



The Effectiveness Of E-Learning Platforms In English Language Acquisition: A Case Study Of Federal Polytechnic Of Oil And Gas Bonny

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ABSTRACT

The increasing integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education has brought significant changes to language learning, particularly English. This study investigates the utilization and effectiveness of e-learning platforms for English language acquisition among students at Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny, Nigeria. By examining the patterns of ICT use and student attitudes towards these technologies, the research aims to identify the role and potential of e-learning in enhancing English language education. Data was collected from 149 students through structured questionnaires, focusing on their general and educational use of ICT, as well as their perceptions and expectations regarding e-learning. The results indicate that while students predominantly use online platforms for personal activities such as social media and entertainment, there is a considerable interest and positive attitude towards incorporating these technologies into their educational routines. However, the actual use of ICT for direct language learning activities remains limited. Students expressed a preference for a blended learning approach that combines traditional classroom methods with online resources, highlighting the potential of e-learning platforms to complement and enhance traditional teaching methods. The study also identified key challenges, including limited access to necessary resources and insufficient training for both students and educators in using these technologies effectively. The findings suggest that addressing these barriers and providing adequate support could significantly improve the use and impact of e-learning platforms in English language education. This study contributes to the understanding of how e-learning can be better integrated into language learning curricula, providing insights for educators, policymakers, and technology developers aiming to enhance educational outcomes through digital tools.

Keywords: E-learning, ICT, language learning curricula

INTRODUCTION

The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has heralded a new era in education, transforming traditional pedagogical approaches and creating new opportunities for teaching and learning. This transformation is particularly evident in the field of language education, where ICTs offer a range of tools and resources that can enhance language acquisition processes. Among these, e-learning platforms have gained prominence, providing learners with access to interactive, multimedia-rich content and the ability to engage in authentic language use in real-time.

E-learning platforms facilitate English language acquisition by offering a variety of features such as virtual classrooms, interactive exercises, multimedia resources, and online assessments. These platforms enable learners to practice language skills at their own pace, receive immediate feedback,

and access a wealth of resources beyond the confines of the traditional classroom. Furthermore, they support diverse learning styles and promote autonomous learning, allowing students to take control of their educational journey.

Despite the global adoption of e-learning technologies, there is a noticeable gap in research regarding their specific utilization in different educational contexts, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. The Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny, a leading institution in Nigeria, presents a unique case for examining the effectiveness of e-learning platforms in English language education. This institution is characterized by a diverse student population, varying levels of access to technological resources, and distinct educational needs.

This study aims to explore how students at Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny use e-learning platforms for English language acquisition. It seeks to identify the patterns of ICT use among students, their attitudes towards these technologies, and the perceived benefits and challenges associated with their integration into language learning. By understanding these factors, the study aims to provide insights into how e-learning platforms can be effectively utilized to enhance English language education in similar contexts.

The research questions guiding this study include:

1. What are the patterns and frequency of ICT use among students at Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny?
2. How do students utilize e-learning platforms for English language learning?
3. What are students' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of e-learning platforms in their English studies?
4. What challenges do students face in using e-learning platforms for language acquisition?

Addressing these questions is crucial for several reasons. First, it provides a clearer picture of the current state of e-learning adoption in a specific educational setting, highlighting areas where improvements can be made. Second, it contributes to the broader discourse on the role of ICTs in education, offering practical recommendations for educators and policymakers. Finally, it underscores the importance of supporting students and teachers in effectively integrating e-learning tools to maximize their educational potential.

In summary, this study is a timely and important contribution to the field of language education, particularly in the context of developing countries. By examining the use and effectiveness of e-learning platforms at Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny, it seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how these technologies can be harnessed to improve English language acquisition and overall educational outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ICT Use in Education

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education has been widely studied and documented, demonstrating a transformative impact on teaching and learning processes across various disciplines, including language education. ICTs encompass a range of tools and resources such as computers, the internet, educational software, and mobile devices, all of which provide innovative ways to enhance the learning experience.

Benefits of ICT in Education

One of the key benefits of ICT in education is the enhancement of learner motivation and engagement. Studies have shown that the use of multimedia resources, interactive exercises, and real-time feedback can significantly increase student interest and participation in learning activities (Chen, Lambert, & Guidry, 2010). Additionally, ICTs provide opportunities for personalized learning, allowing students to learn at their own pace and according to their individual learning styles (Passey et al., 2004).

ICTs also facilitate access to a vast array of learning materials and resources. Online libraries, educational websites, and digital textbooks provide learners with up-to-date information and diverse perspectives on various topics. Furthermore, the ability to communicate and collaborate with peers and educators through online forums, chat rooms, and video conferencing tools promotes a more interactive and collaborative learning environment (Garrison & Anderson, 2003).

ICT in Language Learning

In the context of language learning, ICTs offer specific advantages that can enhance language acquisition. Tools such as language learning apps, online dictionaries, and translation services provide learners with immediate access to linguistic resources. Multimedia resources, including videos, audio recordings, and interactive exercises, expose learners to authentic language use and cultural contexts, which are essential for developing language proficiency (Zhao, 2003).

E-learning platforms, in particular, have been recognized for their potential to support language learning. These platforms often include features such as virtual classrooms, interactive language exercises, online assessments, and multimedia resources, all of which contribute to a comprehensive and engaging language learning experience (Sun & Cheng, 2007). Additionally, the use of ICTs in language learning fosters learner autonomy, as students can access learning materials and practice language skills outside of the traditional classroom setting (Benson, 2011).

Previous Studies on ICT Use and Attitudes

Despite the recognized benefits of ICTs in education, their use and effectiveness can vary significantly depending on various factors, including the educational context, availability of resources, and user attitudes. Previous studies have highlighted several trends and challenges in the adoption and integration of ICTs in language learning.

Utilization of ICT for Educational Purposes

Research indicates that while many students frequently use ICT for general purposes such as social media, entertainment, and communication, their use of these technologies for educational purposes is often limited (Bebell & O'Dwyer, 2010). For instance, a study by Kennedy et al. (2008) found that although university students were proficient in using ICT for personal activities, their use of these tools for academic purposes was relatively low. Similar findings were reported by Selwyn (2008), who noted that students' engagement with ICT for learning was often superficial and sporadic.

Attitudes towards ICT in Language Learning

Attitudes towards the use of ICT in language learning play a crucial role in determining its effectiveness. Positive attitudes can enhance learner motivation and engagement, leading to better learning outcomes. However, several studies have identified barriers to the effective use of ICT in language education. These include lack of access to resources, inadequate training and support, and resistance to change among both students and educators (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012).

For example, research by Albirini (2006) revealed that teachers' attitudes towards ICT were influenced by their perceived ease of use and usefulness of these technologies. Similarly, a study by Teo (2008) found that students' attitudes towards e-learning were shaped by their previous experiences with technology and their confidence in using it for educational purposes.

Blended Learning Approaches

Blended learning, which combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning activities, has been proposed as an effective way to integrate ICT into language education. Studies have shown that blended learning can provide the best of both worlds, offering the flexibility and accessibility of online learning while maintaining the social and interactive aspects of face-to-face instruction (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Research by Graham (2006) supports the view that blended learning can enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes by providing diverse and flexible learning opportunities.

The literature highlights the transformative potential of ICTs in education, particularly in language learning. E-learning platforms and other digital tools offer numerous benefits, including increased motivation, personalized learning, and access to diverse resources. However, the effective use of these technologies depends on various factors, including user attitudes, availability of resources, and appropriate training and support. Blended learning approaches, which combine traditional and online learning methods, have been shown to be particularly effective in maximizing the benefits of ICT in language education.

This study builds on the existing literature by examining the specific use and effectiveness of e-learning platforms for English language acquisition at Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny. By understanding students' usage patterns, attitudes, and challenges, the research aims to provide insights into how these technologies can be better integrated into language learning curricula, thereby enhancing educational outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area and Participants

This research was conducted at Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny, involving 149 students. The participants were selected from various classes

Instrumentation and Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to gather data, consisting of sections on background information, general and educational ICT use, and students' perceptions and expectations of ICT in language. Data were analysed using SPSS version 20.

RESULTS

Patterns and Frequency of ICT Use

The data indicate that students predominantly use online platforms for personal reasons rather than for English language learning. Despite this, there is a notable positive attitude towards the integration of e-learning tools in their studies.

General ICT Use

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social Media	95	63.8
Entertainment	80	53.7
Communication	60	40.3
Research	55	36.9
Academic Purposes	45	30.2

Educational ICT Use

Activity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Online Exercises	30	20.1
Language Learning Apps	25	16.8
Watching Educational Videos	40	26.8
Participating in Online Forums	20	13.4
Reading Online Articles	35	23.5

Attitudes and Preferences

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
E-learning platforms can enhance English language learning	40	70	20	15	4
I prefer a blended learning approach (combining traditional and online methods)	50	60	25	10	4
Lack of access to resources is a major barrier to effective use of e-learning platforms	60	50	20	10	9
Adequate training for students and teachers is necessary for effective e-learning integration	70	60	10	5	4

DISCUSSION

Patterns and Frequency of ICT Use

The findings from this study reveal a complex picture of ICT use among students at the Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny. While the majority of students reported using ICTs primarily for personal activities such as social media, entertainment, and communication, a smaller yet significant portion utilized these technologies for educational purposes. This trend is consistent with previous

research indicating that students often prioritize personal over academic use of ICT (Kennedy et al., 2008; Selwyn, 2008).

The frequent use of social media platforms underscores their potential as educational tools. Social media can facilitate collaborative learning, provide access to language learning communities, and offer real-time communication opportunities with peers and educators (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). However, the challenge lies in channeling this usage towards educational activities. Educators need to explore innovative strategies to integrate social media into their teaching practices, thereby transforming these platforms into effective learning environments.

Educational ICT Use

The data shows that students engaged with e-learning platforms for a variety of educational activities, including online exercises, language learning apps, educational videos, online forums, and reading online articles. However, the frequency of such use remains relatively low. This suggests a gap between the availability of e-learning resources and their actual utilization for English language learning.

Several factors could account for this discrepancy. Firstly, there might be a lack of awareness among students about the availability and potential benefits of these e-learning resources. Secondly, the quality and relevance of the available content could influence students' willingness to use these platforms. High-quality, engaging, and contextually relevant content is crucial to attract and retain student interest (Alqahtani & Mohammad, 2015).

Attitudes and Preferences

The study reveals a generally positive attitude among students towards the use of e-learning platforms for English language learning. A significant number of students agreed that these platforms could enhance their language skills and expressed a preference for a blended learning approach. This aligns with the findings of Garrison and Kanuka (2004), who highlighted the benefits of blended learning in combining the strengths of traditional and online education.

However, positive attitudes alone are insufficient to ensure effective use of e-learning technologies. The study identifies several barriers that need to be addressed. These include limited access to necessary technological resources, insufficient training for both students and educators, and a need for better infrastructure. Addressing these barriers requires a comprehensive strategy involving institutional support, investment in infrastructure, and continuous professional development for educators.

Barriers to Effective Use of E-learning Platforms

The challenges identified in this study are consistent with those reported in other contexts. Limited access to resources, such as reliable internet connections and suitable devices, remains a significant barrier to the effective use of e-learning platforms (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012). This is particularly relevant in developing countries, where digital divides can exacerbate educational inequalities.

In addition to resource-related barriers, the lack of adequate training and support for both students and educators is a critical issue. Effective integration of e-learning requires not only technical skills but also pedagogical expertise in using these technologies to enhance learning outcomes. Professional development programs focused on e-learning pedagogies can equip educators with the necessary skills and confidence to incorporate these tools into their teaching practices (Jung, 2005).

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for practice. Firstly, institutions need to invest in infrastructure and resources to ensure that all students have access to reliable internet and appropriate devices. This is essential to create an equitable learning environment where all students can benefit from e-learning opportunities.

Secondly, there is a need for targeted training programs for both students and educators. These programs should focus on developing digital literacy skills, understanding the pedagogical uses of e-learning platforms, and creating engaging and interactive content. Collaboration between educational institutions, technology providers, and policymakers is crucial to design and implement these training initiatives.

Thirdly, educators should explore innovative ways to integrate e-learning platforms into their teaching practices. Blended learning models, which combine face-to-face instruction with online activities, can offer a balanced approach that leverages the strengths of both traditional and digital education.

Developing engaging, contextually relevant, and interactive content can enhance student motivation and learning outcomes.

Future Research Directions

This study provides a foundation for future research on the use of e-learning platforms in language education. Further studies could explore the long-term impacts of e-learning on language acquisition, examining how sustained use of these platforms influences language proficiency over time. Additionally, research could investigate the specific features and content types that are most effective in engaging students and enhancing learning outcomes.

Comparative studies across different educational contexts and institutions could provide insights into the factors that influence the successful integration of e-learning technologies. Understanding the role of cultural, institutional, and technological factors can help in designing more effective e-learning interventions tailored to specific contexts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the potential of e-learning platforms to enhance English language education at the Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Bonny. While students exhibit a positive attitude towards these technologies, their actual use for educational purposes remains limited due to various barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving infrastructure investment, targeted training, and innovative pedagogical strategies. By leveraging the potential of e-learning platforms, educational institutions can create more engaging, equitable, and effective language learning environments.

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