Investigating the Effectiveness of Synchronous E-Learning Tools on Developing EFL Learners' Language Communication Skills Among the Hashemite University Students

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Abstract—After COVID-19, today's language classes have become blended with e-learning tools that have become indispensable to the process of learning in many situations. Synchronous e-learning classrooms have been studied for their impact on EFL communication skills, but few studies have been conducted in the Jordanian institutions. The purpose of this study is to investigate the EFL students' viewpoints on the efficiency of online classrooms in improving their verbal communication abilities. This study consisted of 284 participants who were EFL learners from the Hashemite University. It was conducted during the academic year 2022-2023, and it followed a mixed qualitative approach. Two means of data collection were used: a questionnaire and observations. The results indicated that students have a positive viewpoint toward online learning effectiveness in developing their communication. Nevertheless, students showed that low self-assurance, nervousness over making errors, and poor lexical knowledge are their main concerns when communicating in EFL classrooms.

Index Terms—synchronous, e-learning, communication, EFL instruction, verbal

I. INTRODUCTION

In interpersonal interactions, effective communication plays a crucial role. Proficiency in advanced English communication can create numerous opportunities at both personal and professional levels. Effective communication has the potential to augment the process of learning within a classroom environment. The concept of communication skills encompasses various aspects, including verbal and non-verbal components such as writing, body language, and facial expressions. However, oral communication poses the greatest challenge and difficulty among learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) (Alhamdi, 2014; Alhosni, 2014; Alshumaimeri, 2019). The ability to express oneself effectively and appropriately constitutes a fundamental element of communication skills, extending beyond mere theoretical comprehension of grammar and language (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012). Communication skill development in the classroom is influenced by various elements such as teaching approaches, the curriculum employed, time constraints, and the number of students in a class. Consequently, students require ample opportunities for practice in order to enhance their communication abilities. Web-based language instruction has shown the potential in improving the oral communication skills of students (Appel & Borges, 2012).

The integration of information and communication technologies into the educational system has significantly impacted teaching and learning procedures. The use of technological tools like the Internet, is widely used in the teaching of English because it enables students and teachers to practice the language outside the classroom. Using online resources in conjunction with language instruction tools provides students with more chances to improve their communication skills (Alshumaimeri, 2019; Alswilem, 2019; Cong-Lem, 2018). The vast majority of Middle Eastern educational institutions have tried to incorporate technology into their systems to attain improved learner-oriented upshots and cope with the new teaching method tendencies (Alshumaimeri, 2008, 2019; Alswilem, 2019). For example, in Saudi Arabia, e-learning was initially applied in 2002 and has had a profound influence on the domains of academia and education as well (Alasmari & Khan, 2014).

During COVID-19, a number of educational institutions, including colleges and universities, adopted online and distance learning modes as the next logical step in the process of teaching. Some industry experts have gone as far as to speculate that the "residential-oriented models," in which students attend classes at fixed locations and times, may

become obsolete in the not-too-distant future (Al Ibrahim, 2021). Nowadays, there is a persistent problem with the Coronavirus that has to be addressed, and that is the question of how the new learning delivery model, which has shifted from physical interaction instruction into a remote method, influences student input. Students have to explore the contemporary remote learning setting effectively and must show the ability to manage various novel dimensions, which include proficiency in Internet and computer technologies. A dependence on self-directed learning methodologies, engagement with both instructors and fellow learners via online platforms, the submission of assignments electronically, and the assessment of knowledge through online testing mechanisms should also be investigated thoroughly. In the context of online instruction, these criteria have a critical role. Salmon (2003) indicates that technological competence is obviously important. Failure to communicate proficiently through computer-mediated tools would be an obstacle to the ability of both students and teachers to be engaged in online educational endeavors. Macdonald (2003) further asserts that a mutual expectation exists for educators and students to show familiarity with collaborative teamwork, mastery of learning management system (LMS) tools, online chatting proficiency and web utilization. Within the domain of online learning, a significant component known as online assessments is integral alongside the submission of assignments through digital means. Collaborative learning introduces new challenges and prospects, including its potential to enhance skill development and distinguish outcomes from collaborative processes. Through collaboration with educational institutions and instructors, students are offered the opportunity to expand and deepen their comprehension by evaluating diverse perspectives, while also testing and defending their own viewpoints (Tam, 2000). According to Higgins (2000), the online educational environment is carefully designed to grant students the autonomy to determine their learning objectives, while also providing essential support systems and promoting interactions with both instructors and peers. The notion of self-directed learning is predicated upon the belief that learner education flourishes when situated within authentic experiences and when students possess a clear understanding of the purpose behind their learning endeavors.

The use of a synchronous e-learning platform is called "Teams" which facilitates real-time interaction between teachers and learners. Online classrooms provide students with the opportunity to acquire new skills in English language learning. Nevertheless, because of the absence of direct one-to-one communication, effective communication has become vital.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the efficiency of the synchronous e-learning platform "Teams" in enhancing communication skills. This research focused on investigating the extent to which the students' English communication abilities were demonstrated through verbal interactions with their teachers and peers within this medium. Synchronous e-learning classrooms have been studied for their impact on EFL communication skills, but few studies have been conducted in the Jordanian setting, and the most used experimental methods without considering students' voices. The primary objective of this research was to assess how Jordanian students learning English as a foreign language perceive the "Teams" platform as an e-learning tool to enhance their communication skills. This involved investigating their viewpoints on disadvantages, advantages, limitations, prerequisites, and recommendations for enhancing the platform's effectiveness. Students appreciated the opportunities offered by e-learning and its support for their unique learning needs and communication.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research aims to answer the following questions:
A. What are the anticipated challenges faced by users of the Teams learning platform?
B. How do learners perceive the efficacy of e-learning techniques, specifically in terms of improving their communication skills?
C. How does the utilization of synchronous e-learning tools impact the interaction between the learners and the instructors?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Parker and Martin (2010), synchronous e-learning solutions offer a learning setting in which students and instructors can engage in live discussions through various tools like audio and video conferencing. This enables active participation and real-time interactions in the educational process. Synchronous e-learning tools have become a new and innovative method for both educators and learners due to the advance in global technology and network infrastructure (Yadav, 2016). Montoute (2013) clarified that a web-based classroom known as a synchronous e-learning setting can be accessed by teachers and students using either desktop computers or mobile devices. The use of a synchronous environment represents a considerable resemblance between synchronous e-learning tools and traditional classrooms. On the other hand, Hussein (2016) emphasizes that synchronous online learning environments offer unique opportunities for both teaching and learning when compared to traditional classroom setups. Danesh, Bailey, and Whisenand (2015) reported that engaging in synchronous e-learning courses can improve communication skills, particularly by developing speaking abilities. Garner and Rouse (2016) demonstrated that synchronous online learning technologies are flexible, cost-efficient, applicable in real-world scenarios, and easily reachable. Yadav (2016)

presented evidence supporting the idea that synchronous e-learning technologies can overcome geographical constraints, alleviate students' anxieties, and boost their enthusiasm, resulting in enhanced communication skills.

Al-Asmari and Khan (2014) found that the primary benefits of synchronous e-learning technologies are their flexibility and ease of use, particularly for students situated in various global locations, including those attending classes in geographically scattered regions. The inclusion of elements like audio or video conferences in synchronous e-learning settings promotes continuous connections, which in turn improves students' engagement and feelings of being part of a community (Berry, 2019). Besides, Pan and Sullivan (2005) noted that engaging in real-time conversations with instructors or fellow students positively influences the level of interaction within synchronous classrooms.

Yilmaz (2015) claimed that synchronous e-learning platforms are comparable to traditional classroom environments concerning the provision of feedback, the communication between educators and undergraduates, and the conduct of activities during class sessions. Nonetheless, synchronous e-learning does have its drawbacks. Furthermore, there are concerns about the compatibility of this format with all types of learners. However, it is possible that future technological advancements, as suggested by Manegre and Sabiri (2020), could address these challenges. In addition, the familiarity of instructors and students with traditional classrooms might impact how they adopt technology in teaching and learning (Yadav, 2016). Hence, it is essential to offer adequate training to both instructors and students on the usage of synchronous e-learning systems. According to Manegre and Sabiri (2020), for an effective synchronous e-learning environment, reliable internet connections are crucial for both teachers and students, along with clear instructions and guidance.

Communication comprises diverse methods, such as verbal, written, and nonverbal expressions, and it involves essential components like attentive listening and providing constructive feedback. As a result, having strong communication abilities is a fundamental requirement for individuals learning a new language (Wambui, 2012). On the other hand, Cheeekeong et al. (2014) argue that developing oral communication skills and effectively utilizing them in an educational context can present difficulties. Cheekeong et al. (2014) points out that the obstacles encountered in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) oral communication arise from three primary factors: teachers, students, and the curriculum. The researchers suggest that teachers should avoid pressuring students to engage in oral communication and refrain from using ineffective strategies that do not support the improvement of students' communication skills. Furthermore, the students' absence of self-assurance and fear of making errors and slip-ups may contribute to their hesitance in participating in classroom discussions. The writers highlight that traditional EFL courses tend to focus more on hypothetical attributes of language learning. According to Abu Alyan (2013), there are several significant factors that play a major part in students' inadequate verbal communication abilities. These factors encompass limited vocabulary, inadequate exposure to substantial reading and listening materials, interference from their native language, and a lack of self-confidence. Khambayat (2017) emphasizes the potential for improving students' oral communication abilities through ample speaking practice opportunities. However, students may face challenges in effectively communicating in real-life situations as Khamkhien (2011) points out. Therefore, achieving effective communication goes beyond mere language proficiency; it requires active participation in practical activities. According to AlSaleem (2018), successful oral communication involves integrating cognitive and affective processes alongside verbal skills, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and syntax. To facilitate this, English teachers can employ diverse instructional strategies within the classroom, as suggested by Khambayat (2017). Thakur, AlMashani, and Almashikhi (2019) also advocate for authentic language practice through classroom projects, as it helps students utilize language more proficiently and develop their communicative abilities. Additionally, Parker and Martin (2010) point out that students in Synchronous e-learning classrooms can interact and communicate with each other as if they were physically present in a traditional classroom setting.

Recent research indicates that online education has a positive impact on students' confidence and talent development. Abu Baker, Latiff, and Hamat (2013) conducted a case study with eleven English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who had limited proficiency. The study aimed to explore their perceptions of using an asynchronous chat means to improve their verbal communication. The findings indicated that most of the students were more at ease and skilled when interacting orally in virtual learning environments compared to traditional classrooms. In face-to-face interactions, the participants displayed hesitancy, largely due to concerns about their peers' reactions. The researchers asserted that online learning platforms, by removing physical barriers, provide students with a valuable opportunity to enhance their spoken communication abilities.

In terms of the attitudes towards online teaching, Salbego and Tumolo (2015) reported that their study revealed participants' favorable attitudes toward online classes. This positivity stemmed from the necessity of paying close attention and seeking clarification regularly, which contributed to a constructive learning experience. Similarly, in Banditvilai's (2016) case study, people also exhibited a positive attitude toward online learning. However, it was noted that the absence of in-person communication could lead to social isolation, hindering meaningful interactions between professors and students. In fact, different studies were conducted on synchronous videoconferencing (Alshahrani, 2016). They showed that there are positive attitudes toward online education (Al Qahtani, 2019; Hamouda, 2020; Alshahrani, 2016; Hamouda, 2020).

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study aimed to examine how effective synchronous e-learning sessions are in improving the communication abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The research adopted a mixed-methods research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Following the approach advocated by Clark and Ivankova (2015), the researchers decided to combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies to enable classroom observations and confirm the survey-based quantitative results in a more comprehensive manner.

A. Study Sample and Population

The study involved undergraduate students from various disciplines who were enrolled at The Hashemite University- a Jordanian institution- during the first term of the 2022-2023 academic year. The total population consisted of 284 students, which was also the sample size for the study. However, due to institutional regulations and accessibility constraints, only around 30 students were observed during classroom sessions, leading to the use of convenience sampling. The subsequent tables provide an overview of the demographic distribution of the sample population.

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANTS' FIELDS OF STUDY

Major	Percentage
Business	14.8%
Engineering	12.3%
Humanities	11.9%
Medicine	8.1%
others	52.9%

TABLE 2
GENDER OF THE POPULATION

Gender	Percentage
Male	37%
Female	63%

B. Instruments of the Research

A survey and teacher observations were both used as the research's two primary data collection tools.

(a). The Survey

This survey is composed of thirteen different statements which focus on the efficiency of the "teams" platform in resolving problems of this nature. It was composed of thirteen different statements. The purpose of the third and last section is to evaluate the dynamics of the learner-instructor relationship in the context of distance education and online education. It was composed of six different statements. The design of the questionnaire was developed based on previous research on online learning and EFL communication abilities. A Likert scale with five responses (neutral, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and highly disagree) was employed.

(b). Validity of the Study Tool's Internal Consistency

The researcher computed the Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between each individual element and the overall importance of the dimension. It was found that there is a statistically significant correlation between each category and the overall degree of significance. The correlation evaluations indicate a strong level of core consistency and reliability among the three survey components. According to Creswell (2011), a study tool is considered reliable if it consistently produces similar results across trials. Upon testing the overall dependability of the coefficients, results demonstrate the tool's high level of stability.

(c). Observation

The researchers used classroom observations to collect data on the efficacy of e-learning and learners' self-reflection. The study tracked 30 students over multiple sessions, ensuring reliable data by conducting online sessions in teams and recording them. The sessions included lecturer and student presentations on English teaching, computer-assisted language learning, using various teaching methods, and discussing language-learning apps. Observations were noted and typed up, referring to the presenting students as presenters.

(d). The Procedure for Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SSPS) was used to conduct statistical analysis on the survey data, while theme analysis was used to do qualitative analysis on the observation data. The process of thematic analysis for the data involved a variety of steps such as reading of the recordings, identification of recurring patterns through coding, organization of similar codes into categories, and ultimately, the emergence of various themes such as student engagement, interaction between lecturers and students, interaction among students, and challenges related to spoken language. The evaluation of the responses was carried out by three experts with extensive knowledge in applied

linguistics and English as a foreign language. Additionally, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis methods were applied.

(e). Analysis

Calculations utilizing means and standard deviation were performed on the participants' questionnaire responses in order to provide answers to the study questions. In the first question, students were asked if vocabulary deficit is their primary difficulty when communicating in English. Responses show that 43.4% of the students responded with 'agree' while about 24.6 % wit strongly agree. The second question addressed the students' concerns regarding making grammatical errors while speaking. Their responses indicate that it is less challenging for them since 31% of them agree and 9.2% strongly agree. In the third question, the issue of pronunciation is focused on. Responses show that it is a partial concern since almost half of them agree with this statement (30 % agree and 18.3 % strongly agree). The affective factors are concentrated on in questions 4 and 5. Most students either do not consider that self-confidence is a main challenge while communicating in English or are not sure about it (18% strongly disagree, 20.8 % disagree, and 31.3% neutral). Regarding the subjects' anxiety and nervousness when speaking English, responses to question 5 indicate that about 30.2 % disagree while 30.3 % are neutral and 39.5 % agree with this idea. The teacher's lack of engagement with students and use of strategies that promote communication are tackled in questions 7 and 8. The majority of students either disagree or are neutral (just 24% agree). Similar responses are given to questions 9 and 10 which address the classroom atmosphere and oral communicative activities where again students either disagree or are neutral and not sure about it (just 30% to 35 % agree). The concept of having constructive criticism of students' performance in speaking activities and its benefit is focused on in question 11. The results show that a high number of students are either neutral or agree with it. In question 12, the frequency of teachers' correction of verbal errors is concentrated on, and in question 13, the student's irritation with it is interrogated. As for question 12, responses show that most students either disagree or are neutral which asserts that teacher most often correct their verbal mistakes. However, about 37% indicate that they are irritated by it while the others are either neutral or generally disagree. The last question addresses the high frequency of speaking Arabic in class. Students' answers indicate that their views are not stable since about 33% of them disagree while 28.9% are neutral and the rest of them agree. This means speaking the native language in EFL classes is part of the issue.

In general, the overall mean score is 56.9, which demonstrates that learners have a neutral attitude regarding their verbal communication challenges. The students believe that receiving constructive criticism is the most helpful way to build their communication skills, with a mean score of 57.9, which received the highest score (58.0), which indicates that their principal issue in talking in English is due to a vocabulary shortage. One of their least significant concerns, which received the lowest possible score of 56.2, is that the Arabic language is employed in the classroom more frequently than it ought to be.

The analysis of the learners' point of view on the effectiveness of synchronous e-learning sessions in developing the skills of communication indicates that it has a positive impact. Responses show that most students either have a neutral viewpoint toward the addressed subject or simply agree with the statements. In most questions, the students who strongly disagree or disagree record the lowest scores.

The students had a positive attitude towards employing "teams" as a medium of instruction, as evidenced by the overall mean score of 48.5. The statement that "participating in in-class conversations is made easier for me by my participation in synchronous online learning sessions" received the highest score of 49.4 out of all the statements. After which there was a mean score of 48.7 that it is much simpler for students to communicate with both their teachers and students during synchronous online learning sessions, which is good for both the second and the third research questions. When they came across question number 8, which was about how it is difficult to participate in conversations because there is limited opportunity for face-to-face engagement, a large section response was marked with neutral. This was definitely evident in how they responded. It finished in third place with an average score of 48.6 towards the statement of developing better vocal communication skills due to participating in synchronous online learning sessions.

The analysis of learners' points of view on the effectiveness of synchronous online learning sessions in developing the learner-instructor relationship displays some contradictory views toward the tackled issue. Results show that about 32.2 % to 36.8 % of the students are neutral in their views while 25.5 % to 36.5% agree. The other variables score relatively lower percentages. The highest mean score of 49.2 indicates the students' positive attitude towards getting the most benefit out of their online sessions. However, the second in rank is a mean score of 49.0, which indicates that students are having difficulties interacting with the instructor via synchronous learning sessions. The researcher suggests that the sample's answers do not reflect learner-instructor communication nature as much as they reflect the technical issues and inability to interact face-to-face with the instructor. The thing that explains the reason behind the sample's positive attitude towards developing better communication skills using the synchronous medium of learning is obviously since they weren't pressured by the actual existence of the instructor or their peers and that they were able to speak and interact more freely.

During observations, the lecturer posed questions and included some activities that require verbal participation. Most students were able to participate at least once, but some students were obliged to participate by calling their names. The primary methods of engagement during these sessions were audio calls. The data that was gathered from the classroom observations demonstrated that all in all, synchronous e-learning sessions have the potential to play a key role in

significantly boosting the communication abilities of EFL students. However, the results shed insight into the widespread challenges that students experience while engaged in oral communication practice such as the students' lack of self-assurance, concern about making mistakes, and inadequate vocabulary.

V. DISCUSSION

A survey was employed to collect data from 284 students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The data aimed to find out challenges encountered by the students in communication and their views regarding the efficacy of online learning platforms in enhancing their communication skills. Additionally, some participants were observed by the researcher during real-time online learning sessions, allowing for a comparison between how the students perceived their performance and how they performed. The primary objective of the initial section of the questionnaire was to evaluate the students' challenges with verbal communication. The respondents predominantly expressed negative viewpoints concerning the common obstacles they face when engaging in spoken English communication. According to the survey, learners' lack of self-assurance and worry about committing mistakes are the two biggest barriers to effective English communication, and students also felt that a limited vocabulary was a barrier. Similar findings were observed in the study by Cheekeong et al. (2014), where it was discovered that 60% of the students refrained from participating in classroom interactions due to reasons such as insufficient language skills, lack of self-assurance, or the fear of receiving unfavorable assessments. According to Cheekeong et al. (2014), the students' low self-esteem in their linguistic and communicative skills will restrict their verbalized English interaction. As a result, language instructors should create a calm environment for their pupils and motivate them to talk, regardless of any potential oral errors.

The quantitative investigation shows that students are neutral about communication-difficult phonological and structural matters. These results offer opposing findings to Abu Alyan's (2013) notion that students' pronunciation hinders class participation. The results demonstrated that students' attitudes regarding teaching tactics and activities are neutral, not a hindrance to oral communication. This contradicts Cheekeong et al. (2014), who found that classroom instruction affects oral skill practice. It can also be stated that this study may suggest that students gain speaking skills.

The second component of the survey asked students how synchronous learning sessions improved their communication skills. According to pervious scholarship (Salbego & Tumolo, 2015; Banditvilai, 2016; AlQahtani, 2019), most students like synchronous learning. Online modules are more comfortable and suitable than conventional classrooms, and students showed that synchronous learning sessions boost their self-assurance to express themselves and engage in debates and class discussions. AlQahtani (2019) found that undergraduate EFL students exhibited greater self-assurance when speaking during synchronous online learning sessions compared to in-person interactions. Cong-Lem (2018) found that web-based tools foster student engagement. These results suggest that conventional methods of practicing spoken English might pose challenges for EFL students. Synchronous learning sessions may be better because they don't involve face-to-face interactions. Thus, teachers should use synchronous learning to assist students develop their communication abilities. Relaxed students openly communicate with instructors and classmates, improving their confidence and communication abilities. The questionnaire also showed that synchronous learning sessions motivated and engaged students in class discussions. This suggests that relaxed students are more engaged and motivated. Students were neutral on whether they preferred regular or synchronous learning. In contrast, Istifci (2017) found that most participants prefer traditional classes since they can better communicate with teachers and classmates. Combining the two teaching approaches may address students' learning styles and personality preferences.

Students preferred synchronous learning sessions, although most disagreed that they helped them spot oral faults. This suggests that feedback helps students learn from their mistakes. In synchronous learning sessions, students thought the lack of face-to-face communication hampered their ability to express ideas. Banditvilai (2016) found that absence of face-to-face contact may impact teacher-student interactions. Eye contact and body language are important in face-to-face communication. Thus, missing components were predicted to impair communication.

Based on the findings of this study, utilizing synchronous learning sessions as a strategy to enhance spoken skills is a viable method that could substantially enhance the communication proficiencies of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Consequently, using synchronous learning sessions to practice oral communication skills can be quite helpful. This is coherent with Hamouda's (2020) research, which showed that completing online courses significantly improved the speaking abilities of the experimental group. The students' oral interactions during the sessions revealed a high level of engagement on their part. The students' queries and remarks to the professor and their classmates can be taken as an inclination to engage in the discussion. Most of the students responded to the mentor's questions punctually, suggesting that synchronous learning sessions provide a more laid-back atmosphere. This is consistent with students' perceptions that synchronous learning sessions are cozier. Additionally, the research by Salbego and Tumolo (2015) verifies the outcomes of this present study, as their participants expressed increased comfort when speaking in online classroom settings. The primary technique utilized by the instructor to initiate conversations with the students during these sessions involved the use of inquiries. To encourage children to engage in dialogue and enhance their oral communication proficiencies, employing questioning is an effective approach. According to Alshahrani (2016), asking questions that need answers encourages dialogue between the teacher and pupils. According to the current study, using the question-and-answer method to improve communication in online classrooms is a successful strategy. Short responses to more in-depth inquiries should both be included in the queries. As outlined by Alshahrani (2016), posing

questions that require thoughtful responses fosters interaction between educators and students. In line with the present study, implementing the question-and-answer technique as a means of enhancing communication within online educational settings proves to be an effective approach. It is advisable to incorporate both concise replies and more comprehensive explanations within the included inquiries.

Within synchronous e-learning environments, numerous approaches can be employed to enhance spoken communication skills. Enabling students to engage in exercises such as practicing communication, delivering presentations, and engaging in role-playing aids in the development of their communicative competencies. Khambayat's (2017) study supports the efficacy of these methods in enhancing communication within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Participating in role-plays during various synchronous e-learning sessions was a mandatory component for the students. These techniques proved effective within the synchronous e-learning environment due to their provision of extra opportunities for learners to engage and communicate with their peers. The study's results indicate that refining speech skills within a virtual classroom, utilizing resources like presentations (PPTs), and innovative approaches like role-playing, constitute a valuable and efficient strategy for enhancing communication proficiencies.

The outcomes of the research by Fauzi and Hanifah (2018), showcasing the effectiveness of presentations in augmenting oral skills and elevating student performance, are in harmony with this deduction. To enhance student engagement, educators should concentrate on instructing students in the incorporation of their peers and the integration of communication exercises into their assignments. As an example, in the third session, the presentation had a lot of activities, which gave the students more chances to practice speaking. However, Session 4's lack of exercises or quizzes had a modest impact on the students' participation.

Overall, the research showed that using synchronous learning sessions can significantly improve students' speech skills. It should be stated that in synchronous learning sessions, the roles of learners and instructors must be defined clearly. The instructor is supposed to function as a mediator, helping learners to refine their verbal communication skills and promoting participation in online sessions. Furthermore, effective communication might be hindered by the absence of direct eye contact, body language cues, and in-person interaction.

As a result, it is the lecturer's duty to give EFL students the chance to utilize their verbal communication skills in a setting that is appropriate for the virtual environment. Throughout the sessions, the researchers also observed some technical issues. For instance, students encountered difficulty in effectively engaging with Presenter 2 due to the unclear voice of one of the students. Such challenges are commonplace in online learning environments. As highlighted by Gedera (2014), unforeseen technological obstacles during synchronous learning sessions can influence students' effectiveness. However, across the span of four sessions, this issue only arose on a single occasion. Therefore, the study suggests that technical difficulties are not a significant barrier to online learning.

VI. CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to evaluate how well synchronous learning sessions improved oral communication abilities in undergraduate EFL students. It also looked at the main difficulties that EFL students have communicating in English. According to the mixed-methods study's findings, oral communication skills may benefit from synchronous learning sessions. Based on the results, the primary hindrances to students' effective communication stem from a restricted vocabulary, diminished self-confidence, and apprehension of committing errors. Participants stated that developing their communication skills in virtual classrooms offers a convenient and comfortable setting. Additionally, during online classes, students reported feeling more inspired, involved, and self-assured when conversing with professors and classmates. These results can motivate language teachers to use synchronous learning sessions to enhance communication skills in their students. Despite these encouraging findings, the study also brought to light certain drawbacks of synchronous learning sessions. Students perceived that their face-to-face interactions were hindered due to the absence of in-person engagement. Technical issues can sometimes make it difficult for students to communicate effectively, but this was only noticed once over the four sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The efficacy of virtual classrooms in intensifying EFL students' communication competencies was the subject of this study. It is suggested that future research might focus on teachers' reflections on the same concerns. Additionally, this study used two methods for gathering data: classroom observations and a questionnaire. Future research might use various tools, such as interviews. A similar study might be conducted to investigate how virtual classes affect other EFL skills. A comparable study could be conducted to explore the impact of virtual classrooms on other English as a Foreign Language (EFL) skills. This current study concentrated on the enhancement of EFL communication abilities through synchronous learning sessions. To enhance the applicability of the study's outcomes, researchers are advised to adapt it by incorporating a larger student cohort, students with diverse educational contexts, or individuals from various geographical locations.

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