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Angela Eze

Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, akamsonyere@gmail.com

Charity N. Onyishi

University of Johannesburg, South Africa, cnyishi@uj.ac.za

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School Library Resources for Inclusive Online English Language learning: Teachers' perspectives about differentiating instruction in the context of English as Second Language

By

Angela Eze

Department of Art and Humanity Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Charity N. Onyishi

Department of Educational Psychology, University of Johannesburg, South-Africa

Corresponding Author: Charity N. Onyishi, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Johannesburg, South-Africa, Email: cnyishi.uj.ac.za

Abstract

In an inclusive education setting, learners with and without disabilities are guided to study in the same classrooms with adaptable facilities and equipments. With this arrangement in place, assistive technology becomes an absolute requirement, and the school library is a medium for providing and using inclusive resources. In the current education system where online learning is speedily overtaking face-to-face learning modalities, school Library resources are indispensable for the effective inclusion of all learners through differentiated instruction. Such is critically essential for English language learning, especially in Nigeria, where English is learned as a Second Language. However, little is known about the perspectives of English Language teachers on the availability and use of online school library resources for differentiating English Language instruction to include all learners. This qualitative study investigated how English language teachers view school library resources for online English language learning and their perspectives about differentiating English language instruction using online library resources. Interview data were collected from 15 practicing English teachers in Government Secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Results showed that English Language teachers are unaware of using technology and online resources in their classrooms, especially for differentiated instruction. Challenges identified were lack of skills, unavailability of resources, poor access, and poor attitudes. Conclusions were drawn based on the findings. It is recommended that school librarians be cautious about the needs and preferences of English Language teachers and learners and provide appropriate online library resources to meet their needs.

Keywords: Library resources, English language learning, teachers, online learning, assistive technology, inclusive Education, differentiated instruction

Introduction

Inclusive education is an emerging concept that has recently gained worldwide acceptance. It is a programme that caters for the education needs of individuals with disabilities in a regular school setting. More than other domains, inclusive Education is threatened with the gradual surge into

online learning. The use of innovative digital technologies and online learning has skyrocketed following the social restrictions associated with COVID-19 and educators now have more options for improving students' learning due to the integration of technological devices and online learning platforms (Dhawan, 2020; Khalil, Mansour, Fadda, Almisnid, Aldamegh, Al-Nafeesah,... & Al-Wutayd, 2020). Thus, though children have gone back to schools, there is increasing availability, acceptability, and adoption of online learning in teaching and learning at all levels (Khalil et al., 2020).

The Internet's availability has made online teaching and learning viable even in remote areas and developing countries like Nigeria. The Internet has blended Education and technology into its domain, allowing experts to study and promote the pleasures offered by online learning to both instructors and pupils. Since the proliferation of online learning and technology-based instructions, research studies have delved into validating the effectiveness. The majority of such studies have recorded great success in terms of achievement (Torun, 2020), motivation (Esra, & Sevilen, 2021), self-regulation (Pelikan, Lüftenegger, Holzer, Korlat, Spiel, & Schober, 2021; Wandler, & Imbriale, 2017), and general skill development. For instance, a study carried out by Erguvan, (2014) found favorable views of instructors towards the ICT tool. The study found that ICT motivates students and adds variety to class based on instructors' views.

In a similar study, Lindner, Alnahdi, Wahl, and Schwab (2019) discovered that the new online invention provides educators with various options for implementing customized instruction (also known as differentiated instruction) to meet learning objectives. Teachers of English as a second language may find it challenging to keep pupils motivated and involved in the activity; however, computer-assisted language learning opens new avenues for supporting teachers in meeting this difficulty. Online language learning energizes learners (Lee, 2000). It

provides benefits such as lower long-term costs, greater access to multiple sources of information, interaction opportunities, and personalization of the teaching process (Jorge, Jorge, Gutiérrez, Garca, & Daz, 2003).

Most interestingly, teaching and learning are no longer constrained by the time and space of authentic materials with graphics and animations, posting and answering messages, and writing and replying to emails; instead, learners may communicate and learn collaboratively whenever and wherever they want. Hakim (2020) found teachers' positive attitudes about using online blackboard in teaching English; they also reported facing some challenges, such as weak internet connection and low student motivation and attention. In a related study, Algethami, (2022) found that teachers' attitudes were mixed towards teaching English online, compared to in-person teaching and assessment. However, some barriers to effective virtual classrooms exist, such as a lack of technical training and support, internet access, and student engagement (Dhawan, 2020; Gacs et al., 2020; Manegre & Sabiri, 2020).

Furthermore, online learning has been criticized for making the learners question their role in the classroom and aggravating the already existing plagiarism endemic among students. Hence, though online learning may entice the learner, it may lead to deviations and confusion for some learners. Additionally, the efficacy of online learning has been questioned based on its limitations in equally addressing all learners in ways that attend to their abilities, interests, learning styles, and expertise (Muthuprasad, Aiswarya, Aditya, & Jha, 2021). Online learning can be designed to fit various learning styles and produce long-lasting results. Online methods and differentiated training are more compelling than the traditional "one-size-fits-all" approach to teaching since they can be adapted to each student's needs. Differentiation is much more

crucial now that online learning is increasing. In a context where online lessons are not differentiated, weak pupils may practice abilities that are too tough for them.

At the same time, high-achieving pupils may not put their knowledge into practice (Tomlinson et al., 2003) when lessons are not differentiated. Indeed, varied instruction fosters student engagement while also protecting the interests of high-achieving children. Teachers in many nations, especially Africa, are still practicing traditional teaching approaches and have not changed their teaching to match the student's needs (Schleicher, 2016). Methods of teaching that address different learning styles are rarely used (Schleicher, 2016). Since the diversity of learners continues to grow, every learner is surrounded by colleagues who hold opposing views or beliefs, particularly in terms of how they process information. Thus, learning diversity is an integral part of Education. Education involves a wide range of variety in language, age, tradition, gender, ability, disability, interest, talent, legacy, ethnicity, and religion. These are only a few of the different variations that contribute to educational heterogeneity. Such a diverse set of qualities distinguishes each individual from the next, extending far beyond geographical boundaries.

Education consists of multiple levels and classes or groups of pupils. Even with the streamlining processes implemented when students enroll in school, variability persists within a particular group or grade level. According to Kauchak and Eggen (2011), today's classroom is becoming more diverse, with pupils of various languages, cultures, learning styles, talents, giftedness, and gender. Teachers should have acknowledged that children possess unique skills, interests, and learning requirements or choices regardless of grade level. Learning English online can be challenging for both teachers and learners as their speaking and writing abilities are often influenced by their mother tongues (Dashtestani, 2014).

As a result, differentiating online learning allows teachers to bring learners together in an online classroom despite their differences (George 2005). According to McCoy & Radar (2007), differentiation allows curriculum adaptation and provides equitable learning opportunities for all students when their diverse needs are considered during the learning process. Differentiated Instruction (DI) is a teaching philosophy and a purposeful learner-centered method to teaching where varied learners are supported in a heterogeneous environment, guided by instruction assessment (Hellman, 2007; Suprayogi, 2017; Tomlinson, 2014). Valiandes (2015) defines differentiated teaching as a method of learning that adapts instruction to meet student's unique needs, provides each student with a proportionate amount of effort, and provides support to ensure students reach their goals.

Similarly, according to Idrus, Asri, and Baharom (2021), DI is defined as "standards and curriculum that educate students of required knowledge, and enable teachers to guide students to the knowledge while teaching them how to learn." Teachers who differentiate instruction do so based on content, process, product, and learning environment (Tomlinson, 2014). Taylor (2015) states that teachers differentiate the content by adjusting the level of complexity. Thus, instead of adopting textbooks that appeal to everyone, teachers can provide various appropriate materials for the same content or syllabus based on the students' particular needs. Meanwhile, teachers might stretch learning activities based on students' interests or learning styles to differentiate the process. As a result, they will not find the learning process uninteresting or challenging. Many language teachers do not differentiate their content owing to the scarcity of language teachers' resources (Idrus, Asri, & Baharom, 2021). Most English language teachers differentiate their instructions only in terms of process and product, such as flexible grouping (Al-Subaiei, 2017) or tiered assignments (Alavinia & Sadeghi, 2013; Melesse, 2018; Pham, 2012).

Sun (2015) and Yeh (2012) used student team achievement for cooperative learning as a differentiated procedure. Studies have shown that differentiating online English language learning can benefit teachers and students (Beck & Beasley, 2020). Several studies have examined the effects of differentiated instruction on students' learning in the Nigerian educational system (Ojonugwa, Igbo, Apeh, & Ndukwu, 2020; Onyishi, & Sefotho, 2021). Esther (2015) researched the impact of secondary school teachers' varied reading instruction in English as a second language classroom on two ESL teachers and 76 students' reading abilities. The study found that differentiated lessons elicited active involvement in a reading classroom where students determine level and pace of learning. Moreover, teachers reported difficulties differentiating their classes. In a qualitative study, Idrus, et al., (2021) explored selected English as Second Language teachers' practices of differentiated instructions in their online classes. This study also examined the challenges these teachers face when implementing DI in their online classrooms. Results showed that environmental strain, resources constraint and students' and parents' attitudes are the main challenges in DI while teaching in an online platform.

Furthermore, previous research has shown that online language teaching can be as effective as face-to-face (Blake, 2011; Enkin & Mejías-Bikandi, 2017; Gacs, Goertler & Spasova, 2020; Moser, Wei & Brenner, 2021). For effective online teaching of the English language in Nigeria, where English is learned as a second language, it is necessary that library resources be available and harnessed to address students' diversity. Research shows that assistive technologies are necessary for effective differentiation and inclusion (Subramaniam, Oxley, & Kodama, 2013). Assistive technology includes any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability (Subramaniam, et al., 2013).

Assistive technology can aid in the library for both face-face and online learning. It may be available as hardware, software, and web-based resources, including touch-screen technologies, large-screen monitors, optical scanners, lightboxes, specialized keyboards, headsets with microphone, screen readers, speech-to-text converters, and browser add-ons with easy access to magnification or talking dictionaries (Burgstahler 2011; Cummings 2011; Ennis-Cole and Smith 2011; Krueger & Stefanich 2011; Socol 2010). Low-tech items such as dry-erase boards, laminated pictures and albums, and three-ring binders are other examples of assistive technology (Ennis-Cole, & Smith 2011). Hopkins (2006) has asserted that in addition to serving as a venue for access for learners with disabilities, assistive technology is obviously inclusive and provides options for all students.

English language teachers can work together with school Librarians to choose online assistive technologies that will maximize students' physical and intellectual access to library resources and encourage the integration of assistive technologies into the curriculum (Ennis-Cole & Smith 2011; Jones et al. 2010). Specialized library services, including a number of favorite systems, provide physical and intellectual access to library resources and diverse instructional options (Ennis-Cole and Smith 2011). For instance, e-books, audiobooks, talking books, graphic novels, MP3 files, and other digital media, Playaways, large print, DVDs, closed-captioned movies, streaming videos, podcasts, and Braille are some of the favored formats for students with disabilities (Copeland 2011; Socol 2010). Consequently, online learning is embedded in assistive technology and can at the same time be differentiated to meet learners' needs. In this respect, resources in school libraries should be diverse and support inclusion through assisting the teachers with materials to implement differentiated instruction.

However, in the Nigerian context, only a few secondary schools have libraries equipped with digitalized resources or technology-based materials, thus threatening inclusive Education. Further, little is known about the views of English teachers about library resources for inclusive online English language learning and how they think differentiated instruction can be implemented in the context of online teaching/learning for maximum outcomes. We examined English language teachers' views on school library resources for inclusive online learning and differentiated instruction in the English language.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to investigate:

1. A survey of English language teachers on the availability of school library resources for online English learning.
2. The views of English language teachers about their challenges associated with online resources in school libraries for inclusive online learning.
3. The views of English Language teachers about using online library resources to support differentiated instruction for inclusive learning.

Method

The study utilized a qualitative approach to data generation in a descriptive survey research design. Ethical approval was collected from the University of Nigeria before conducting this study.

Participants and sampling

The data were collected from 15 English language teachers from 15 government-owned secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. All the 15 study respondents teach the English language in mainstream secondary schools, where there are functional school libraries. 10 (66.7%) participants were females, while 5 (33.3%) were males. Participants' identities were protected through a pseudonym, and all efforts were to prevent the identification of participants

via deductive disclosure (Kaiser 2009). The volume of explanatory detail that can be furnished around participants is necessarily limited. Pseudonyms were selected by the participants, with their direct quotes presented in a slightly edited verbatim form to facilitate readability while maintaining the original meaning and intent of the respondents.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to generate data pertaining to teachers' views and practices to foster online English language learning as part of their professional practices. Data were collected from the 15th of January to the 20th of February, 2021. The researchers developed an interview schedule that guided the interview sessions. Each interview session typically ran for about one and a half hours. Interview sessions were recorded using a phone and were transcribed by the researchers before analysis.

Data Analysis

After the interview data were transcribed, an inductive approach was followed to derive key recurrent practices rather than themes (Thomas 2006). I allowed the experiences to emerge from the data. I also drew on my research background to bring a collection of “sensitizing concepts” that guided into identifying which experiences could be viewed as supportive of the literature (Patton 1990). Sensitizing concepts can be defined as constructs “derived from the research participants’ perspective, using their language or expressions, and that sensitize the researcher to possible lines of inquiry” (Given 2008). For inclusion, these practices needed to appear at least twice across the 15 English Language teachers’ sample to avoid inclusion of perspectives that were only used as an individual anomaly. It should also be noted that the list is unlikely to be exhaustive, as the participating teachers were given little time to formulate a response in a semi-structured interview scenario.

Results and Discussion

Objective 1: The views of English Language teachers about the availability of online library resources for inclusive online learning of the English language.

The participants' responses to the interview question outlined some major perspectives regarding online library resources for inclusive learning. They identified limitations in terms of unavailability of online library resources for inclusive English language learning. The participants varied in their views about the availability of online resources in inclusive secondary schools. They outlined that most online resources are not available in secondary schools. Some excerpts of the participants' quotations confirm these positive attitudes:

... moving online will be difficult for us as resources are unavailable. I often try to see if I can make the parents buy some of those materials. Participant 1ask for a library, we cannot boast of resources for differentiation, like audiobook, audio books Participant 2 the library I can say is ill-equipped and we cannot depend on the strength of our librarywe try to use different materials that are not from the school library. Participant 5 In my school, all these online resources are nowhere in the library and facilities are unavailable... Participant 7

Lack of online resources in the school library would be a demotivating factor for online English language learning. In another study of online English language learning situations, a lack of online facilities has also hindered (Eze, Chinedu-Eze, Okike, & Bello, 2020). A lack of internet facilities and equipment in school libraries would be a substantial impediment to online English language learning in Nigeria (Mohammed, Maifata, & Dan'azumi, 2019). This problem is not solely due to a lack of internet resources, but also their poor quality and accessibility. In the Nigerian English language environment, relatively little attention is dedicated to providing and improving online capabilities. In the near future, if educational authorities are serious about setting realistic goals for the future, they will need to consider adding and improving online and electronic training in school libraries for effective learning of English learning (Mohammed, Maifata, & Dan'azumi, 2019).

Objective 2: The views of English language teachers about their challenges associated with online resources in school libraries for differentiated online learning of the English language. Access to online resources in school Library

The participant submitted that though there are few computers in their school library, it is practically impossible to implement inclusive online learning due to poor internet access, poor awareness, and the inability of the teacher to coordinate the learning. Most English languages pointed out some limitations to online resources access, including poor network, few digital gadgets, lack of training of the English Language teachers, poor knowledge about the available online resources, limited time to conduct differentiated online English language teaching/learning. Some teachers expressed that though technology and online teaching might help English language teachers improve students' motivation and interest, it is almost impracticable to implement distance learning. Some exemplary quotes from the participants include:

..I don't think we have what it takes to differentiate instruction online! It is better said than done. What support do we actually have to access the Internet? ^{Participant 5} Even if as a teacher, I have such, how do I make sure all my students have them, and are making use of them..... I wish we have access to this whole lots of resources you are mentioning. ^{Participant 9} Some facilities that are available are rarely used ^{Participant 15}Most times, we are unaware of the available online materials for differentiating instruction, and you know, differentiation has always been daunting, and one finds it difficult to get used to it..... The major challenge for me is that the resources are not available, it is available, then it will be easy for me to update my skills in using them.... Our situation may not allow full access to online resources in the library to permit a teacher to differentiate English learning online..... ^{Participant 10}

The poor access found in this study could be linked to poor library services offered in school library. The English language teachers rarely utilize most available resources in the school libraries because of poor skills (Okwu, & Opurum, 2021). Chukwueke, and Onuoha, (2018) found poor access as one of the challenges students encounter in utilizing online resources in the school libraries. As a result, Nigerian teacher educators and authorities might include

technological literacy training in their teacher education programs for English teachers. Poor access may not be wholly dependent on availability but may be due to the lack of training of English language teachers and their keenness to adopt online Education. In addition, ongoing workshops and on-the-job training sessions would be crucial in enhancing language teachers' internet skills. Naturally, English language teachers must possess both the theoretical and practical skills required to implement online English instruction. For English language study, this necessitates more digitalized information sources.

Attitudes of teachers on using online library resources for inclusive English Language Learning

Students' negative attitudes may also be a limitation to the teachers' use of online library resources, as found in this study. From the participants' discussion, it was found that many of them do not believe that online library resources can help improve outcomes for secondary school students. The majority of those interviewed preferred to use physical library resources to online ones. They believe that pure online learning is technically not possible for inclusive English language learning, considering that such an approach may lead to a losing view of struggling learners. They pointed out that digital technologies such as computers and assistive technologies are essential to help students with special needs and fast learners. However, they must not be online but in customized tablets and gadgets. This perspective portrays that English Language teachers in secondary schools in Nigeria are still doubtful about the efficacy of online English language learning and using online library resources. This outcome is likened to that found by Dashtestani (2014), which outlined that the negative attitude of teachers constrains the use of online library resources.

I am really skeptical about using online library resources for online English learning; such material can be given to the student as clips and recordings. ^{Participants 13} There are so many distractions online, that may be risky for secondary school students, considering their age ^{Participant 11}I don't actually fancy teaching online for secondary school students, except it is

used in a blended format accessed from home. Participant 14 Asked to choose; I will prefer offline material for secondary school students....Online experience may not yield targeted results. Participant 1

Teachers' positive views on online education resources will simplify the integration of online instruction into teaching and learning of the English language, especially in English as a foreign language, which is the case in Nigeria. This is because English teachers play a critical role in persuading students to use technology for their learning (Bijeikiene, Rasinskiene, & Zutkiene, 2011). Such could assist some students struggling with language learning. Contrarily, some study outcomes from developed countries show that teachers accept and are satisfied with online teaching methods (Bijeikiene, et al., 2011; Murday, Ushida, & Chenoweth 2008). The use of digital resources in English language instruction necessitates teachers' favorable attitudes (Dashtestani 2012). Even though they were skeptical, teachers in this survey expressed their willingness to implement online, or at least hybrid instruction, provided it will aid differentiated instruction. This preference of teachers for mixed teaching implementation was also mirrored in prior research (Bijeikiene, et al., 2011). Further, Chin-Neng (2013) found that reading skills are significantly higher for readers of electronic books (e-book). Omuna, Onchera, and Kurgatt, (2016), on the contrary, found that textbooks were the most used instructional resources and instructional resources positively correlated with the learning of English reading skills, yet books are rarely available to support English Language learning. Thus, the negative attitudes of the teachers may be based on experience. However, other studies showed that online library materials are necessary for building English language skills, especially where English is learnt as second language (Ahmed, 2017; Jamil, Tariq, & Jamil, 2013; Gibbons, 2003; Jules, Opitz, Guccione, Collier, Colorado, Haager,... & Svensen, 2009).

Poor Skills for using online library resources for inclusive English Language Learning

Results of this study showed that English language teachers perceived themselves as unskilled in the use of online library resources for inclusive English Language learning. All the interviewees agreed that they need training before they can implement online learning in English language. They identified that they lack skills in accessing and using online resources. Some shared that they find some audio resources difficult due to spoken language limitations. Some exemplifying quotes to this effect are:

I am just wondering how secondary school can be exposed to online resources.....
Participant 8 They may possibly get distracted....if the resources are downloadable resources, they could be given to students as clips, but holding a whole class instruction online may be very difficult for the teacher unless with serious training.
Participant 7 As a teacher, I am not conversant with most of these resources mentioned.....The students should be able to reach their books. *Participant 4 I believe that we are poorly skilled in the aspect of these online library resources as to how to access, retrieve and effectively use them to coordinate lesson that will be effective.* *Participant 3 Poor skill is my major challenge, I believe that if it works for others, then our problem is lack of training...If we are skilled, we can make it work in our own context.* *Participant 6*

This outcome agrees with that of Jamil, Tariq, and Jamil, (2013), who found that that lack of human and material resources was the main reason for underutilization of library materials. More importantly, educational authorities and planners in Nigeria must consider teachers' viewpoints on students' lack of sufficient computer literacy. In order to effectively integrate online training, further study is needed to assess Nigerian students' computer literacy levels and identify the essential computer and online skills. This finding is consistent with earlier research that has found that students in various English Language learning situations had poor levels of computer literacy (Dashtestani, 2014).

Objective 3: The views of English Language teachers about using online library resources to support differentiated instruction for inclusive learning of English language.

The participants are pessimistic about using online library resources to differentiate English language learning. The teachers pointed out that it is difficult to integrate the online and

offline resources in the context of differentiated instruction since using online materials also poses a measure disparity among students. The majority of the interviewees submitted that it is almost impracticable in their context to execute differentiated instruction using online recourses.

I am of the opinion that we are now in double jeopardy. We, as English language teachers have been struggling with how to differentiate the face-to-face instruction to carry all the students along..... Now, our plight has worsened with the need to do differentiate instructions online..... I personally am constrained by lack of skills to jam both novel approaches together, and I will prefer to first get conversant with differentiated instruction..... As I try to achieve an inclusive learning environment, I only use differentiated instruction and build in the available digital materials for those that may access such at home..... I have no idea how to use the online library materials, but I know some students make use of digital materials to support themselves.....for me, it will be too complicated and as well daunting to organize whole class instruction with online library resources if the teacher is not sure that all students have the necessary gadgets.... It will be easier only if all the students have their computers, tablets or smartphones....I don't think it is practically possible to fully build in online resources into differentiated instruction within lesson periods....

Many English Language teachers are unaware of how to use technology and online resources in their classrooms, especially in differentiated instruction. Online English language instruction, according to the participants, would not be participatory and would be challenging to be fully differentiated. This drawback of online learning has been mentioned in other studies as well (Dashtestani, 2014). Even though online instruction would promote students' interaction and engagement (Cavinato, Hunter, Ott, & Robinson, 2021), teachers may be unable to recognize some aspects of differentiated instruction process, such as students' interaction with the task and themselves, students' use of gestures and body language, and students' reactions to queries and input. In the digital age, many teachers may find this lack of interaction a significant issue (Dashtestani, 2014). English teachers may assume that face-to-face instruction is more interactive than online instruction, as evidenced by this issue. However, such a perspective may have been influenced by teachers' lack of understanding of online instruction. When using online instruction, teachers should be able to use interactive approaches and procedures. Interactions in

online training are complex and require considerable thought and analysis. Specific actions should be taken by educational authorities and teacher educators to influence teachers' attitudes of specific components of online instruction, such as interactivity.

Conclusion

This study concludes that online library resources are practically unavailable in inclusive schools libraries in Enugu state, Nigeria. Some challenges associated with online resources in school libraries for inclusive online learning of the English language are poor access to online resources in inclusive school Libraries, negative attitudes, and lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. Teachers prefer to differentiate instruction using a face-to-face approach and physical library materials rather than online. Teachers in inclusive secondary schools think that they and the teacher-librarians are not prepared to use pure online instructions.

Recommendations

Further research is required to identify students' perspectives on online library resources and their needs and preferences. School librarians should be cautious about the needs and preferences of teachers and learners and make attempts to meet the needs appropriately and continuously. Providers of language teaching in secondary schools should fund teachers and students to have access to mobile devices. More needs-analysis studies are required to identify the types of facilities that teachers and students need to implement online instruction in the English language in Nigeria. English Language teachers should collaborate with school librarians to provide more digital resources that support differentiated instruction. Additionally, English language teachers should undergo in-service training on differentiating online lessons for effective English language learning.

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