



E-Learning in the Post COVID-19 Era: A Panacea for Repositioning Students' Attitude Towards English Language Learning in the University of Calabar, Nigeria

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Abstract

In the contemporary educational landscape, the integration of technology has revolutionized the way students learn and engage with academic content. E-learning, defined as the use of electronic media and information and communication technologies (ICT) in education, has gained prominence across various disciplines, including language learning. Literature tells that e-learning aids students' learning and produces better results. The research aims to ascertain the influence of e-learning on students' attitude towards English Language learning. Two research questions guided the study while two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and the population of the study consist of 343 English Language students of 200 level from Arts Education Department of the University of Calabar. Purposive and census sampling techniques were used for the study to select the entire 343 English Language students of 200 level from Arts Education Department that constituted the sample. A well validated 'Students' E-Learning and Attitude Questionnaire (SEAQ) was used to collect the required data. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was the statistical tools used for analysis of the data collected. The result of the analysis revealed that there is a significant influence of students' perception to e-learning and students' accessibility to e-learning, on their attitude towards English Language. Sequel to the findings of this study, it was recommended, among others that, regular surveys and focus group discussions should be conducted to gauge students' perception of e-learning and their attitude towards learning English. A comprehensive and user-friendly e-learning platform that prioritizes accessibility for students should be implemented.

Keywords: *E learning, covid-19, perception, accessibility and attitude.*

Introduction

English language learning has been and will continue to constitute one of the major focus in the Nigeria Education curriculum. This is because, English language operates as a second language (L2) in Nigeria. Nigeria is multilingual in nature with an estimated number of about 520 spoken languages. This means that the nation is culturally and socially heterogeneous. By implication, there is a gap in communication which is a natural occurrence as a result of multitudes of languages. Interestingly, to bridge the gap, English language though L2, is the lingua franca (a language adopted as a common language between native speakers whose native languages are different) in Nigeria. It occupies a central and dynamic position in the country. According to Timothy (2016) ,

English language is used in educational, political, commercial and sociocultural day to day life and dealings in the nation.

Particularly, English is the language of formal education in Nigeria. It is used as medium of instruction at all levels of education (primary, secondary and higher institution) to facilitate teaching and learning. In addition, all the text books for arts, science and technology are written in English language. Commenting on that importance of English language in Nigeria Ajufo (2007) asserts that English language is the pivot on which the educational wheel of Nigeria rotates. This infers that any short fall in students' performance in the subject will reverberate through the entire education system. To further buttress the point on the importance of English language in Nigeria, it is a subject that must be passed at all levels of education in Nigeria (Galadi, 2010).

Notwithstanding the colossal position of English language as the essential key for educational and economic advancement of the nation's life, it is perplexing that students' performance is not always satisfactory in both internal and external examinations at all levels of education in the country. There has been a growing unease among the Nigeria education stakeholders on what could be responsible for the poor performance despite government systematic efforts in making sure that sound and quality education is given at all levels of education in Nigeria. There has equally been a buck passing up and down on what and who should be blamed. There is this finger-point on teachers, government, students and parents as the reason for the poor performance as have been observed by various investigators (Ozskus, 2003; Akinsolu, 2010; Obiekezie & Ejemot-Nwadiaro, 2016). For this study, the researchers are of the opinion that old mode of teaching and learning English language may have some bearing on the performance. This is because performance is what gives clue to whether learning has occurred or not.

Interestingly, since the inception of Covid 19, a new mode of lecture delivery: e-learning is being advocated. In other words, could there be a change if learning is delivered through a different mode other than the old mode? Does this new mode have the capacity to reposition students' attitude to English language learning. This is what prompted the investigation of current study: E

learning in the post covid era: a panacea for repositioning students' attitude towards the study of English language in the University. All our investigation will take root from this background.

In Nigeria's higher institution, English language is studied as a course in the faculty of education. It is usually a four-year programme at the end the graduands are given the B.A. (Ed) Bachelor of Arts Education or (B.Ed) Bachelor of Education certificate. The pre-service teachers are exposed to various aspects of English language to enable them garner knowledge and skills that will enable them teach the subject after graduation to students. It is expected that these students (pre-service teacher) should perform optimally positive in their course of learning so as to ensure the sustainability of the language in other to continue to advance the nation educationally and other wise.

The situation is worrisome because with the emergence of e-learning in the universities, better performance is expected bearing in mind the giant strides that have been made in this modern era of technology in the field of teaching and learning. Again, the disruptive COVID-19 pandemic is endangering every facet of the global economy, including the educational system. Since the beginning, its highly contagious nature has made the act of social distancing—a non-medical measure for preventing Covid-19 - necessary. This has accelerated the use of e-learning in education especially in the higher institution. In this post Covid 19 era, e-learning has become the new normal. It makes for equitable education. Recently, the Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) directed that 40% of learning must be e-based due to its role(s) in enhancing students' knowledge. This is innovation may be relatively new in Arts education department which may have influence in the performance of the target students worrisome. See Table 1.

From table 1, it has been observed that only 34.20% of second year English Language students from the Arts Education Department, University of Calabar, scored between A-C in some selected courses, while the remaining 65.80% of students scored between D-F. Due to this poor performance, one now wonders less over their inability to perform well in four skills of language arts: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Table 1 : Performance of second year students of English Language in Arts Education Department - Unical in some selected courses for 2019/2020 Session

S/N	Course code	Course title	A	B	C	D	E	F	A-C %	D-F%
1	ELS 201	Advance English Composition	14	57	91	47	53	32	55.10%	44.90%
2	ELS 202	English Syntax and Lexis I	03	27	69	47	90	107	28.86%	71.14%
3	ELS 221	English Morphology	2	7	28	26	39	49	24.5%	75.50%
4	ELS 222	English as Second Language	11	32	50	46	78	111	28.35%	71.65%
		Average							34.20%	65.80%

This discouraging performance has left parents, learners, lecturers and the general public to keep asking questions as to the rationale behind the inconsistency, even as English is the language of instruction in Nigeria schools. Language inefficiency invariably leads to poor academic performance (Owens, 2016; Falayajo, 2017).

These very poor outings have made it increasingly difficult for our students to fill their admission quota in any English Language related programme in the different colleges and universities in Nigeria. In this 21st Century of knowledge explosion in which e-learning is a vital learning tools and courtesy, it is perplexing that students are performing below expectation at this level of education. We are in a modern era where e-learning makes room for self- training and development of the required knowledge for future use. Thus, students are required to take advantage of the modern facilities to improve their learning using e-learning. One important question prone to be asked at this juncture is - what aspects of e-learning should be looked at in order to help improve students' attitude towards English Language? This research work attempts to focus on two aspects of e-learning that could be of help to solving problem of students' attitude

towards English Language. These components considered in the study are students' perception of e-learning and students' accessibility to e-learning.

Based on the aforementioned, it is imperative to broaden the teaching/learning of English Language to include e-learning especially at this post Covid-19 era. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a coronary track infection that is caused by a novel coronavirus, medically named as 'severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2' (SARSCoV-2). The spread of Covid-19 in Nigeria among other parts of the world has negatively affected all the sectors of the world including the teaching and learning process. This study is a call to students to avail themselves of the opportunity of better teaching and learning that e-learning affords. It is against these backdrops that the researchers deemed it fit to determine the influence of e-learning on students' attitude towards English Language learning in Arts Education Department, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

In the contemporary educational landscape, the integration of technology has revolutionized the way students learn and engage with academic content. E-learning, defined as the use of electronic media and information and communication technologies (ICT) in education, has gained prominence across various disciplines, including language learning. Arkorful and Abaidoo (2014) "e-learning refers to the use of information and communication technologies to enable the access to online learning/teaching resources" (398). Twenty-first century education is awash with seismic pedagogical shifts orchestrated by rapid advances in technology witnessed in the last three decades, particularly, the boom in information and communications technologies (ICTs) like the Internet (Yunusa, Umar & Bervell, 2019).

E-learning is the use of electronic media and information communication technologies (ICT) in education (Eze, Chinedu-Eze & Bello, 2018). Bahanan, Alsharif and Samman (2022) define e-learning as "as the dissemination of information through various electronic media, including the internet, audio, video, among others (839). The above include audio and video as aspects of e-learning. The information through all these media cuts across all fields of human endeavours including teaching and learning. Concerning teaching and learning, information is available on any subject including English language, the subject which poor performance in is

under investigation. Suffice it to say that the use of electronic learning in teaching English Language has a lot of benefits in improving the students' knowledge in the subject for a better performance.

Perception refers to the view or manner with which an idea is received or appreciated. It is believed that an individual perception towards the environment has a significant influence on his behavior towards his environment. Students' perception to e-learning refers to students' thoughts and beliefs about e-learning resources in the learning of English Language. The way students perceive the use of e-learning has influence on his attitude towards learning the language. Students' perceptions of e-learning have bearings to their attitude towards learning of English Language. This is because students from different education and cultural backgrounds may have different perceptions towards higher education particularly expectations related to teaching and learning (Xu, 2012).

In the study conducted by Okafor (2014), the researcher found that the learners who showed positive perception towards using the internet in language learning performed satisfactorily in all the language skills. Zarlina, Airil, Sheema and Johana, (2012) who found students' perception in learning to influence their attitude toward learning. Also, Axelrod (2012) who found students' perceptions to be what constitutes effective instruction transcend time and mode of delivery. Lee, Lee and Kem (2015) stated that past education focused on face-to-face communication between teacher and students or knowledge acquisition through books, recent education has evolved by adapting various media including e-books and smart devices and highly advanced networks and the spread of smart devices enable more comfortable and diverse applications of social networking service (SNS) as a new educational communication tool (Weber, 2012). This statement re-enforces the need for engaging and encouraging students to embrace E-learning for their improved academic performance.

Accessibility is the quality of being able to be reached or entered. Again, the degree to which electronic learning (e-learning) are provided to English Language students has a lot of

influence and bearings to their attitude and performance. Successful education system depends exhaustively on the availability, accessibility and utilization of information resources (Ternenge & Agipu, 2019). Access to information is vital for successful research outcome, Okolocha and Ile (2012) affirmed that access and use of information is needed for problem solving and decision making in research process. The importance of timely access and utilization of electronic learning cannot be over-emphasized. No doubt, the existence of e-learning resources would be of no positive consequence learning if they are not accessed and utilized by students for learning and plausible research outcome.

Owate (2018) carried out a study on accessibility and utilization of e-learning resources of undergraduate students in academic libraries: A Precursor to Academic Goals in University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The finding showed that there is indeed a relationship between accessibility and utilization of e-learning resources and achievement of academic goals. For example, Ivwighrehweta and Igere (2014) investigated the impact of the internet on academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria and found that most of the students were computer literate and merely access relevant academic materials through the Cyber Cafe. Most of the students disclosed that the internet usage improves their examination preparation. E-journals and e-books were among the resources often used.

Otunla (2013) reported that a considerable number of undergraduate students in Nigeria accessed and use the internet through their mobile telephones and laptops using a modem as a router, whereas a few accessed the internet through the University digital centre and none accessed through the University Library. In this regard, a prior study has proven that the internet enables Delta state university students in Abraka, Nigeria to access relevant and up to date materials for their research work without travelling to other places to source for research materials. The positive result of this study further strengthens the need to make all the higher institutions ICT friendly for easy accessibility for the students. Bankole (2013) remarked that students at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Nigeria, access the internet from homes and commercial cybercafé which has improved their academic performance positively.

Various strategies adopted by different government agencies and stakeholders in education in putting infrastructure in schools, research by foreign and few home-based authors tend not to address the problem substantially. There are therefore underlying the attitude of students towards English Language since e-learning is an important component in the learning process. The researchers had therefore been motivated to carry out studies that are aimed at examining if e-learning in the post covid-19 era could be a panacea for repositioning students' attitude towards English Language learning in arts Education Department, University Of Calabar, Nigeria. The basic question is: Why the poor performance. Could it be the students' attitude to E learning? Could there be issues with perception and accessibility availability and usage of e-learning gargets? The study is set out to find out.

The main aim of the study was to examine the influence of e-learning on students' attitude towards English Language Learning, University of Calabar, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of:

- i. Students' perception of e-learning on their attitude towards English Language.
- ii. Students' accessibility to e-learning on their attitude towards English Language.

Research questions

- iii. How does students' perception of e-learning influence their attitude towards English Language performance?
- iv. How does students' accessibility to e-learning influence their attitude towards English Language performance?

Statement of Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant influence of students' perception of e-learning on their attitude towards English Language.
- ii. There is no significant influence of students' accessibility to e-learning on their attitude towards English Language.

Research design and Methods

The study area is the University of Calabar, which is located in Calabar Metropolis, the capital of Cross River State of Nigeria. Calabar Metropolis is located between latitude 4°30' and 5°05' north of the equator and longitude of 8°15' and 8°25' east of meridian. Its total land areas is 331,551 sq.km (Sule, 2001). The climate of Calabar is the semi-equatorial type which has rainfall throughout all months of the year, though the intensity is greatly reduced in the drier months from December to February. The mean annual rainfall is about 3000mm and ranks very high among other coastal locations in Nigeria.

The participants of the study comprised all the 343 English Language students of 200 level from Arts Education Department of the University of Calabar, 2019/2020 session. The design adopted for the study was descriptive survey research. Purposive and census sampling techniques were used for the study to select the entire 343 English Language students of 200 level from Arts Education Department that constituted the sample. The researchers developed a well-structured and validated questionnaire titled 'Students' E-Learning and Attitude Questionnaire (SEAQ) was the major instruments for data collection. SEAQ was designed to find out students' perception of e-learning and accessibility to e-learning and their attitude towards English Language. It was constructed using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD). The reliability coefficient of SEAQ yielded a high-reliability coefficient of .81 and it was obtained via Cronbach alpha reliability. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for the data analysis; at 0.5 level of significance.

Results and Discussion**Hypothesis one**

There is no significant influence of students' perception of e-learning on their attitude towards English Language (categorized as Low, Average and high; 24-32 high, 16-24 moderate and below 16 low). To test this hypothesis, students' perception to e-learning were classified into three groups based on their attitude towards English Language (low, Average and high). Based on the

classification, their means and standard deviation were compared and analyzed using One Way Analysis of Variance were used. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: One-Way Analysis of Variance on influence of students' perception to e-learning on their attitude towards English Language

Perception	N	\bar{x}	SD
Low	129	28.34	4.27
Average	112	25.32	4.15
High	102	23.45	3.99
Total	343	25.91	3.88

Sources of variable	SS	df	MS	F-value	P-value
Between group	1977.440	2	988.720	23.639	.000
Within group	14220.688	340	41.826		
Total	16198.128	342			

Perception	Low (n=129)	Average(n=112)	High (n=102)
Low	28.342 ^a	3.018 ^b	4.888
Average	3.614 ^{*c}	25.324	1.870
High	2.167 [*]	6.243 [*]	23.454
Within	41.826		

* Significant at 0.05 level (Critical F_{2, 340} = 3.00, t critical = 1.96)

a=Group mean along the principal diagonal

b = Mean difference above the principal diagonal

c= t-value below the principal diagonal

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that, the calculated F-values of (23.639) is higher than the critical t-value of 3.1 at .05 levels of significance with 2 and 340 degree of freedom. This result indicated that there is a significant influence of students' perception to e-learning on their attitude towards English Language. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted. The result also shows that those students with low perception of e-learning with mean score of 28.3421 developed more positive attitude toward learning English Language, followed by students with average perception of e-learning with mean score of 25.324, followed by those with high perception of e-learning with mean score of 23.454.

The information in Table 2 also show the post hoc test multiple comparison result of Fisher's significant t-value of 3.614, 2.167 and 6.243 which indicates that there is a significant difference between low and average, low and high, average and high of students' perception to e-learning on their attitude towards English Language respectively.

The implication of this result indicating a significant influence of students' perception of e-learning on their attitude towards English Language can have several important implications for education and instructional design. The findings suggest that educators and instructional designers should pay attention to students' perceptions of e-learning. Understanding what aspects of e-learning are positively or negatively influencing students' attitudes towards learning English can help in tailoring e-learning environments to better meet students' needs and preferences. Also, positive perceptions of e-learning may contribute to increased motivation among students. Educators can leverage this information to incorporate engaging and interactive elements into online English Language courses, fostering a positive attitude that can lead to improved learning outcomes.

The results may indicate a need for professional development for instructors to enhance their skills in delivering effective e-learning experiences. Instructors can benefit from learning how to use technology more effectively and creating online content that aligns with students' preferences, thus positively impacting their attitude towards learning English. The finding is in line with Xu (2012) who stated that students' perceptions of e-learning have bearings to their attitude towards learning of Language which as a result of different education and cultural backgrounds that may have different perceptions towards higher education particularly expectations related to teaching and learning. The finding is agreement with Axelrod (2012) who found students' perceptions to be what constitutes effective instruction transcend time and mode of delivery.

The finding also agreed with the study of Okafor (2014) who studied different tasks in vocabulary acquisition via web-based activities and found that the explicit response mode has a greater effect than the implicit response mode on the recall and the transfer of the students''

learning. The finding is in consonance with Zarlina, Airil, Sheema and Johana, (2012) who found students' perception in learning to influence their attitude toward learning.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of students' accessibility to e-learning on their attitude towards English Language (categorized as Low, Average and high; 24-32 high, 16-24 moderate and below 16 low). To test this hypothesis, students' accessibility to e-learning were classified into three groups based on their attitude towards English Language (low, Average and high). Based on the classification, their means and standard deviation were compared and analyzed using One Way Analysis of Variance were used. The result is presented in Table 3. The result of the analysis as presented in Table 3 revealed that, the calculated F-values of (28.016) is higher than the critical t-value of 3.1iat .05 levels of significance with 2 and 340 degree of freedom.

This result indicated that there is a significant influence of students' accessibility of e-learning on their attitude towards English Language. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted. The result also shows that those students with high accessibility of e-learning with mean score of 27.621 developed more positive attitude toward learning English Language, followed by students with average accessibility of e-learning with mean score of 25.212, followed by those with low accessibility of e-learning with mean score of 24.236.

. The information in Table 2 also show the post hoc test multiple comparison result of Fisher's significant t-value of 4.011 and 2.963 which indicates that there is a significant difference between low and high, average and high of students' accessibility of learning on their attitude towards English Language respectively. The non-significant t-value of 1.053 indicated no significant difference between students with low and average accessibility of learning on their attitude towards English Language. The implication of the result indicating a significant influence of students' accessibility to e-learning on their attitude towards the English language can have several important ramifications for educational practices and policies. Schools and educational institutions may need

to invest more in e-learning infrastructure, ensuring that students have reliable access to digital devices, internet connectivity, and relevant software or platforms.

Table 3: One-Way Analysis of Variance on influence of students' accessibility to e-learning on their attitude towards English Language

Accessibility	N	\bar{x}	SD			
Low	88	24.24	3.99			
Average	99	25.21	3.87			
High	156	27.62	3.76			
Total	343	25.91	3.88			
Sources of variable		SS	df	MS	F-value	P-value
Between group		2243.674	2	1121.837		
Within group		13954.454	340	40.043	28.016	.000
Total		16198.128	342			
Accessibility	Low (n=88)	Average(n=99)	High (n=156)			
Low	24.236 ^a	0.976 ^b	3.385			
Average	1.053 ^c	25.212	2.963			
High	4.011*	2.963*	27.621			
Within		40.043				

a=Group mean along the principal diagonal

b = Mean difference above the principal diagonal

c= t-value below the principal diagonal

* Significant at 0.05 level (Critical F_{2, 340} = 3.00, t critical = 1.96)

This could involve initiatives to provide laptops, tablets, or other devices to students, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Also, the results suggest a need for the creation and enhancement of e-learning resources specifically tailored for English language learning. This may include interactive multimedia content, online language labs, and digital materials that engage students and facilitate a more positive attitude towards English language acquisition. Educators might require additional training to effectively integrate e-learning tools into their teaching methods. Professional development programs can focus on equipping teachers with

the skills to utilize digital resources, manage online classrooms, and adapt traditional teaching strategies to an e-learning environment.

The finding is in line with Owate (2018) stated that access to information is vital for successful research outcome. The finding also agreed with Okolocha and Ile (2012) who affirmed that access and use of information is needed for problem solving and decision making in research process. Therefore, the global concern for timely access and utilization of information resources orchestrated the adoption of Information Communication Technologies in the management and use of information. Successful education system depends exhaustively on the availability, accessibility and utilization of information resources (Ternenge & Agipu, 2019). Students are expected to capitalize on the availability of e-learning resources to improve their learning capability towards the achievement of academic goals, ultimately aimed at attainment of the educational policy; education for self-reliance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in the study, it was concluded that students' perception to e-learning and accessibility to e-learning, have influence on their attitude towards English Language learning English Language. The fact established in this study has it that students develop positive attitude towards the study of English Language when technological based facilities are used in the teaching of the subject. E-learning is critical in this post covid-19 era because it has become the new normal. It is equally critical that higher institutions of learning and government should take the responsibility of sufficing the environment of learning with ICT gadgets to make for easy access.

Recommendations for policy direction

Based on the findings in the study, it was recommended that;

- Regular surveys and focus group discussions should be conducted to gauge students' perception of e-learning and their attitude towards learning English. These assessments should include questions related to the effectiveness of online platforms, the ease of navigation, and the overall satisfaction with the e-learning experience. By actively seeking

feedback from students, educators can gain valuable insights into areas that may require improvement or enhancement. Additionally, incorporating open-ended questions can provide qualitative data that offers a deeper understanding of students' attitudes, preferences, and challenges in relation to e-learning and English language acquisition.

- A comprehensive and user-friendly e-learning platform that prioritizes accessibility for students should be implemented. This platform should be designed with a focus on inclusivity, considering the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities or limited technological resources. Features such as adjustable font sizes, closed captioning for videos, and compatibility with screen readers should be integrated to ensure a seamless learning experience for all. Additionally, regular accessibility audits and user feedback sessions can be conducted to identify and address any emerging issues promptly. By prioritizing accessibility, we can enhance students' engagement and facilitate a positive attitude towards e-learning and the study of the English Language.

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