotes deeper understanding, collaboration, and critical thinking. Similarly, inquiry-based learning encourages students to investigate themes in literature, social issues, or cultural topics through guided questioning. This approach fosters analytical reasoning and independent thinking skills essential for 21st-century learners (OECD, 2018).

3. Gamification and Interactive Learning

Gamification the use of game elements such as points, leaderboards, and rewards enhances motivation and engagement in language classrooms. Deterding et al. (2011) define gamification as the application of game-design elements in non-game contexts to increase participation. In ELT, spelling competitions, vocabulary challenges, and digital quiz platforms stimulate active learning. Innovative gamified tools such as Kahoot and Quizizz support formative assessment and immediate feedback, which improves retention and learner motivation (Zainuddin et al., 2020). In resource-constrained environments, even low-tech gamification strategies (e.g., classroom competitions and role-play simulations) can significantly enhance engagement.

4. Integration of Digital Literacy and Multimodal Learning

Innovation in ELT increasingly involves multimodal instruction—combining text, audio, video, and interactive media. Mayer’s (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning suggests that students learn more effectively when information is presented through multiple channels. Digital storytelling, blogging, podcasting, and video presentations allow students to develop language skills across modalities. Such practices align with 21st-century competencies, including creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy (Partnership for 21st Century Skills [P21], 2019).

5. Differentiated and Inclusive Instruction

Innovative pedagogy also promotes differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse learning needs. Tomlinson (2014) emphasizes that effective teaching requires adjusting content, process, and assessment to learners’ readiness levels and interests. In multilingual Nigerian classrooms, differentiated strategies can support learners with varying proficiency levels. By combining differentiation with adaptive technologies and creative assessment methods, teachers can ensure inclusive participation and improved learning outcomes.

6. Assessment Innovation

Traditional ELT assessment in Nigeria has largely focused on summative examinations conducted by bodies such as the West African Examinations Council and the National Examinations Council. Innovative pedagogy, however, emphasizes formative assessment, peer evaluation, reflective journals, portfolios, and performance-based tasks. Black and William (2009) argue that formative assessment significantly enhances student achievement by providing continuous feedback. In ELT, innovative assessment supports language development beyond memorization toward communicative competence.

Moving Beyond Traditional Pedagogy

Traditional English teaching in Nigeria has often relied on teacher-centered approaches, where students passively receive information without active engagement. Such methods focus heavily on memorization of grammar rules and literary analysis, often neglecting functional communication skills (Adegoke, 2019). Innovative pedagogy, however, emphasizes student participation, critical thinking, and creativity. For example, strategies such as project-based learning (PBL), cooperative learning, and inquiry-based instruction encourage learners to use English as a tool for problem-solving and collaboration.

Flipped Classroom and Blended Learning

One innovative model with global success is the flipped classroom, where students first explore instructional content (through videos, podcasts, or reading) outside class and then apply knowledge through discussions, role plays, or debates during class sessions (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). In Nigerian secondary schools, flipped classrooms could be used to assign online videos on English grammar or comprehension passages for pre-class study, while classroom time is used for guided practice, peer assessment, and collaborative learning. Similarly, blended learning, which combines face-to-face instruction with digital platforms, offers flexibility and expands learning beyond the classroom. For instance, English teachers may use WhatsApp groups to facilitate vocabulary building, Kahoot for quizzes, or Google Docs for collaborative essay writing. This approach fosters learner autonomy and integrates technology into everyday learning.

Barriers to Innovation

Despite its promise, innovation in pedagogy faces challenges in Nigerian secondary schools. Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult to implement personalized or project-based learning. Limited access to technology restricts flipped and blended learning models,

especially in rural areas with poor internet connectivity. Moreover, many teachers lack training in modern teaching strategies and remain dependent on chalk-and-talk methods (Akinwumi, 2022). Without deliberate investment in teacher professional development and infrastructure, innovative pedagogical practices may remain confined to elite private schools.

Implications for English Language Teaching

The integration of innovation and creative pedagogy into English Language Teaching (ELT) carries significant implications for instructional practice, curriculum design, teacher professional development, learner outcomes, and educational policy. In the Nigerian secondary school context, these implications are both transformative and strategic.

1. Shift from Teacher-Centred to Learner-Centred Instruction

One major implication is the transition from traditional lecture-based instruction to learner-centred pedagogies. Constructivist theory emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through social interaction and guided participation (Vygotsky, 1978). This suggests that English teachers must move beyond grammar-drill approaches toward communicative tasks, collaborative learning, and problem-solving activities. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), for example, promotes meaningful language use rather than memorization of rules (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In practical terms, ELT classrooms should incorporate debates, role-play, peer discussions, storytelling, and real-life simulations to foster fluency and communicative competence.

2. Curriculum Reform Toward Competency-Based Learning

Innovative pedagogy implies a reorientation of the English curriculum toward competency-based outcomes. Rather than focusing primarily on examination preparation, the curriculum should emphasize:

- Speaking and listening proficiency
- Critical thinking
- Creative writing
- Digital literacy
- Intercultural communication

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018), 21st-century education must equip learners with transferable skills that support adaptability and lifelong learning. Therefore, ELT in Nigerian secondary schools must integrate authentic tasks such as digital presentations, podcast creation, and collaborative writing projects.

3. Increased Emphasis on Formative Assessment

Innovative pedagogy shifts assessment practices from predominantly summative examinations to continuous formative assessment. Black and Wiliam (2009) argue that formative assessment significantly improves learning outcomes by providing timely feedback and identifying learning gaps. For ELT, this means:

- Using rubrics for speaking tasks
- Incorporating peer assessment
- Maintaining learner portfolios
- Providing feedback on drafts of essays
- Using interactive quizzes for immediate feedback

While external examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council and the National Examinations Council remain important, classroom-level assessment must promote skill development rather than rote memorization.

4. Teacher Professional Development and Capacity Building

The successful implementation of innovative pedagogy requires continuous teacher training. Fullan (2013) emphasizes that educational change depends largely on teacher capacity and institutional support. Teachers must develop competencies in:

- Creative instructional design
- Classroom technology integration

- Differentiated instruction
- Student-centred facilitation
- Reflective teaching practice

Without adequate professional development, innovation efforts may fail due to resistance, skill gaps, or lack of confidence.

5. Promotion of Inclusive and Differentiated Instruction

Innovative ELT practices encourage differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse learners. Tomlinson (2014) explains that effective teaching requires adjusting content, process, and assessment according to students' readiness levels and interests. In multilingual Nigerian classrooms, differentiated strategies can support:

- Learners with low English proficiency
- Students from diverse linguistic backgrounds
- Gifted learners requiring enrichment

This ensures equitable access to quality English language education.

6. Development of 21st-Century Skills

Innovative pedagogy enhances broader competencies such as collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2019) emphasizes that these skills are essential for global competitiveness.

Through project-based learning and inquiry-based instruction (Thomas, 2000), students engage in authentic problem-solving activities that strengthen analytical and expressive abilities. This aligns ELT with national development goals and global educational standards.

7. Improved Learner Motivation and Engagement

Motivational theories suggest that active engagement increases learning effectiveness. Gamification and interactive learning strategies enhance participation and intrinsic motivation (Deterding et al., 2011). When students experience English learning as dynamic and relevant, anxiety decreases and confidence improves. This is particularly important in contexts where English is a second language and learners may experience communication apprehension.

8. Policy and System-Level Implications

At the systemic level, educational policymakers must provide:

- Infrastructure support
- Updated curriculum guidelines
- Funding for instructional resources
- Monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- Incentives for innovative teaching

Educational reform must be supported by institutional structures to ensure sustainability (Fullan, 2013).

Creative Pedagogy in English Language Teaching

Creative pedagogy emphasizes the development of learners' imagination, problem-solving skills, and innovative thinking through teaching strategies that go beyond traditional methods. In English Language Teaching (ELT), creativity involves using innovative approaches such as storytelling, debates, drama, poetry, digital arts, and multimedia projects to make language learning engaging and meaningful. For Nigerian secondary schools, where English is both a subject and the official medium of instruction, creative pedagogy is essential for improving proficiency, enhancing critical thinking, and preparing students to thrive in a competitive global economy.

Understanding Creative Pedagogy

Creative pedagogy is rooted in the belief that every learner possesses the potential to think imaginatively and express ideas uniquely (Craft, 2005). In ELT, it moves teaching from a

rigid focus on grammar and rote memorization to a dynamic process where students actively produce language through various forms of creative expression. This approach not only strengthens linguistic competence but also nurtures confidence, self-expression, and collaboration—qualities often underdeveloped in traditional Nigerian classrooms (Adeyemi, 2021).

Storytelling and Narrative-Based Learning

Storytelling is a powerful pedagogical tool in Nigeria's multilingual context, where oral traditions are deeply embedded in culture. Teachers can encourage students to share folk tales, personal experiences, or community stories in English, thereby improving vocabulary, listening, and speaking skills. Storytelling also fosters imagination and intercultural understanding. For example, in a secondary school in Enugu, teachers used student-generated short stories to teach narrative writing, significantly improving learners' creativity and grammar (Okebukola, 2021).

Drama, Role-Play, and Performance

Drama and role-play provide learners with opportunities to practice English in authentic contexts. By enacting real-life situations—such as job interviews, market transactions, or political debates—students develop confidence, fluency, and communicative competence. In addition, performing plays or reciting poetry in English integrates language with creativity and performance arts. Nigerian schools already host cultural and literary days; integrating these events systematically into ELT curricula can transform language classrooms into hubs of creativity and expression (Adegbite, 2020).

Poetry, Creative Writing, and Debate

Poetry and creative writing offer learners a platform for self-expression while honing their mastery of vocabulary, figurative language, and stylistic devices. Teachers can organize poetry-writing workshops, short story competitions, and essay contests where students express their views on local and global issues in English. Similarly, debates encourage critical thinking, argument construction, and persuasive communication. For instance, inter-school debate competitions in Lagos have demonstrated how students can creatively use English to engage with pressing societal issues such as corruption, unemployment, and climate change (Akinwumi, 2022).

Digital Arts and Multimedia Projects

The integration of technology into creative pedagogy expands opportunities for learners to engage with English in innovative ways. Students can be tasked with producing digital storytelling projects, podcasts, or short films using smartphones and free editing software. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube can serve as spaces for students to publish English-based creative content. These activities not only improve digital literacy but also give students a sense of ownership and pride in their learning. For example, students in private schools in Abuja have successfully created podcasts in English to discuss environmental challenges, thereby combining language practice with civic education (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2022).

Benefits of Creative Pedagogy

Creative pedagogy enhances motivation, promotes deeper learning, and improves retention of language concepts. It bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application by allowing students to use English in meaningful contexts. Moreover, it nurtures 21st-century skills communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking that are essential for Nigeria's educational and economic transformation (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). For students from underprivileged backgrounds, creative approaches also make learning inclusive and relatable, particularly when local culture and real-life experiences are integrated into classroom activities.

Challenges to Creative Pedagogy

Despite its advantages, creative pedagogy in Nigeria faces barriers such as exam-oriented teaching, lack of resources, and rigid curricula. Teachers often feel pressured to “teach to the test” for WAEC and NECO examinations, leaving little room for creativity. Furthermore, many teachers lack professional training in creative instructional methods and rely on outdated, teacher-centered techniques (Okebukola, 2021). Overcoming these challenges requires systemic reforms, teacher empowerment, and curricular flexibility.

Implications for English Language Education

Creative pedagogy offers Nigerian secondary schools an avenue to transform English language education from passive learning to active, innovative engagement. When students are encouraged to express themselves through drama, storytelling, poetry, debates, and digital media, they develop not only language proficiency but also transferable skills that contribute to national development. Thus, embedding creativity in ELT aligns directly with Nigeria’s broader goals of innovation-driven education and economic growth.

Creative Pedagogy in English Language Teaching

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Enhancing Educational Quality and Access

The introduction of AI and creative pedagogical practices has the potential to address many systemic challenges in Nigeria’s education system, including large class sizes, inadequate instructional resources, and teacher shortages. AI-powered platforms provide personalized learning opportunities, while innovative and creative approaches ensure student engagement and improved retention. By improving the quality of English teaching, Nigeria can reduce the high rates of examination failure in WAEC and NECO, thereby enhancing students’ chances of progressing to higher education (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2022). Access is also broadened as digital learning tools and creative teaching strategies make education more inclusive, especially for students in rural or disadvantaged areas. Over time, this can reduce educational inequalities and contribute to the nation’s human capital development.

Strengthening Human Capital for the Economy

Human capital development is central to Nigeria’s economic growth. Proficiency in English equips students with communication skills essential for employment in both domestic and international markets. AI-based English learning tools also promote digital literacy, which is a critical skill in today’s technology-driven economy (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). By producing graduates who are proficient in English and technologically literate, Nigeria will be better positioned to compete in global industries such as information technology, business process outsourcing, creative industries, and academia. For instance, young Nigerians who can confidently use English in coding bootcamps, online freelancing, or digital entrepreneurship can access global opportunities that contribute to the economy.

Promoting Innovation and Creativity in Society

When secondary schools embrace innovation and creativity in English teaching, they cultivate learners who are not only linguistically competent but also innovative thinkers and problem-solvers. Such learners are more likely to contribute to the nation as entrepreneurs, civic leaders, and innovators. For example, students exposed to creative writing, debates, and

digital storytelling in English are more capable of engaging in civic discourse, proposing solutions to community problems, and creating original content for the creative economy. This aligns with Nigeria's vision of becoming an innovation-driven economy, where human creativity is harnessed for socio-economic transformation.

Improving Global Competitiveness

English remains the global lingua franca, especially in business, diplomacy, science, and technology. Nigerian students who achieve high proficiency in English gain access to international education, research collaborations, and global labor markets. AI-enhanced ELT prepares students to meet international communication standards, while creative pedagogy ensures they develop confidence and originality in expressing ideas. This improves Nigeria's global competitiveness, as the nation becomes home to a workforce capable of participating in international trade, diplomacy, and knowledge economies. For instance, Nigeria's participation in global outsourcing markets, such as call centers and IT support, depends heavily on English language proficiency.

Reducing Youth Unemployment and Underemployment

Nigeria faces high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment, partly due to gaps in communication skills, creativity, and digital competence. Integrating AI and innovative pedagogical practices into English teaching equips students with transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving that are highly valued in the labor market (Akinwumi, 2022). Moreover, creative pedagogy prepares students for opportunities in Nigeria's growing creative industries (film, music, digital arts), where English proficiency is crucial for global recognition. By making English learning practical and creativity-driven, Nigerian schools can nurture students who are employable and entrepreneurial.

Challenges in Integrating AI, Innovation, and Creative Pedagogy in ELT

Despite the potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI), innovation, and creative pedagogy in revolutionizing English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nigerian secondary schools, several challenges hinder their widespread adoption:

1. **Infrastructural Deficits:** Many Nigerian schools lack stable electricity, reliable internet, and digital devices, making it difficult to integrate AI-powered tools or blended learning models (Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2022).
2. **Teacher Preparedness:** Most English teachers have limited training in digital literacy, AI tools, and creative pedagogical approaches. Many continue to rely heavily on rote learning and examination-focused instruction (Akinwumi, 2022).
3. **Curriculum Rigidity:** The current secondary school English curriculum prioritizes examination preparation (WAEC and NECO) over creativity, innovation, and real-life communication skills (Adegbite, 2020).
4. **Financial Barriers:** Many public schools cannot afford digital devices, projectors, or AI-powered platforms. Students from low-income backgrounds also face challenges in accessing digital resources.
5. **Cultural and Policy Barriers:** There is often resistance from stakeholders who fear that AI may replace teachers, as well as a lack of comprehensive government policies to integrate emerging technologies into education (Okebukola, 2021).

Recommendations

To maximize the potential of AI, innovation, and creative pedagogy in English language education and link them to Nigeria's national development, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Organize workshops and training programs to build teachers' capacity in AI integration, innovative teaching strategies, and creative pedagogy.
2. Establish partnerships with universities and EdTech companies to train teachers in emerging educational technologies.
3. Revise the English curriculum to emphasize communication, critical thinking, digital literacy, and creativity.
4. Incorporate project-based learning, debates, digital storytelling, and other creative practices as core components of ELT.
5. Expand access to electricity, internet connectivity, and affordable digital devices in schools, particularly in rural areas.
6. Encourage government-private sector partnerships to provide AI-powered educational resources at subsidized rates.

Conclusion

The integration of Artificial Intelligence, innovation, and creative pedagogy in English Language Teaching holds immense potential for transforming Nigeria's education system and driving national development. English proficiency is not merely an academic goal but a foundational skill for communication, employability, and global competitiveness. By leveraging AI to personalize learning and automate assessment, innovation to adopt learner-centered methods, and creativity to make lessons engaging and expressive, Nigeria can build a future-ready education system. However, realizing these benefits requires deliberate investments in teacher training, infrastructure, curriculum reforms, and supportive policies. It also calls for a cultural shift away from exam-oriented teaching toward creativity, communication, and critical thinking. If properly implemented, these approaches will not only enhance students' mastery of English but also produce a generation of innovative thinkers, problem-solvers, and global citizens who can drive Nigeria's socio-economic transformation. Ultimately, revolutionizing English language education through AI, innovation, and creative pedagogy is more than a classroom reform; it is a strategic pathway to building a prosperous Nigeria anchored on knowledge, creativity, and technological advancement.

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