A Survey on students' perception on the effectiveness of online learning in communicative english classes among PKT students

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

The pandemic Covid19 has caused conventional system of education which is focusing on physical classroom and face to face interaction between educators and students to alternately change into virtual learning process. The study was conducted to review on the students' perception of the effectiveness of online learning in Communicative English class among Polytechnic Kuala Terengganu students. A set of questionnaires was used as a data collection tool to 61 respondents. The sampling was Electrical and Electronics Engineering students who took Communicative English Courses. The data was analysed using SPSS version 20.0. The findings revealed that most of the respondents agreed on the effectiveness of online learning in Communicative English Classes, with the mean value 3.2. The mean score for lecturer-student engagement, students' concentration and motivation and online assessments were interpreted at medium high level. It concluded that students were having good perception on the effectiveness of online Communicative English class implementation. These findings are significant as to support the lecturers and institution in designing more applicable online teaching and learning approaches. However, it is recommended for further researches in the same area involving more sample of respondents, including the other English courses.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced uncertainty into major aspects of national and global society, including the education sector. Many problems have been highlighted by all parties about this issue, be it via official and unofficial platforms, particularly about how it is affecting students' mastery and achievement in academic. The struggles faced by students, from school until tertiary level when the sudden alteration of most instruction to an online platform due to this pandemic, have brought a debatable question on how students' acceptance and readiness to face the changes in current teaching and learning process. In many nations, face-to-face instruction is being discontinued, leaving e-learning as the only method for teachers and students to interact (Mariam, A. 2021)

Having the COVID-19 pandemic around, students have to adapt themselves in learning English and doing online communicative activities. With teaching and learning taking place remotely and on digital platforms,

online learning has become a new route for the learning process (Kamisah et.al., 2020). According to Ariffin et.al. (2020) online learning is the greatest way to ensure that students' learning is not disrupted during this Covid-19 era. Students, in particular, must adjust to online learning, which is an alternative pedagogy for the era of technological progress and communication (Pusvyta S., 2015).

The changes have also altered the approaches used by lecturers in Communicative English courses to be more technological friendly. The Communicative English courses which its goal is to improve students' communicative competence in a wide range of social interactions and real-life scenarios (Abdullah & Majid, 2013), have to undergo conditions to be in line with technology as well as providing authentic environment of communication. With the curriculum emphasis is on communicative assessments, the lecturers need to amend the teaching strategies to ensure it would be easily accessible for the students without neglecting its core objectives. Since the virtual learning is widely implemented, students have experienced a variety of challenges, from the technological competencies and devices to the understanding on the subject taught in an online class. This would create the question whether the students could adapt themselves with the new approach of communicative courses, but as stated by Basar et.al (2020) the goal to fully employ technology will unquestionably help to effective and meaningful learning if students have a positive attitude, are believed to have behavioural control, and are in supportive environments. Responding to this issue, this paper evaluates the students' perception on the effectiveness of online learning in Communicative English classroom.

Method

The study has been carried out using quantitative method involving 61 respondents who enrolled for Communicative English courses at Politeknik Kuala Terengganu. They were taking Communicative English 1, Communicative English 2 and Communicative English 3 courses respectively. A set of questionnaire was developed consisting of 2 sections. The first part comprises demographic factors of the students. The next section consists of three constructs. Construct A was to investigate the lecturer-students' engagement in online classroom from students' perspective. Construct B was to identify students' concentration and motivation in online Communicative English classes. The aim of construct C was to determine students' perception on the implementation of online assessments. The respondents were required to rate 15 statements according to 4 levels of Likert-Scale; 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-agree and 4-strongly agree. The Cronbach alpha method was utilised to measure the questionnaire's index reliability. A 10-sample pilot study was conducted to verify the questionnaire's reliability, which was determined to be 0.929. The attained value shows that the questionnaire is reliable. The data was analysed descriptively using mean and standard deviation. The interpretations of mean scores are based on Table 1 below.

Table 1 <Mean Interpretation (Source: Nunnally & Berstein, 1994)>

Mean Scale	Level
4.00 – 5.00	High
3.01 – 4.00	Medium High
2.01 – 3.00	Medium Low
1.00 – 2.00	Low

Results and Discussion

Table 2 provides a summary of demographic factors of the respondents. A total of 61 respondents took part in the research. Male students made up 77% of the respondents, while the 23% was the female students. 62.3% of the respondents were from Electrical and Electronics Engineering Course (DEE) while 37.7% were Electrical and Electronics Engineering (Communication) (DEP) students. The highest percentage came from semester 4 students with 62.2%, followed by semester 3 students with 23% and 14.8% belonged to semester 1 students.

Table 2 <Demographic Factors>

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	47	77.0
Female	14	23.0
Total	61	100.0
Electrical & Electronics Engineering (DEE)	38	62.3
Electrical & Electronics Engineering (Communication) (DEP	23	37.7
Total	61	100.0
Semester 1	9	14.8
Semester 3	14	23.0
Semester 4	38	62.2
Total	61	100.0

Table 3 shows mean scores on perception of lecturer-students engagement in online Communicative English classes.

Table 3 <Lecturer-Student Engagement>

No	Item	N=61		
		Means	SD	Interpretation
A1.	I like to be in online language classroom.	3.16	.63	Medium High
A2.	I always respond to the questions asked by my lecturer during online class.	3.20	.51	Medium High
A3.	I am always ready to participate in any activities conducted during online class.	2.98	.46	Medium Low
A4.	My lecturer always responds to students' feedback during online class.	3.51	.59	Medium High
A5.	My lecturer always immediately corrects students' mistakes during online class.	3.48	.56	Medium High

The highest mean score was for item A5 with the value 3.48. The lowest mean score, interpreted as medium low was for the item, A3 with 2.98. In overall, Construct A was interpreted as having medium high mean score with the average mean value of 3.27. It shows that students were comfortable as they know the lecturer was there even though in virtual mode. There was two-way communication between students and lecturer and making them involved in activities done during the online classes. It is important for students to feel the presence of their lecturer as online classes somehow can cause students to become passive learners as students often feel disconnected from their lecturers, as well as their peers (Vavasseur et al., 2020).

Table 4 indicates mean scores on perception of students' motivation and concentration in online Communicative English classes.

Table 4 <Students' Motivation and Concentration>

No	Item	N=61		
		Means	SD	Interpretation
B1.	I am always motivated to join online Communicative English class.	3.23	.56	Medium High
B2.	I can pay full attention towards teaching and learning process during online class.	3.15	.57	Medium High
B3.	I have no problem to understand what is being taught in online class.	3.13	.61	Medium High
B4.	I am always encouraged by my lecturer to participate in activities during online class.	3.26	.51	Medium High
B5.	I am always encouraged by my lecturer to communicate in English during online activities.	3.31	.53	Medium High

All of the items in B2 construct were analysed at medium high level of interpretation. The highest mean score 3.31 shown by item B5 which students agreed on their lecturers always encouraged them to use English in their communication during online class activities. The lowest mean score was 3.13 for the item B3, where they were asked about whether having problem to understand the lesson taught in online class. The overall interpretation shows that students are motivated to go through online classroom and the role played by the lecturer enhanced their focus towards the lesson, as Mese, E. & Sevilan, C. (2021) had stated that student motivation and satisfying classroom experiences interact dynamically in online settings. Campbell and Sarac (2018) suggested in order to increase students' motivation and improve their grasp of the material, technology is being incorporated into language learning at an increasing rate.

Table 5 reveals the mean score on perception of the assessments implemented during online communicative class.

Table 5 <Assessments>

No	Item	N=61		
		Means	SD	Interpretation
C1.	I have no difficulty to understand the course assessments conducted in online classroom.	3.20	.60	Medium High
C2.	I think all assessments for Communicative English courses are suitable to be done online.	3.21	.52	Medium High
C3.	I prefer to do online assessment (e.g: oral presentation) rather than doing it in physical class.	3.16	.66	Medium High
C4.	I feel more comfortable and confident with online assessments.	3.20	.57	Medium High
C5.	I am satisfied with my performance in all assessments done during online class.	3.15	.51	Medium High

The highest mean score 3.21 shown by item C2 which students approved that all of the assessments for communicative English courses are suitable to be done online. The lowest mean score was 3.13 for the item C5, where students claimed that they were satisfied with the performance in all assessments done during online class. Having online assessments allow students the option to sit for the exam at a location of their

choice. The result aligned with the statement proposed by Baleni (2015); one advantage for students was the convenience of taking exams online from any location. This reduces the stress of the students.

Conclusions

In conclusion, online learning has been a significant platform for the students to continue receiving knowledge despite of the current issue that limits their access to physical classroom. Even though it has its own disadvantages, the opportunities offered by virtual learning can be exploited by the educators in order for learning process to still happen. The presence and role of the educator still can be felt, by engaging more interaction and bonding as it happened in the normal classroom. Thus, it can increase students' motivation and concentration towards the lesson. The effective pedagogical methods used also will help the students to be more open with virtual learning and it could lead them to readiness and preparedness when they are assessed virtually for the assessments. In the end, it leads to the success of the whole process of online learning.

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