The Use of Virtual Learning in Improving Communication skills: Students' and Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract
The study focused on Students' and Teachers' Perspective on the use of virtual learning in improving communication skills. Descriptive designed was used in this study to enable the validation easily. The sample size of the respondents was 31 students and 11 lecturers of Basic Midwifery Class at College of Nursing and Midwifery, Damaturu, Yobe State Nigeria. The instrument that was used in collecting the data was questionnaire. The procedure for collecting the data was online using survey monkey application to easy the work. And the theory that was used is Transactional Distance Theory. Some of the findings revealed that teachers and students prefer face to face learning than virtual, and have positive attitudes towards virtual learning; Virtual learning caused difficulties that might handicap teaching and learning processes as a result of network problem, too cost of data subscription, unfamiliarity with the system, time consuming because of network failure etc; Virtual classes developed Communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in teaching and learning, and virtual classes played a significant role in enhancing teachers' and students' communication skills. Based on the findings, the study would contribute by motivating researchers to fill the gap where the study had not been touch, and it would also contribute by encouraging teachers and students in participating academic activities virtually. Lastly, it was recommended that managements of an institution should be having e-learning training to their teachers and students so that they should be well equipped in the field, and also to provide a well necessary furnished e-learning gadgets in improving the system.

Keywords: E-learning; virtual; learning; virtual learning; Transactional Distance Theory, ICT

Introduction

Many activities in Nigeria (such as meetings, workshops, conferences, launchings, academic activities etc) took place virtually as a result of COVID-19, unlike before the pandemic which were taking place physically. Virtual learning as part of Student Centered Learning to some extent exposes many Academics to National and International Conferences, and also improves Educational Sector especially during this pandemic crises where some lectures, academic conferences, meetings, workshops have been done via zoom, google meeting, WhatsApp etc which changes the methods of teaching and learning into current one.

A virtual learning environment (VLE) is a collection of software tools supporting academic administration, teaching and research using the Internet, particularly the World Wide Web. As information and communication is increasingly conducted online such systems have become part of the essential educational infrastructure in many higher education establishments. Just as e-mail, VLEs are centrally provided services that are delivered right across the institution largely to enhance existing academic practices, not to replace them (Trafford and Shirota, 2011).

The Virtual Learning Network (VLN) provides schools, particularly those in rural and remote areas, with the opportunity to cooperate to expand curricular offerings for their students. Each school that participates in a VLN cluster contributes at least one course delivered by an e-teacher, allowing member schools access to any course offered through the VLN that they cannot offer locally. At present, there is no formal national training for the e-teachers, although individual clusters offer a range of training opportunities (Barbour & Bennet, 2013).

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particularly those in rural and remote areas, with the opportunity to cooperate to expand curricular offerings for their students. Each school that participates in a VLN cluster contributes at least one course delivered by an e-teacher, allowing member schools access to any course offered through the VLN that they cannot offer locally. At present, there is no formal national training for the e-teachers, although individual clusters offer a range of training opportunities. This case study focused on the e-teachers' perceptions of the learning curve required for them to be adequately and effectively prepared to teach in the virtual environment. Results indicated that the experiences of e-teachers in this new learning environment were positive, but still embedded in the norm of a school. Further, e-teachers desired professional development beyond learning how to use the technology, but wanted more assistance in developing their pedagogy to work in the online environment.

Literature Review

Hamouda, (2020) conducted a study aimed at exploring the effects of using the virtual classes on English majors' speaking skills, and examining their attitudes towards the use of virtual classes. The study was conducted with 70 English students at Qassim University who were assigned into two groups, control (35) and experimental (35), after ensuring of their homogeneity by administering the Quick Placement Test. Data were collected from the study participants using an oral speaking test, an attitudinal questionnaire, and Semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between both groups in favor of the experimental group, in pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary due to the virtual classes. However, using virtual method appeared to be a more fruitful tool since the mean score of the experimental group (30.36) was much higher than the mean score of the control

group (20.37). The findings also revealed that students generally had positive attitudes towards using virtual classes particularly because they found it helpful in improving their speaking skills.

Khalawi & Halabi, (2020) conducted a research paper to explore Saudi foundation-year teachers and students' perceptions of the use of virtual classes for teaching or learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the English Language Institute (ELI) in King Abdulaziz University (KAU). The data for this study was collected through questionnaires from a total of 20 teachers and 22 students. The overall results of the questionnaires demonstrate that the majority of teachers and students held positive attitudes towards EFL virtual classes; however, they prefer face-to-face classrooms. Additionally, some participants admitted the huge role virtual classes play in improving learners' autonomy.

Al-Qahtani, (2019) investigated teachers' and students' perceptions of English as a foreign language (EFL) virtual classes. The participants were thirty teachers and students who were divided into two equal groups (fifteen in each group). The results show that the majority of the students and teachers possess positive attitudes toward teaching and learning through EFL virtual classes. Moreover, they also agree with the significant role of virtual courses in enhancing communication skills.

Mosquera, (2017) identified the impact of implementing a virtual learning environment (VLE) in English as a foreign language (EFL) courses at a public university in Colombia. About 210 students and 5 teachers composed the sample of convenience for this study. As for the research instruments, questionnaires, class observation notes, quick surveys, and teacher narratives were used to gather information related to students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of this technology in class as well as the existing conditions for such implementation. The study shows that students feel enthusiastic and motivated towards the use of VLEs, and they suggest that all teachers should indeed include them in their lessons. Students also realized that even though they are part of a digital age in which the use of personal digital devices is common place, it is sometimes challenging for them to deal with some types of educational technology. On the other hand, findings suggest that the capacity of laboratories and computers, as well as Internet connectivity, continue to be the main threats to implementing VLE. Nevertheless, when those hindrances were overcome, the experience of technology-based learning turned out to be satisfactory for those EFL students.

Alves, Miranda & Morais, (2017) made a study and focuses mainly on the relation between the use of a virtual learning environment (VLE) and students' performance. This study is mainly quantitative with descriptive features, involving data obtained from literature research and from experimental research using a sample of approximately 6300 undergraduates. The data was extracted from the VLE and student registration system databases using learning analytics procedures. The results show that there are relatively positive indicators regarding students' access to a virtual learning environment and the relation between such access and their performance.

Akpan, Etim & Ogechi, (2016) carried out a study to investigate Virtual Classroom Instruction on Academic Performance of Educational Technology Students in Distance Education, Enugu State. The population for this study was limited to the Students in National Open University, Enugu study Centre. Simple random sampling technique was used to select forty

respondents from the educational technology students and questionnaire was used to gather the data. The findings from this paper suggested that the students' acknowledged that the availability and use of virtual classroom influenced their academic performance. Although the virtual classroom available was adequate, it was not often utilized for instruction.

Yadav (2016) discussed the advantages and disadvantages of using computers and the internet in education and discussed the role of teachers in Internet education, and stated how the use of the Internet and web lead to the significant changes in educational models and in communication tools that are adapting easily with learning methods. He mentioned that virtual classes are a new term of E-learning, where the students would be present with their professor and fellow learners in a classroom via the Internet. He also stated that the availability of different communication materials between teachers and students in virtual classes considers as a beneficial role is of synchronous online classes. It played an important role in maintaining interaction. Moreover, he pointed out the interaction capability of the synchronous virtual classroom and the importance of learner-learner, learner-instructor, learner-content, and learner-interface interaction within the virtual classroom. He also concluded with the need for training and technical problems consider as disadvantages of virtual classes.

Danesh, Bailey & Whisenand, (2015) examined the role of technology in interaction and communication as relates to distance education. The results showed that learner-instructor and learner-learner interactions, when used synchronously or asynchronously, were perceived as effective discussion modes and played an important role in the success of the class. The students felt the lack of face-to-face non-verbal cues

hindered the effectiveness of class discussions. They participated more in online sessions than in face-to-face discussions and a combination of both was preferable to better understand the material.

Çakýroðlu, (2014) assessed the quality of distance learning (DL) in higher education by considering the Seven Principles of Good Practice (SPGP). The participants were 77 second year students from the Computer and Instructional Technologies Program (CEIT) of a Faculty of Education in Turkey. A questionnaire was developed in line with the SPGP and administered to collect data after 14 weeks of teaching. The analysis of the results of the questionnaire indicate that this questionnaire as it has been developed in this study can be effective in understanding and evaluating the perspectives of learners on the quality of distance learning in virtual classrooms. This study also presents some new evidence on the potential of virtual classrooms for teaching, learning and learner interaction.

Gedera, (2014) in his study stated that online learning environments can offer learners opportunities for flexibility, interaction and collaboration distinctly different from face-to-face learning environments. However, the integration of educational technologies also presents challenges and concerns in relation to students' learning. This article attempts to develop a better understanding of students' experiences of learning with the specific online learning technology of Adobe Connect virtual classroom. The study was conducted in a university in New Zealand using a case study method. With Activity Theory as its research framework, the research methods of this study include individual interviews, online observation and analysis of other relevant documents. One of the finding revealed that Adobe Connect virtual classroom, used in an online learning environment affected students' active

participation in e-learning activities.

Research Objectives
The study aimed in the Use of Virtual Learning in Improving Communication skills: Students' and Teachers' Perspective in order:
I. To find out the teachers' and students" views on Virtual Learning?
ii. To find out the teachers' and students' opinion on the Role of Virtual Learning in Enhancing Communication Skills?

Research Questions
I. What are the Teachers' and Students' Views on Virtual Learning?
ii. What are the Teachers' and Students' Opinion on the Role of Virtual Learning in Enhancing Communication Skills?

Methodology
The study focuses on Students' and Teachers' Perspective on the use of virtual learning in improving communication skills. Descriptive designed was used in this study to enable the validation easily. The sample size of the respondents was 31 students and 11 lecturers of Basic Midwifery Class at College of Nursing and Midwifery, Damaturu, Yobe State Nigeria. The instrument that was used in collecting the data was questionnaire

adopted by Al-Qahtani, (2019) with slight differences, and was divided into two parts base on the research questions. The only difference between the students' and the teachers' questionnaire was learning and teaching respectively. The questions were 10, eight questions were closed-ended, and the remaining two were opened to allow the respondents to elaborate on their views. The procedure for collecting the data was online using the survey monkey application to easy the work.

Theoretical Framework
As there are many theories concerning virtual learning such as activity theory etc, Transactional Distance Theory (Moore & Kearsley, (1993) in McBrien, J. L., Jones, P. & Cheng, R., 2009) was used as the theoretical framework of this study in other to explore the use of a virtual leaning in distance education and analyze the ways in which it will enhance communication skills in learning experiences.

Result and Discussion
Level 1: Students' Views on Virtual Learning
Table 1: Do you prefer using a virtual class in your learning rather than a face-to-face classroom setting?

Table 8

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Agree	14	46.67%
Disagree	16	53.33%
Total	30	

Table 1 indicated that most of the students with 53.33% preferred face to face learning than virtual.

Table 2: What kind of attitudes do you have towards virtual classes?

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Positive	22	70.97%
Negative	9	29.03%
Total	31	

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Table 2 indicated that most of the students having 70.97% had positive attitudes towards virtual learning.

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Positive	22	70.97%
Negative	9	29.03%
Total	31	

Table 3: Do you think that using a virtual class can cause difficulties or problems that may handicap your learning processes?

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Positive	18	60.00%
Negative	12	40.00%
Total	30	

Tables 3 showed that majority of the students (60.00%) were with the views that virtual e-learning could cause difficulties that might handicap their learning processes.
Table 4: If agreed, list the major difficulties you have encountered?

If agreed, list the major difficulties you have encountered?

No Android Phone

Network failure

No data

Not seeing the lecturers physically as it discourages me in learning

No physical demonstration

Not comfortable

Unfamiliar to me

Lack of understanding properly

Lack of proper communication

No Android Phone

I prepare front to front lectures

Eye problem

Difficulty in asking question

Too cost in data subscription

Less explanation by the lecturer

Distraction by students

Table 4 indicated that the major difficulties that many students encountered were network problem, too cost of data subscription, no physical demonstration, etc.

Table 5: Rate your opinion of the statement "Virtual classes facilitate the learning processes in the same manner when compared to face-to-face classes."

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Agree	15	53.57%
Disagree	13	46.43%
Total	28	

Table 5 indicated that the majority of the responses of the students (53.57%) responded that virtual classes facilitated the learning process in the same manner when compared to face to face learning.

Table 6: In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?

ItemIn your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
	Easy in getting knowledge	lack of concentration
	It is very important for me	lack of data
	One can easily copy down what is written, than face to face, because sometimes to see on the board clearly is difficult.	low battery
	It helps students to engaged in school affairs rather than playing games or unnecessary chats	lack of good network
		Not all students have smart phones.
		The lecture is fast

Table 6 indicated that the advantages of a virtual class were easy in getting knowledge, easy in copying down what was written than face to face because sometimes to see on the board clearly is difficult, helping students to engage in school affairs rather than playing games or unnecessary chats, while the disadvantages were lack of concentration, lack of data subscription, network difficulty, not all students had smart phones, the lecture was fast.

Research Question 2 Concerning Learning: Students' Opinion on the Role of Virtual Learning in Enhancing Communication Skills

Table 7: Virtual classes enhance comfort and engagement in dialogue.

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Agree	20	68.97%
Disagree	9	31.03%
Total	29	

Table 7 showed that majority of the students having 68.97% agreed that virtual classes enhanced comfort and engagement in the dialogue.

develop the four communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) through virtual classes?

Table 8: Do you believe that it is possible to

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Agree	18	64.29%
Disagree	10	35.71%
Total	28	

Table 8 showed it was believed by the majority of the students (64.29%) that the four communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) could be developed through virtual classes.

Table 9: Based on your experience, do virtual classes play a significant role in enhancing communication skills?

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Agree	18	62.07%
Disagree	11	37.93%
Total	29	

Table 9 showed that virtual classes played a significant role in enhancing students' communication skills as responded by majority of the students (62.07%).

Table 10: From your experience in learning, how does this type of class enhance communication skills?

Table 6: In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?

From your experience in learning, how does this type of class enhance communication skills?	Sharing of experience
	Writing
	It only helps in getting information and complete notes
	Listening and non verbal communication
	In terms of Grammar
	It enhances all the communication skill because a lecturer will write or send voice note and we will be reading
	Each and every person is trying in communication
	Low communication
	Speaking
	It enhances communication skills by allowing the learners and instructors around the world to participate in live classes to collaborate and interact

Table 10 indicted virtual class enhanced students' communication skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing) in terms of reading, speaking and writing, as the students could be good in fast reading and writing.

Level 1: Teachers' Views on Virtual Teaching

Table 11: Do you prefer using a virtual class in your teaching rather than a face-to-face classroom setting?

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Agree	3	27.27%
Disagree	8	72.73%
Total	11	

Table11indicated that most of the teachers with 72.73% preferred face to face teaching that virtual.

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Table 12: What kind of attitudes do you have towards virtual classes?

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Agree	7	63.64%
Disagree	4	36.36%
Total	11	

Table 12 showed that most of the teachers having 63.54% had positive attitudes towards virtual teaching.

Table 13: Do you think that using a virtual class can cause difficulties or problems that may handicap your teaching process?

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Agree	6	54.55%
Disagree	5	45.45%
Total	11	

Table 13 indicated that majority of the teachers (54.55%) were with the views that virtual class could cause difficulties that might handicap their teaching process.

Table 14: If agreed, list the major difficulties you have encountered?

If agreed, list the major difficulties you have encountered?	
	Most of the students will easily forget what they did
	You cannot assess students attention towards the class
	You will not know if they understand the concept
	They cannot freely ask question
	The only difficulty is that as a clinical instructor, the teaching is based on practical aspect, therefore it requires face to face class
	Unavailability of internet
	The instrument of communication
	Time consuming
	Level of explanation

Table 14 indicated that the major difficulties that many teachers encountered are network problem, data subscription as it is too cost, no physical demonstration especially when it comes to practical aspect, time consuming as there was network failure, only few students participate as some did not have laptops, Android phones, and their place of residence

had no internet network etc.

Table 15: Rate your opinion of the statement "Virtual classes facilitate the teaching process in the same manner when compared to face-to-face classes."

Answer Choices	**Responses**	Percentage
Positive	4	36.36%
Negative	7	63.64%
Total	11	

Table 15 indicated that the majority of the responses of the teachers with 63.64% disagreed that Virtual classes facilitate the teaching process in the same manner when compared to face to face classes.

Table 16: In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?

In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of a virtual class?	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
	It can easily understand	It can be easily forgotten
	Easy and convenient	Poor student-teacher relationship
	It enhance digital learning for both the teachers and students	You cannot identify slow learner
	Students from all geographical region have access to learn	The main disadvantage of virtual class is inaccessibility to the
	Student learn at the comfort for their environment	Student may allow a third-party to do task
	It enhances teaching at convenient time	There may be network failure
	It makes teaching more easier	It requires a skillful personnel
	Assess any moment	There may be use of wrong method or material

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	Teaching will be mobile	It is required mobile phone (Android)
	Facilitate teaching	Electrical failure/interruption
	Improve spelling	Network failure
	It doesn't the slow learners	Make students to be lazy
	Improve communication skills, collaborations, and time management	Internet problem
	Arrangement of class anywhere anytime	Time consuming
		Availability of the material
		It doesn't increase the students vocabulary
		Lack of control over students
		Lack of computers and internet
		Limitation of real time communication

Table 16 indicated that the advantages of a virtual class were accessing the class from anywhere, teaching at the comfort for their environment, easy in teaching, improving spelling, time management, enhancing digital learning for both the teachers and students, while the disadvantages were lack of concentration, lack of data subscription, network difficulty, not all students had smart phones, the lecture was fast, lack of laptops, electrical interruption, not identifying the real good students as many do not participate as a result of poor network or lack of means.ould be good in fast reading and writing.

Level 2: Teachers' Opinion on the Role of Virtual Teaching in Enhancing Communication Skills

Table 17: Virtual classes enhance comfort and engagement in dialogue.

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Positive	10	90.91%
Negative	1	9.09%
Total	11	

Table 17 indicated that the majority of the teachers having 68.97% agreed that virtual classes enhanced comfort and engagement in the dialogue.

Table 18: Do you believe that it is possible to develop the four communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) through virtual classes?

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Positive	2	18.18%
Negative	9	81.82%
Total	11	

Table 18 showed that the majority of the teachers were with the view that the four communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) could be developed through virtual classes.

Table 19: Based on your experience, do virtual classes play a significant role in enhancing communication skills?

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Positive	7	63.64%
Negative	4	36.36%
Total	11	

Table 19 indicated that virtual classes played a significant role in enhancing teachers' communication skills as responded by most of the teachers (63.64%).

Table 20: From your experience in teaching, how does this type of class enhance communication skills?

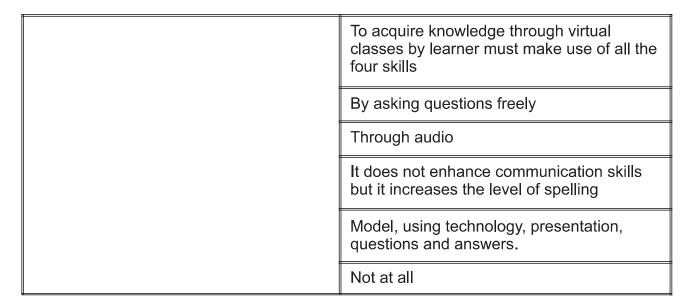| From your experience in teaching, how does this type of class enhance communication skills?	Mby listening
	The students can communicate without fear of embarrassment by other students
	No practical teaching
	The information passed across both teachers and students brings about confident in the student to participate more thereby increasing communication skills

	To acquire knowledge through virtual classes by learner must make use of all the four skills
	By asking questions freely
	Through audio
	It does not enhance communication skills but it increases the level of spelling
	Model, using technology, presentation, questions and answers.
	Not at all

Table 20 indicated that virtual classes enhanced communication skills as responded by some of the teachers especially in term of speaking confidently without fear of eyes.

Discussion

This study focused on the Use of Virtual Learning in Improving Communication skills by answering the research questions "What are the Teachers' and Students' Views on Virtual Learning, as well as their opinions on the Role of Virtual Learning in Enhancing Communication Skills?"

It was found in the work that Students and Teachers prefer face to face learning than virtual which agreed with the works of Khalawi & Halabi, (2020) and Mosquera, (2017), and also the Teachers and students had positive attitudes towards virtual learning which is in line with the studies of Khalawi & Halabi, (2020), Al-Qahtani, (2019), but it only agreed with the works of Hamouda (2020), Alves, Miranda & Morais, (2017) in students as their works were based on students without teachers. Furthermore, the result showed that virtual learning causes difficulties that may handicap teaching and learning processes which concurred with the finding of Mosquera, (2017) in terms of learning only; and it was found also that virtual class facilitated learning process in the same manner when compared to face to face learning, but it did not facilitate in teaching. Additionally, it improved academic performance (communication skills) which is in line with the work of Akpan, Etim & Ogechi, (2016) as they said it enhanced academic performance, and enhanced digital learning as the advantages. The major difficulties that teachers and students encountered virtually were network problem, unfamiliarity with e-learning, time consuming because of network failure.

In addition, some findings in relation to Teachers' and Students' Opinion on the Role of Virtual Learning in Enhancing Communication Skills, revealed that Virtual classes enhanced comfort and engagement in teaching and learning; developed Communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in teaching and learning; played a significant role in enhancing teachers' and students' communication skills, and also enhanced communication skills in teaching and learning (in terms of reading, speaking and writing) which accorded with Al-Qahtani, (2019) and Akpan, Etim & Ogechi, (2016) as

they said it enhanced academic performance.
Conclusion

In this study, the researcher targeted students' and teachers' Perspectives on the use of virtual learning in improving communication skills, and it was found based on the teachers' and students' views on virtual teaching and learning that teachers and students preferred face to face learning than virtual; had positive attitudes towards virtual learning; virtual learning caused difficulties that might handicap teaching and learning processes as a result of network problem, too cost of data subscription, unfamiliarity with the system, time consuming because of network failure etc; Virtual class facilitates learning process in the same manner when compared to face to face learning, but it does not facilitate in teaching. Furthermore, based on the teachers' and students' opinion on the role of virtual teaching and learning in enhancing communication skills, teachers and students enhanced comfort and engagement in teaching and learning; virtual classes developed Communication skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in teaching and learning, and played a significant role in enhancing teachers' and students' communication skills. Lastly, it was recommended that managements of an institution should be having e-learning training to their teachers and students so that they should be well equipped in the field, and also to provide a well necessary furnished e-learning gadgets in improving the system

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