Virtual Teaching and Learning of English As A Second Language in Selected Secondary Schools Isu-Ikwuato, L. G. A. Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The adoption of virtual teaching and learning of a second language in the Nigerian educational system has received little attention. COVID-19 lock-down, imposed by the governments of the nations, forced educational institutions globally and locally to adapt virtual teaching and learning of English language. This research paper investigated the challenges of virtual teaching and learning of a second language (English) in selected secondary schools, Isu-Ikwuato L.A. Abia State, Nigeria. It used a mixed-method convergent parallel research design. The purposive sampling technique was used to select secondary schools that adopted virtual teaching and learning. The targeted population was 2000 English students and teachers with a sample size of 333. The results revealed that the schools made use of synchronous, asynchronous and blended

types of online teaching and learning, and the students had a positive attitude. Both students and teachers experienced challenges of poor network, lack of ICT training, unstable electricity, and financial constraint. This study recommends the following: Language Policy Makers in Nigerian Educational System to map out the strategies that will incorporate online second language teaching and learning skills in the curriculum. That Marist Educational Board in partnership with the Ministry of Education in Nigeria, provide virtual supplementary materials for English language education. Adequate virtual training to be provided for English teachers and students. That the challenges of internet fluctuation, power shortage, insufficient virtual materials, inadequate funds, technical issues, virtual skills be addressed by all the stakeholders in education.

Keywords: *Virtual teaching, Virtual learning, Language acquisition, Adoption.*

1.0 Introduction

There is no doubt that the invasion of coronavirus pandemic both globally and locally (Africa and Nigeria inclusive) has opened a way for a new approach to teaching and learning of second and foreign language in both lower and higher institutions of learning. The entire world is now battling with the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Globally, many studies have shown that this pandemic has brought in new challenges especially in the field of academics where the familiar system in lower institutions of learning is face-to-face (onsite) mode of teaching and learning. The world is now going digital almost in everything and the world's number one invisible enemy called coronavirus pandemic has ignited the fire of consciousness in terms of online education. In line with this, Gao et al. (2020) narrated that educational institutions were temporarily closed down. But virtual teaching and learning became the only means of helping learners cope with the coronavirus pandemic. Virtual teaching and lear ning are the experiences that take place online by the use of the internet, mobile phones and com puter technologies. It is teaching and learning activities carried out in an online environment, with the use of instructional technologies, whereby the teacher and students are separated in terms of physical environment and time.

Online teaching, therefore, substituted the traditional way of classroom teaching and learning and became the mainstream mode of delivering content. Due to the life-threatening global pandemic, language teachers, as well as teachers of other disciplines, had to move instructions online. In this process, the change in teachers' cognitions about education and language teaching must have changed substantially. Compton (2009) created a model for teaching skills needed for online settings. They are technological skills, which include the knowledge and ability to handle hardware and software issues; pedagogical skills that relate to the ability to facilitate teaching and learning activities; and evaluative skills, which refer to the ability to assess tasks and make the adjustments and modifications necessary to ensure the achievement of the language learning objectives.

Some might argue that the process of facilitating learning in a virtual environment compared to an authentic one is difficult, and in turn, it is important that the virtual environment is not an attempt to simply create an authentic one (Akoumianakis, 2011). Virtual learning is a system not

commonly used in developing countries especially in Africa and Nigeria to be precise/specific. During this time of the pandemic, people have been forced to work and study from homes to curtail the spread of the deadly coronavirus. Virtual learning is a system used in most developing countries where the students and the teachers do not interact on a one-on-one basis in a physical environment (classroom). Alberth (2011) suggests that the instructors' attitudes are transferred to students. When they show enthusiasm and motivation about teaching online and a greater capacity to face the challenges of online learning, they set an example for their students and impact their motivation, participation, and engagement in online activities. Furthermore, instructors need to be prepared to do troubleshooting or make modifications to course content or quizzes when necessary and for that, they need to feel comfortable manipulating the hardware and software.

Teacher presence also defined by Garrison, Anderson & Archer (2010) as "the design, facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes" (p. 32) is an important element in virtual teaching. For online learners, not feeling that presence from the teacher can lead to frustration. Instructors need to implement strategies to maintain effective communication and visibility within the virtual classroom to prevent discouraging students (Murphy, 2015). In the study conducted by Lin, Zheng and Zhang (2017), the results of multiple regression showed that learner-instructor and learner-content interactions had significant positive effects on satisfaction, whereas learner-learner interaction did not affect satisfaction. Based on these results, the role of the instructor is still valued and desired by the students as they can make a difference in the overall satisfaction and motivation.

Ushida (2005) showed that each teacher's style affects students' motivation and attitudes toward studying a second language online. His findings reinforced the importance of students' attitudes, but also the critical role of the instructor in technology-enhanced teaching. This, therefore, implies that students' attitude towards virtual learning determined their academic performance. Alberth (2011) suggests that students' personal characteristics influence their perceptions towards online courses, which in turn may have an impact on their performance and outcomes. Alberth (2011) argues that the differences in students' perceptions of virtual learning may be partially attributed to students' individual characteristics. Those students who are more independent and/or have been previously exposed to technology are more likely to take advantage of online classes than those who have not been working with technology or rely on the presence of a teacher for confidence.

Other studies have revealed that teachers carry out continuous training throughout the academic year. It is meant to demonstrate skills in certain areas of digital teaching competence such as security and communication, although there is still a deficit in the creation of digital content (Cabrera, Cruz & Sánchez, 2019). The best methods to meet learning objectives in an online environment have been under much scrutiny (Wei, Chen, & Kinshuk, 2012). Some have indicated that learning in an online environment is distinctly different from a traditional classroom and that further comparison between the two has done little to improve the quality of online learning environments. The first paper reports a study by Fu and Zhou (2020) that investigated the opportunities and challenges of online teaching. The authors reported that the hardware facilities and Wi-Fi conditions are uneven across schools and areas; teachers'

information technology skills and resilience cannot meet the needs of online teaching; the online resources and platforms are insufficient for online teaching; students, parents, and schools have different expectations of online teaching.

Jiang et al. (2020) in their second publication discussed the principles and modes of online teaching during COVID-19. The principles of online teaching over COVID-19, the authors' reports include simplicity in technology, immediate feedback, interactive communication, and precision management. Unfortunately, little has been reported on how English teachers have responded to such a drastically challenging and evolving virtual teaching and learning environment (Fu et al, 2020). According to Dermott (2013), research on the pedagogy surrounding the use of Web 2.0 (second stage development of internet) tools is still in its infancy; therefore, many educators will have to make their decisions to adopt a particular tool based on traditional learning theories. The new online educational environment of today requires that teachers become those life-long learners that are acquainted with the new pedagogies/methodologies for online teaching and the new technology required for facilitating online instruction (Adebisi & Oyeleke, 2018).

To acquire a second language outside the environment where the native speakers are not available is quite challenging in a face-to-face classroom, not to mention learning it virtually. Teachers and students have been forced to embrace this new trend in the teaching and learning process. Virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language skills are 21st Century skills which most of the senior teachers/lecturers and even students are not used to and find it challenging, in Africa and precisely/specifically Nigeria, hence the need for in-service training for such educators to be able to equip themselves and put students through an online environment. This study sought to make findings on the challenges faced in virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language during COVI-19 lockdown. Learning a second language virtually especially in semi-urban and rural areas where there is shortage of resources; no internet, no mobile phone networks, no electricity, lack of smartphones and computers, etc. is a big challenge to both the teachers and students.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The adoption of virtual teaching and learning of second and foreign languages in secondary schools as a result of lock down due to the coronavirus pandemic has not only come in with great advantages but also many challenges as well. Before, most teachers and students were familiar with face-to-face teaching and learning where they interacted on a one-on-one basis and not remotely. Now, teachers are posed with the challenges of restructuring the curriculum, lesson content, their perception and methodology of teaching to suit the online classroom environment. This may have an adverse effect on those teachers who may not have had prior technological skills. Students are also forced without proper preparation to transit from on-site to the virtual classroom. How did the teachers coordinate all these in virtual teaching and learning of the second language effectively, making sure that all the students participate actively? How did the students cope with this new mode of learning? It is on the basis of this background that this study sought to find out how teachers and students of the English language managed and coordinated all these online activities and the challenges they encountered in the processes of teaching and learning of English as a second language virtually, in selected secondary schools in Isi-Ikwuato, Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

Globally, Hockly (2015) presents the term 'online language learning' to refer to language learning that takes place fully online, via the internet, with no face-to-face component, within the context of both formal language courses and more informal learning scenarios. A study conducted by Xu and Jaggars (2014) on the effect of virtual learning and teaching on students' performance found out that the students' socioeconomic strata and background had an effect on students' performance in the online course. Students from poor socio-economic backgrounds may not be opportuned to exposure to some of the technologies used in virtual teaching and learning.

Alberth (2019) in his study argues that the differences in students' perceptions of online learning may be partially attributed to students' individual characteristics. Those students who are more independent and/or have been previously exposed to technology are more likely to take advantage of online classes than those who have not been working with technology or rely on the presence of a teacher for confidence. This can equally have an impact on their academic performance. This current study is interested in the role of students' characteristics in the success or failure of students enrolled for online courses.

Xu and Jaggars (2014) in their study examined the performance gap between online and face-to-face students and the variation of the gaps based on student subgroups and subject areas in students enrolled in over 500,000 courses from over 40,000 community colleges in Washington State. They found out that the typical student had more difficulty succeeding in online courses than in face-to-face courses and that the size of the gap varied significantly across subgroups: male, black students and students with lower levels of academic preparation had stronger performance gaps. These results suggest that variables such as socioeconomic strata, students' backgrounds, and lower academic performance may have an effect on the overall performance in online courses. This conclusion also supports the idea that students' characteristics may play an important role in the success or failure of virtual learning and teaching of English language. The research under review was carried out among the college students, it was dissimilar from the present study in design and location and population.

In Africa, Ajayi (2010) conducted a study looking at online environments with a focus on discussion boards and what the online component brought to the classroom experience. In the study, Ajayi noted that using online technology has the potential to change the online environment "from teacher-centred to student-centred; generate positive structure and support for learning; shift learning from an isolated activity to social, collaborative work; and move learning from passive to active processes."

Mpungose (2020) carried out a qualitative study to investigate the emergent transition from face-to-face to online learning in a South African University in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study adopted a two-year postdoctoral qualitative research project conducted at a South African university to explore students' experiences of the transition from face-to-face to e-learning. The study purposively and conveniently sampled 26 students to generate data using e-reflective activity, Zoom group meetings and a WhatsApp one-on-one semi-structured interview. The findings suggested the digital divide as a hindrance to students realizing the full potential of e-learning, yet lecturers still want students to submit assessment tasks and engage with course activities on the Moodle learning management system. However, the study submitted that

various challenges hinder disadvantaged students from realizing the full potential of e-learning. Moreover, the location of the present study which is in Nigeria is different from those of the reviewed literatures and the focus of the reviewed literatures are different from that of the present study whose focus is to examine the challenges of adopting virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language in secondary school.

Dube, (2020) carried out a study to determine rural online learning in the context of COVID-19 in South Africa: evoking an inclusive education approach. The study used participatory action research. A total of 10 learners and 5 teachers participated via WhatsApp. The findings suggested that, while the South African government is promoting online learning as the only alternative in the context of COVID-19, this mode excludes many rural learners from teaching and learning, due to a lack of resources to connect to the internet, the learning management system, and low-tech software. Based on the findings of this study, it was argued that rural learners are critical stakeholders in education and in the fight against COVID-19, and they cannot be left behind in efforts to fight the pandemic. The study was relevant to the present study in addressing the challenges of online learning. However, the number of participants was relatively small to have generalized findings.

2.1 Summary of Reviewed Literature and Knowledge Gap

The reviewed literature illustrated the numerous studies completed in virtual teaching and learning of the second language in secondary schools. Among these studies, there have been researches surrounding online language learning and interaction among universities and colleges in Western and Asian countries, but researches have been limited pertaining to virtual teaching and learning of the second language in secondary schools especially in Africa Continent and Nigeria to be specific. It is important to focus on improving online practices and methodology through research to assist practitioners who are trying to adjust to different instructional technologies used in the online classroom. Unfortunately, little has been reported on the challenges of virtual teaching and learning of a second language in Africa, especially in Nigeria. This study aimed at filling the research gap. The findings were expected to help secondary school teachers and students and other language teaching professionals to understand how they can benefit from learning about how their colleagues were learning to cope with the new challenges by trying to understand online teaching platforms.

3.0 Methodology

This study was carried out in three selected secondary schools in Abia state Nigeria. The schools are located in Isu-Ikwuato L.G .A. Isu-Ikwuato is a small area and a part of Abia state, which is found in southern Nigeria, near the most urbanized living areas. It is a local business area filled with great houses, schools, churches and a lot more. It is a former mining area, where a lot of working-class people moved to work and live. The community is dominantly Christian, and the total population is estimated to be close to 50,000 people. The area was chosen because of the accessibility of secondary schools in this area that adopted virtual teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This triggered the researcher to strive to investigate perceptions and challenges of virtual teaching and learning of the second language in secondary schools in Isu-Ikwuato L.G.A in Abia State, Nigeria.

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-method research design. A mixed-method approach was considered suitable for the study because the data collected was both qualitative and quantitative. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used for the qualitative study while a descriptive statistical approach was used for the quantitative study. The key idea behind this approach was that the design allowed the researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, analysed them separately, and then merged them during interpretation (Creswell, 2014).

For the qualitative study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions in line with the objectives to collect data through face-to-face interviews and audio recordings with the consent of the participants. For the quantitative study, the researcher used a self-constructed questionnaire in line with the objectives of the study constructed on a 5 Likert scale to collect data. The purpose of using two instruments was deliberated to direct a pedagogical triangulation of the required data. The pedagogical triangulations of the data would allow researchers to validate and enrich data. The questionnaire was self-administered. The use of one research tool alone has limitations hence the need for the use of more than one instrument for triangulation purposes and for strengthening the validity of the research outcome.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

This paper sought to establish challenges faced in the adoption of virtual teaching and learning of the English Language as a second language. The researcher adopted quantitative tools to obtain the data. The researcher used standardized tools with a Likert scale of items developed to determine the challenges faced in the adoption of virtually teaching and learning of English as a second language in secondary schools. The views were given on -items and 5-point Likert Scale measured as strongly disagree (SD) = 1, disagree (D) = 2, neutral (N) = 3, agree (A) 4 and strongly agree (SA) = 5. The results were summarized into frequency and percentages presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Challenges faced in the adoption of virtual teaching and learning

Statement	Participant Category	SA f (%)	A f (%)	N f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)
Students are compelled to learn through virtual teaching and learning during Covid-19 and at any specific circumstances.	Student	99(34.1)	136(46.9)	24(8.3)	18(6.2)	13(4.5)
	Teacher	20(66.7)	5(16.7)	(0)	5(16.7)	(0)
Virtual learning is problematic and challenging to adopt due to unstable electricity and network during online teaching and learning.	Student	116(40.0)	112(38.6)	30(10.3)	18(6.2)	14(4.8)
	Teacher	10(33.3)	15(50.0)	(0)	5(16.7)	(0)
The teacher is not easily accessible in virtual teaching and learning.	Student	50(17.2)	87(30.0)	59(20.3)	73(25.2)	20(6.9)
	Teacher	5(16.7)	20(66.7)	(0)	(0)	5(16.7)
Teachers and students are not well trained and prepared for virtual teaching and learning.	Student	33(11.4)	80(27.6)	58(20.0)	83(28.6)	35(12.1)
	Teacher	5(16.7)	20(66.7)	(0)	(0)	5(16.7)
Every student has equal cognition capacity/ability to get virtual teaching.	Student	47(16.2)	90(31.0)	54(18.6)	63(21.7)	36(12.4)
	Teacher	(0)	(0)	(0)	20(66.7)	10(33.3)
Every student and teacher has the facility to avail virtual lectures learning and caused learners to be more versatile.	Student	42(14.5)	88(30.3)	66(22.8)	59(20.3)	34(11.7)
	Teacher	(0)	10(33.3)	5(16.7)	10(33.3)	5(16.7)
Every student and teacher has challenges of proper skills to get virtual teaching and learning and participated actively.	Student	55(19.0)	102(35.2)	77(26.6)	44(15.2)	12(4.1)
	Teacher	(0)	(0)	(0)	10(33.3)	20(66.7)
Teachers have maximum control of students in online teaching and learning	Student	52(17.9)	44(15.2)	41(14.1)	60(20.7)	92(31.7)
	Teacher	(0)	(0)	(0)	20(66.7)	10(33.3)

The responses in Table 1 reveal that the majority of participants (81%) agreed with the assertion that students are pushed to study through virtual instruction on a second language during Covid-19 and under any conditions. However, a minor percentage of the population (10.7 %) said contrary. On Virtual learning of the English language being problematic and challenging to adopt due to unstable electricity and network during online learning, 40% strongly agreed and 38.6 % agreed. The findings are in line with those of Fu and Zhou (2020), Xu, and Jaggars (2014), all of whom looked at the difficulties of online teaching. According to the authors, hardware facilities, unreliable electricity, and Wi-Fi conditions vary greatly between schools and locations.

Cumulatively, 47.2% agreed with the statement that the teacher is not easily accessible in virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language; however, 20.3% decided to be neutral and 32.1% disagreed. The findings back up Ajayi's (2010) and Mpungose's (2020) suggestions on teachers' abilities to have maximal influence over students in online second language teaching due to their proficiency with online technology. This suggests that each school had their own challenges about its teacher's accessibility in the process of online teaching and learning of English language. A greater number of respondents agreed that teachers were not accessible during online teaching and learning of English which is an indicator that English students faced some challenges during the period of second language virtual teaching and learning. This challenge is attributed to teacher's lack of technical know-how, poor internet connectivity and power failure. This is frustrating to the students because English language teaching and learning requires that teachers be always present to guide the students in the skills of speaking, reading, listening and writing. English language in this study is a foreign language to the students and they need well-experienced tutors for them to grasp it. This finding contradicts one of the principles of Siemens (2004) connectivism theory, which says that nurturing and maintaining connections (between teacher and students) is needed to facilitate online steady learning. In online teaching and learning of the English language, learners are to be equipped with the skills on how to manage the tension between networks, how to maintain networks and how to manage huge information found there. So, learners lacked sufficient online presence of teachers during online English language learning. Aspects of teacher's training that should enhance their online teaching skills, good internet connectivity and steady power supply should be adequately taken care of by the administration.

Similarly, 40.7% of the participants cumulatively disagreed with the statement that teachers and students are not well trained and prepared for virtual teaching. On the contrary, 39% cumulative agreed with the statement while 20% remained neutral. This implies that some of the schools still have challenges on the technical aspect of teaching the English language online due to poor training, which can affect preparation for online teaching and learning of English. Alberth (2011) opinions of students' personal qualities that influence their impressions of online learning, where students and teachers are not well taught and prepared for virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language, are supported by the findings. Mitchell, Myles and Marsden (2013) in Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, on the input that teacher is supposed to give to the second language learners to help them move from their current level of competency to another higher level, States that the best way to learn a second language is by comprehensible input. The results of this study show that some teachers and students (39%) were not well trained on the online teaching and learning of English language which is a wakeup call that such teachers and students should be properly trained so as to bring about successful online second language teaching and learning as affirmed by input hypothesis of Krashen.

Every student has equal cognition capacity/ability to get virtual teaching and learning. Cumulatively, 47% agreed while 40.3% disagreed with the statement. The finding is an indicator that student's cognition capacity can never be at the same level regardless of class, form and age in terms of learning a second language online. 44.8% agreed that every student and teacher has facility to avail virtual lectures learning of English language and helped learners to be more versatile while 32% disagreed. The findings support Hockly (2015) and Alberth (2019) findings that every student and teacher has access to virtual lectures learning of English as a second

language, which has led to learners becoming more self-reliant in acquiring it. The findings emphasized the relevance of students' positive attitudes as emphasized by the affective filter hypothesis of Krashen towards the virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language, as well as the instructor's important role in technology-enhanced linguistic education, stated in Siemens (2004) Connectivism theory.

The majority of the participants (54.2%) agreed that every student and teacher has challenges of proper skills to get virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language and participated actively; 22.8% were neutral while 19.3% cumulatively disagreed. Overall, (52.4 % disagree and 33.1% agreed) that teachers have maximum control of students in online teaching and learning of English as a second language. The findings showed that teachers from the sampled schools have challenges at a certain degree in controlling their students in online teaching and learning of English language. Due to a lack of resources to connect to the internet, the learning management system, and low-tech software, the findings are consistent with Dube, (2020,) and Hockly (2015) viewpoints. Students and teachers are confronted with the obstacles of acquiring the necessary abilities to participate actively in virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language. A greater number of the respondents in this study agreed that both teachers and students faced challenges like lack of proper skills for online teaching and learning of English as a second language, unable to control online second language classroom, distractions from students, inadequate internet supply, learning management system and software issues. These aspects of challenges of online teaching and learning of second language should be improved by the management of the schools.

Overall, (83.4%) teacher's responses indicated that students are pushed to study through virtual instruction on English as a second language during Covid-19 and under any conditions. (83.3%) agreed that Virtual learning is problematic and challenging to adopt due to unstable electricity and network during online teaching and learning of English as a second language. Pushing students to learn through online teaching of a second language portrays that it is a new approach to language teaching and learning which students were not familiar with. This is in line with the affective filter hypothesis of Krashen, where teachers are required to work on the attitudes of students (emotion) to reduce their emotional barrier and help them acquire a second language. Also, a larger number of participants in this study agreed that virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language is difficult and quite challenging to adopt. This attests to the fact that online language teaching and learning does not just require only human efforts but needs both human and non-human activities to bring about its success and it is in line with the assumption of connectivism theory by Siemens (2004).   From the information gathered in this study, these findings confirmed the oral response of one of the teachers who said:

"The challenges are what I have been pinpointing at, the internet fluctuation, the cost of data, it was not easy for the school to provide data for students, and the parents too didn't find it easy. The electricity supply was not steady, the generator was used which goes off at 1:00 p.m, and not all the students joined during online teaching and learning. We used school Wi-Fi but it was not stable all the time"

(Teacher 3, 24th July, 2021)

Overall, the data table shows that the majority of teachers (83.4 %) believe virtual teaching and learning of English language is inaccessible, which is a challenge, by agreeing with the view. 83.4% of the teachers agreed that teachers and students are not well trained and prepared for virtual teaching and learning. This confirms the fact that before the evasion of the coronavirus pandemic many teachers and students were comfortable with the face-to-face teaching and learning of English as a second language, in Nigeria. Virtual teaching of a second language became the only available option to keep the academic calendar running. But most importantly, there was no prior proper training on how to handle online classrooms and this caused a lot of challenges.   One of the participants said:

> "Some teachers were not very good in computer literacy initially. At some point, they usually lose control of online classroom situations and parents complained of the high cost of buying data for their children. Also, management didn't find it easy providing data for school".

> (Teacher 5, 24th July, 2021)

Overwhelming participants (100%) disagreed on the view that every student has equal cognition capacity/ability to get virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language. This portrays the individual differences in learners which needs to be addressed by the teacher in the process of online teaching and learning. Every student and teacher has the facility to avail virtual second language learning and made learners to be more versatile (33.3% agreed while 50% disagreed). This information available shows that not all the teachers and students had all the facilities to embrace online second language teaching and learning. It is clearly an invitation to make satisfactory provisions for online language teaching and learning. 100% of the teachers disagreed that every student and teacher has challenges of proper skills to get virtual teaching and learning of the second language and participated actively. This indicates that some teachers and students had some skills on how to teach and learn a language online and it needs to be strengthened. Similarly, 100% of the teachers disagreed that teachers have maximum control of students in online second language teaching and learning. Teachers having control over the students in an online second language teaching and learning is very important for the success of English language learning. It is a second and foreign language to the learners who cannot acquire its skills properly except in the company of an experienced tutor. The findings of this study is that not all teachers had full control of students in online language teaching and learning.

Teachers who participated in the survey were also interviewed after getting their consent to participate in the study. They were asked to specify their perceptions on the challenges faced in the adoption of virtual teaching and learning. The responses were as follows:

> "Network issues from the internet service provider is the number one challenge. Sometimes some of our students could not come online because the parents complained that the data that they used is too much, the data consumption was too much on them.

This is because usually there is no electricity in the country Nigeria. Electricity supply is not everywhere. The parents usually get fuel for their generators, which will run from morning until afternoon for their children to participate fully. We also have gadgets issues, some of them could not use laptops but they were using phones, which have limited services in accessing zoom than laptops. Apart from these things, these are the challenges".

(Teacher 1, 24th July, 2021)

"One of the major challenges we experienced in the course of virtually teaching and learning was network issues and finance. I don't think the network can't be corrected, we just have to bear with the situation. Teachers should be well trained in online teaching and learning since some of them didn't find it easy teaching online. Parents should be convinced to pay for the data used by their children and school, and teachers should be well paid for the services rendered"

(Teacher 2, 24th July, 2021)

"The challenges are what I have been pinpointing at, the internet fluctuation, the cost of data, it was not easy for the school to provide data for students, and the parents too didn't find it easy. The electricity supply was not steady, the generator was used which goes off at 1:00 p.m, and not all the students joined during online teaching and learning. We used school Wi-Fi but it was not stable all the time"

(Teacher 3, 24th July, 2021)

"The following are the challenges: Network problem, it wasn't stable. The power supply was inadequate and the cost of data provision was very high on the management and parents. For teachers, not everybody was well trained in the use of virtual teaching and learning.

Students were making a lot of noise and it was a bit challenging to control them since the forum was online learning. It is different when a teacher is with the student in the class

(Teacher 4, 24th July, 2021)

"Some teachers were not very good in computer literacy initially. At some point, they usually lose control of online classroom situations and parents complained of the high cost of buying data for their children. Also, management didn't find it easy providing data for school".

(Teacher 5, 24th July, 2021)

"The internet service providers should be met, they should service their gadgets for improvement in their services, so that Wi-Fi will be stable. Parents can help the school by providing money for data and provide for their children. Teachers should be paid well for the services they rendered".

(Teacher 6, 24th July, 2021)

"We experience many challenges especially lack of materials, network and power supply and at times some students misbehaved which was a big challenge for the teacher to control them. I would like to encourage those involved to finance the lessons".

(Teacher 7, 24th July, 2021)

"Non-challant attitude of some students, no instructional resources to teach certain topics like identification of clauses and phrases, Students' "I-too-know attitude" in the English Language contributed to some of the challenges we experienced. I feel this can be controlled by giving them a lot of classwork to keep them busy".

(Teacher 8, 24th July, 2021)

"For the network issues, once the network is stable, that is the solution to that problem. Free Wi-Fi connection to be made whereby people can connect easily without having to bear the cost unnecessarily, this will take care of data aspect. Provision of stable electricity/light whereby people can connect without experiencing disconnection. Once these are attended to the problems will be solved".

(Teacher 9, 24th July, 2021)

"The management should be provided with an adequate fund to cater for online teaching and learning. Teachers should be well trained in the use of virtual teaching and learning. The school management and parents should provide equipment for online teaching and learning as well. Parents should provide laptops and iPhones for their children and teachers should be provided with laptops as well".

(Teacher 10, 24th July, 2021)

According to the findings from the interviews, students are compelled to study through virtual instruction of English during Covid-19 and under any special circumstances, according to the majority (81%). However, a minor percentage of the population (10.7%) said contrary. Because of the inconsistency of energy and the internet during online learning, virtual learning is complicated and difficult to implement (40% strongly agreed and 38.6% agreed). In all, 47.2% of the participants agreed that the teacher is not easily available in virtual teaching; nevertheless, 20.3% chose to be neutral, and 32.1% chose to be negative. This indicates that each school had

unique challenges in terms of teachers' accessibility. The statement that teachers and students are not sufficiently trained and prepared for virtual teaching of the English language was disputed by 40.7% of the participants. On the contrary, 39% of respondents agreed with the statement, while 20% were undecided. This means that some schools continue to face technical issues as a result of insufficient training, which might delay preparation for online teaching and learning. Every student has the same cognitive capacity/ability to benefit from virtual instruction and learning. Overall, 47% agreed to the statement, while 40.3% disapproved. The results are a good indicator of a student's intellectual capacity. Generally, 47 % agreed to the statement, while 40.3% disapproved. The data show that regardless of class or age, a student's cognition capacity will never be the same. 44.8 % said that virtual lectures learning is available to all students and teachers and that it has made learners more adaptable, while 32% disagreed. The majority of participants (54.2%) agreed that every student and instructor faces obstacles in developing necessary abilities for virtual teaching and learning and actively participated; 22.8 per cent were neutral, and 19.3% disagreed. Teachers have maximum control of students in online teaching (52.4 % disagree and 33.1% agreed). The findings showed that teachers from the sampled schools have challenges at a certain degree in controlling their students in online teaching.

5.0 Conclusion

The focus of this study was to evaluate virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language in selected secondary schools Isu-ikwuato, L. G. A. Abia state, Nigeria, and identify the challenges faced. The findings on the challenges faced by teachers, students and administration (objective four) exposed that insufficient power supply, internet fluctuation, lack of online resource materials, inadequate funds, technical issues, online language teaching and learning skills and poor network issues were experienced.

Based on these, this study concludes that virtual teaching and learning of English as a second language in Isu-Ikwuato L.G. A. Abia State, Nigeria, was partially successful due to unavoidable challenges faced during the period. It equally concludes that these challenges faced was as a result of lack of training and preparation caused by the evasion of coronavirus pandemic.

6.0 Recommendations

o Language Policy Makers in Nigerian Education System to come up with strategies that will incorporate online second language teaching and learning skills in the curriculum.

o That Marist Educational Board in partnership with the Ministry of Education in Nigeria provide virtual supplementary materials to be used in online English language education.

o Based on the findings, it is suggested that training be provided for English teachers and students in order to make better and more effective use of internet resources for learning English as a second language.

o That the challenges of internet fluctuation, inadequate power supply, lack of online resource materials, inadequate funds, technical issues, online language teaching and learning skills and poor network that interrupted the smooth running of online English language teaching and learning be addressed by the schools' administration, the Nigerian government and all the stakeholders in education.

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