



# REVISTA KRONOS

## Do Online Classes Really Contribute to Support EFL Learning? Teachers' Perspectives

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**ABSTRACT** Online classes or virtual classes have become an essential aspect of modern education and have changed the perspective of language learning, especially in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). This study addresses the following question: Do online classes really support the learning of English as a foreign language? As virtual classrooms become more popular for both learners and educators, the effectiveness of the classes has shown some gaps in the teaching-learning process. In this regard, the main objective of this study is to investigate teachers' perspectives on the success of online teaching in relation to EFL learning. Therefore, this study is concerned with identifying the strengths and challenges that teachers perceive in virtual spaces. The methodology used for the research involves a mixed method with a questionnaire addressed to 6 teachers, 4 work in a public school and 2 in primary education, both located in the south of Quito, thus, the structured questionnaire will allow to clearly know the teachers' views on the impact of virtual platforms and corroborate their perspective with the results of the study. The outcomes highlight the adaptability of online classes for EFL teaching and e-learning as a valid present and future option. Furthermore, this study will provide relevant information on how to correct and improve teaching in virtual environments. However, concerns about possible loss of student engagement have emerged as key issues.

**KEYWORDS** Learning, teachers, online classrooms, perspectives.

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### ¿Las clases en línea realmente contribuyen a apoyar el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera? Perspectivas de los profesores

**RESUMEN** Las clases en línea o clases virtuales se han convertido en un aspecto esencial de la educación moderna y han cambiado la perspectiva del aprendizaje de idiomas, especialmente en el contexto del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Este estudio aborda la siguiente pregunta: ¿Sirven realmente las clases en línea de apoyo al aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera? A medida que las aulas virtuales se hacen más populares, tanto para los alumnos como para los educadores, la eficacia de las clases ha mostrado algunos vacíos en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. En este sentido, el objetivo principal de este estudio es investigar las perspectivas de los profesores sobre la eficacia de la enseñanza en línea en relación con el aprendizaje de EFL. Por ello, este estudio se ocupa de identificar los puntos fuertes y los retos que los profesores perciben en los espacios virtuales. La metodología utilizada para la investigación involucra un método mixto con un cuestionario dirigido a seis docentes, cuatro laboran en un colegio fiscal y dos en educación primaria, los dos ubicado en el sur de Quito. El cuestionario estructurado permitirá conocer claramente los puntos de vista de los docentes sobre el impacto de las plataformas virtuales y corroborar su perspectiva con los resultados del estudio. Los resultados destacan la adaptabilidad de las clases en línea para la enseñanza de EFL y aprendizaje virtual como una opción válida presente y futura. Además, este estudio contribuirá con información relevante sobre cómo corregir y mejorar la enseñanza en entornos virtuales. Sin embargo, la preocupación por la posible pérdida de compromiso de los estudiantes ha surgido como cuestiones clave.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** Aprendizaje, docentes, clases en línea, perspectivas.

## INTRODUCTION

These days, the educational process has been affected due to several social and health conditions such as: income inequality, child labor, migration and displacement, malnutrition and healthcare access. In this regard, significant changes with the integration of online instruction have been viewed as a powerful alternative to keep going ahead. This change has forced students and educators to move from the conventional classroom into a more dialect and dynamic teaching – learning process. This research tries to identify relevant perspectives, showing that online classes without a doubt play an urgent part in different levels of English (EFL) instruction, especially as seen by teachers. In this concern, Educators are considered as the builders of the learning experience, wield significant influence in shaping the knowledge acquisition of students. As a result, understanding their perspectives on the efficacy of online platforms is imperative for improving the evolving environment of language education.

Against the background of innovative headways, the coming of online instruction has displayed both advantages and disadvantages that affect heavily the teaching learning process, about support the improvement of the main language skills. The remarkable possibilities offered by virtual learning have become a central consideration, prompting educators to rethink their methods. As the growing demand for English language proficiency continues to rise in schools, high schools and higher education, the effectiveness of online classes in facilitating language acquisition becomes questionable.

This study explores the doubts and perspectives of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors, dissecting their views on the role of virtual classrooms in supporting language learning. With a clear and intentional objective, the research aims to comprehensively investigate the diverse viewpoints of EFL teachers regarding the impact of online teaching on language learning. Additionally, in the development of this research, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the ever-evolving scenery of language education on virtual spaces. Through an analysis of teachers' experiences, challenges, and recognized benefits, the research intends to clarify the intricacies of language learning within the online realm. In this concern, Nambiar (2020) asserts that immediate feedback and responding to individual questions is a disadvantage that online classes bring out.

In relation to the population, the participants in this study were asked to fill in the survey and some were fearful of the survey or too busy and preferred not to fill it out. That is why this research is aimed at primary and secondary education.

The implications of understanding teachers' viewpoints in online EFL teaching extend beyond refining teaching methods. They serve as a foundational basis for policy decisions and contribute to shaping the long-term direction of language learning. The findings of this study, provide a deep understanding of the role of online classes in supporting EFL learning, they also aim to understand educators' perspectives, and report authorities about the advantages and disadvantages of working with the use of technology in virtual environments. In addition, the outcomes will contribute to making educators aware of the drawbacks and limitations that online classes bring to correct mistakes and strengthen virtual education.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### ONLINE CLASSES

According to Barrett (2010), online classes have changed dramatically the way students acquire new knowledge, and it changes depending on the place where they are located, since the access to technology has a fundamental role in this modality and in every place where education takes place. In addition, Junus et al. (2021) assert that various institutions were prepared to work in a virtual way and, on the contrary, some learners were not ready for this transition because teachers and students need some adaptation to technology and modern platforms. In this way, Russell (2020) claims that this rapid move has generated anxiety and high levels of stress as much in students as in educators, since the number of students is the main factor that affects the correct process of language acquisition. The author emphasizes that it became popular during the pandemic. However, it is important to recall that there are other reasons for moving from traditional classrooms to online or blended classes.

Similarly, Camargo et al. (2020) agree that COVID 19 brought out a variety of new perspectives about online education. From a similar perspective, Korkmaz and Toraman (2020) argue that teachers had to get adapted to different challenges where lack of training was the main barrier to deal with online classes. Moreover, Hoi et al. (2021) coincide that online learning provides a couple of advantages that students and teachers do not have the opportunity to use in traditional classrooms, these benefits highlight the use of modern methodologies and gamification tools.

In another research, Castro and Tumibay (2021) argue that the correct execution of online educational practices can provide meaningful insights, and the results could be satisfactory; however, if there is some lack of experience and teachers are not able to manage online classrooms, the outcomes could also be disappointing.

### ONLINE CLASSES FOR EFL

Online classes have used the benefits of technology to promote language skills. However, not all learners have this opportunity. In this concern, Rachmah (2020) observed that learners prefer to attend face to face classes due to interaction and enjoyment. Moreover, Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) coincide that there are plenty of technological resources to work online with EFL students; nevertheless, the research highlight that managing online learning properly can meet challenges due to insufficient preparation and weak planning strategies. On the other hand, Madi Albogami (2022) agrees that students are able to develop their language skills while working from home, the author recalls that the learners prefer online classes because they feel engaged and more concentrated, the study does not mention teachers' perspectives. From another point of view, Taghizade and Amirkhani (2022) indicate that pre-service teachers found some challenges during online classes and emphasize that the teacher experience is indispensable to improve the learners' language skills.

From the words of the researchers, Derakhshan et al. (2021) conclude that monotony, lack of active participation and demotivation cause students to get bored easily and, in consequence, their language learning does not improve. From a similar perspective, Alolaywi (2021) agrees that online classes bring out some advantages such as the imple-

mentation of modern strategies and the use of technology in class. However, monitoring and engagement are drawbacks that become easier to manage in traditional EFL classes.

### ADVANTAGES OF ONLINE CLASSES

Thanks to technology it is assumed that there are plenty of advantages when teachers and students work using various environments. In this sense, Dumford and Miller (2018) agree that engagement is the principal factor that makes online education attractive. From another point of view, Means et al. (2013) mention online classes vs traditional instruction; however, the authors recall that blended learning is what students desire, since the pro activity and interaction is found in this hybrid learning environment, which integrates the benefits of both in-person and digital learning experiences. Furthermore, Pandey et al. (2021) list various tools that contribute positively to engage students in online activities, in this sense, e-learning brings out technological resources that traditional classes do not offer to improve EFL skills.

### CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS ON ONLINE CLASSES

Teachers and students have taken advantage of online classes; however, not everything is as easy as it seems, since there are some drawbacks that have affected EFL acquisition and skills development. In this concern, Baticulon et al (2021) claim that technological barriers are the most popular drawbacks that teachers and students have to face, since poor internet connection does not allow the educative community to enhance their language skills; in addition, lack of teachers' experience to manage adequately groups have affected the development of online learning.

From a similar perspective, Khan et al. (2021) refers to online classes as a negative experience for students who had to face isolation, lack of teamwork, outdoor activities and deficient communicational skills.

At this point, it is necessary to recall that most researchers have focused their objectives on students' perspectives. In similar Yusuf and Ahmad (2020) remark that the main challenge that learners and educators had to overcome and deal with, is when poor internet connection takes place, and communication does not allow a positive and engaging interaction.

### TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT VIRTUAL LEARNING

There is very limited material that reflects on teachers' point of views about online classes. Nevertheless, Murphy and Rodríguez-Manzanares (2009) focused their study on motivation, and claim that teachers agreed that motivating learners is fundamental to obtain positive learning results. On the other hand, Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2021) assert that having good internet connectivity is the basis to support the enhancement of English language, since teachers can use a variety of technological tools and virtual platforms. In addition, Zamora-Antuñano et al. (2021) agree that teachers' perception about virtual learning varies depending on the age and include that teachers who are older than 31 years old have more problems with platforms and their perceptions are more negative.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate and analyze deeply the perspectives of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding the contribution of online classes to language learning. In addition, the population consists of six experienced EFL teachers who work in public educational institutions located at the south of Quito whose ages rank between 30 to 55, they also have worked in both scenarios, face to face and online teaching.

**Data Collection:** A structured questionnaire was administered to the 6 selected EFL teachers. The questionnaire encompassed a range of 10 questions addressing the educator's perceptions, experiences, challenges, and perceived benefits or drawbacks of online EFL teaching. Moreover, the 10 questions with the support of a Likert scale (adverbs of frequency) were designed to elicit detailed responses that can offer meaningful insights.

**Design:** The questionnaire consists of 10 multiple choice questions that would facilitate quantitative and qualitative analysis, which can explain the educators' viewpoints. Moreover, the survey also covers areas such as teaching strategies, student engagement, technological challenges, and overall effectiveness of online EFL instruction.

**Data Analysis:** Quantitative and qualitative Analysis: The questionnaire responses were subjected to statistical analysis to quantify teachers' points of views (percentages) on specific aspects of online EFL instruction. This analysis provided numerical insights that were used to interpret the outcomes.

**Ethical Considerations:** This research adheres to ethical guidelines, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity for participants and their answers.

## RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In relation to the bibliographic review, it is noticed that researchers have dedicated their work to do research online classes and their impact on students. However, there is not much evidence about how teachers feel and what they think on EFL online skills improvement. That is why a survey and an analysis that contains meaningful information from their perspectives took place (see Table 1).

Regarding the first question that asks the teachers about the frequency they consider their students participate actively in online class discussions, 3 teachers that are represented by 50% answer that sometimes, while 2 teachers that represent 33,33% answered that never and only 1 teacher that represents 16,67% responded often. In this sense, most teachers with the frequency of sometimes agreed that their students participate actively in classes. It is evident that most of the teachers consider that the students' participation needs to be improved. Additionally, the qualitative insights provide a deeper understanding of the underlying challenges and potential strategies to enhance engagement. Technical difficulties, lack of motivation, and the need for interactive teaching methods can be considered as key factors that need to be addressed to improve student participation in online class discussions.

In relation to the second question, that asks teachers if they are able to monitor everyone while sharing their screen, 5 educators represented by 83,33% responded that never, and only 1 teacher represented by 16,67% said that sometimes. In this concern, it has been proved that pedagogues cannot monitor all learners while sharing their screen because not all the students appear in the screen and educators waste time when they are checking each individual student. In this sense, while quantitative data indicates that most teachers are unable to monitor all students while sharing their screen, the qualitative

**Table 1.** Efficacy of Online Classes - Teacher's Perspective

QUESTION	ALWAYS	USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
How often do you consider students participate actively in online class discussions?	0	0	1	3	2
Are you able to monitor everyone while sharing your screen?	0	0	0	1	5
How often does poor internet connection affect your online classes?	0	4	2	0	0
How frequently do the students upload their task on time?	0	2	1	1	2
In your opinion, how often are students motivated to complete online assignments on time?	1	5	0	0	0
How often do you incorporate engaging and interactive elements into your online class content?	1	4	1	0	0
How frequently do students ask questions to improve their language skills?	0	0	0	3	3
Have you received any training about technological tools and modern methodologies?	0	0	0	0	6
Have you noticed oral communication improvement while teaching online?	0	0	0	1	5
Have you experienced bad behavior or inappropriate comments during online classes?	0	2	2	2	0

outcomes provide a deeper understanding of the challenges involved. As it is seen, teachers face significant difficulties in maintaining student engagement and managing classroom behavior due to technical limitations. In this concern, providing additional resources, such as dual monitors, and exploring alternative teaching methods could help minimize the need for screen sharing.

According to question 3 that refers to poor internet connection and online classes, 4 teachers that are represented by 66,67% answered that students usually have problems with internet connection, while 2 teachers that mean 33,33% use the frequency of often in their responses. At this point, poor internet connection in fact, affects virtual classes. It is also necessary to recall that the survey was applied to teachers who work in public schools and the students do not have good connectivity all the time. In this regard, while quantitative data indicates that a significant majority of teachers report frequent issues with students' internet connectivity, which affects the quality of virtual classes, the qualitative feedback further highlights the extensive effects of these connectivity issues including disruptions to learning, increased frustration and disengagement among students. As a consequence, it's essential to consider these challenges, especially since the survey was conducted with teachers from public schools where students might not have reliable internet access. Addressing these connectivity issues is fundamental for improving the effectiveness of online education.

Regarding question number 4 that asks teachers about the frequency their students upload their tasks on time, two teachers represented by 33,33% responded that usually, while 2 other teachers mentioned that never, 1 teacher answered that often and 1 teacher responded that sometimes. In this concern, the lack of punctuality on the delivery of tasks is also a disadvantage that affects language improvement. It is essential to remark that, while the quantitative data reveals varied frequencies of on-time task submissions, the qualitative outcomes highlight the underlying challenges and effective strategies. In this concern. Problems such as poor time management, technical difficulties, and lack of motivation are significant barriers. Resolving these issues is important to improve punctuality in task submissions and, consequently, enhance language learning outcomes.

Regarding question number 5 that asks teachers about the frequency their students are motivated to complete online assignments on time. 5 teachers represented by 83,33% responded that the learners are usually motivated, while 1 teacher represented by 16,67% answered that his students are always motivated. However, the previous question demonstrates that motivation is not working as desired because students do not worry about uploading their tasks on time. It is necessary to look for other alternatives. As it is analyzed, while the quantitative data indicates that most teachers believe their students are usually motivated to complete online assignments, the qualitative insights reveal that motivation alone does not guarantee timely submission of tasks. In this sense, taking care of fundamental problems like distractions, lack of structure, and insufficient organizational skills is essential for improving the problem. Besides exploring alternative strategies and support systems can help students to improve their motivation and get better learning results.

Concerning question number 6 that asks teachers about how often they incorporate engaging and interactive elements into their online class content, 4 teachers represented by 66,67% responded with usually, while 1 teacher mentioned that he always incorporates attractive engaging activities, 1 teacher mentioned that engaging and interactive elements are often used in online classes. Once again, there are some contradictory variables, although teachers try to improve their classes in a dynamic way, the results are discouraging. On the other hand, the existence of conflicting answers highlights how difficult it is to apply engaging tactics consistently throughout online courses. Even while educators are working hard to improve their teaching strategies, the existence of opposing viewpoints raises the possibility of difficulties or discrepancies in how these efforts are carried out. It is highlighted that teachers aiming for unified and effective online teaching practices may become discouraged because of these disparities in approaches.

In relation to question number 7 that asks teachers about the frequency their students ask questions to improve their language skills, 3 educators that represent the 50% responded that sometimes, while 3 teachers that represent the other 50% answer that their students

never ask questions. In this sense, it is necessary to design activities that encourage students to be curious about the topic and promote their participation in virtual learning. In this regard, while the quantitative data indicates a split in the frequency of student questions, the qualitative insights highlight the essential factors influencing students' participation in virtual learning. Considering these factors, designing activities carefully and cultivating a supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere are crucial measures to stimulate students to ask questions and participate actively in enhancing their language skills.

According to question number 8 that asks teachers if they have received training about technological tools and modern methodologies, the total population that represents 100% responded that they have never received training to improve their technological skills. It is unfortunate that nobody worries about this important step that has become very common and a challenge these days. In this regard, it is evident that the absence of training in technological tools and modern methodologies is a significant barrier to improving EFL skills. It is necessary to add that teachers recognize the importance of incorporating technology into their teaching practices but lack the necessary support and guidance to do so effectively. Moreover, this data highlights the urgent need for educational institutions to prioritize teacher training programs that equip educators with the skills and knowledge to navigate the digital learning landscape successfully.

Regarding question number 9 that refers to oral communication improvement in online classes, 5 teachers that represent the 83,33% responded that they did not notice any oral communication improvement, while 1 teacher represented by 16,67% mentioned that sometimes. As it is evident, oral communication requires some extra dedication and a variety of strategies to get improved, teachers also need to be aware about its importance and include it in their plans, specific activities and strategies that contribute to enhance the communicative competence. The qualitative feedback from teachers provides insights into the challenges and potential strategies for enhancing oral communication skills in online classes. In light of these insights, it is evident that improving oral communication in online classes requires extra dedication and a variety of strategies. In this sense, teachers need to be aware of the importance of oral communication skills and include them in their lesson plans. Moreover, specific activities and strategies that contribute to enhancing communicative competence, such as interactive discussions, collaborative projects, and simulated conversations, are essential for fostering oral communication skills in virtual learning environments.

According to question number 10 that requires teachers if they have experienced bad behavior or inappropriate comments during online classes, 2 teachers represented by 33,33% responded that usually, other 2 teachers represented by 33,33% included in their answers that often and finally the other 2 teachers (33,33%) answered that they sometimes have experienced students' bad behavior in their virtual classes. It is important to try to manage the class properly, since students take advantage of online classes and they sometimes cannot be recognized to show disrespect. That is why educators should prepare plenty of activities that attract the students' attention and foster their language skills. Furthermore, the qualitative outcomes highlight the importance of effective classroom management strategies and engaging activities in addressing and minimizing bad behavior in online classes. In this sense, teachers face unique challenges in managing student behavior in the virtual environment, but with thoughtful planning and proactive measures, they can create a positive and conducive learning atmosphere that enhances students' language skills development.

As it is observable, the results of most of the answers show negative outcomes that do not support the English Language Skills enhancement. Based on this, the main drawback for the language improvement is lack of teachers' preparation (training, planning, modern methodologies, attractive strategies) and, of course the need to encourage students to apply



their knowledge and participate actively in virtual classes. In this concern, Chandra (2021) claims that virtual motivation is a key concept that should be implemented in online lessons, since students respond and participate in a better way when they are fully motivated and feel comfortable with virtual classes. In addition, Sumalinog (2022) asserts that technological issues and demotivation have become a main concern because poor connectivity and lack of devices do not contribute to encourage students in their learning enhancement.

It is difficult to monitor and control what all the students are doing, since the teacher is working and explaining a specific topic (future with be going to). Furthermore, the screen only shows 4 panels, and the other students are not viewed.

## CONCLUSIONS

The discouraging outcomes reveal the urgent need for comprehensive teacher training programs, in this sense, educators must research effective teaching strategies that engage students and foster genuine interest in learning.

The lack of student interest highlights the significance of fostering a stimulating learning environment. Incorporating interactive activities, real-world applications, and accessible multimedia resources that help to enhance student engagement and motivation.

The negative results also require some curriculum reforms that align with students' interests, needs, and learning styles, since a flexible and adaptable curriculum can promote relevance and authenticity in the language skills application. It is essential to highlight that the number of English hours in public schools decreased the present school year (2023-2024) because last year English teachers had 5 working hours to develop and improve EFL skills, and unfortunately, this school year there are only 3 hours to work in the English area.

Educators should explore alternative teaching approaches, such as project-based learning, experiential learning, and flipped classrooms, to activate their students' interest and promote active participation in the learning process.

There are some works related to students' perceptions, however, there is not enough research about teachers' perceptions, and it is a drawback in education, since researchers have not worried much about what teachers think and how they feel with this teaching modality. New research about this topic should take place.

## CONTRIBUCIÓN DE LOS AUTORES

Rogger Mauricio Silva Herrera: análisis formal, investigación, metodología, visualización.

## ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The author states that there are no ethical implications.

### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no financial and non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work presented.

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