

EFL learners' views on the online classes' use of Zoom

**Percepción de los estudiantes sobre el uso de Zoom en las clases de inglés
como lengua extranjera**

Autores:

Lcda. Macías-Mendoza, Cristina Beatriz
Universidad Técnica de Manabí
Maestrante
Portoviejo-Ecuador



cmacias0159@utm.edu.ec



<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2093-4027>

Mg. García-Farfán, Isabel de los Ángeles
Universidad Técnica de Manabí
Docente Tutora de Posgrado en la UTM
Portoviejo-Ecuador



isabel.garcia@utm.edu.ec



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4738-3523>

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8695-5005>

<http://mqrinvestigiar.com/>



Resumen

La pandemia COVID-19 ha tenido un impacto en muchas industrias, pero principalmente en el campo educativo. La educación se llevó a cabo de forma remota a causa del COVID-19, utilizando algunas aplicaciones, como Zoom. Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar las opiniones de un grupo de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en una escuela secundaria sobre la aplicación Zoom utilizada en las clases en línea. Se trata de un estudio transversal en el que se eligieron enfoques cualitativos y cuantitativos para este estudio. Se utilizaron entrevistas y cuestionarios para reunir los datos y la población estaba integrada por 28 estudiantes. Para obtener los resultados de la investigación, se analizaron la entrevista y los cuestionarios que permitieron conocer la percepción de los estudiantes sobre el uso de la aplicación Zoom en las clases de inglés y la entrevista ayudó a identificar los desafíos que enfrentaron los estudiantes en las clases de Zoom. Ambos resultados mostraron que el internet es un factor importante para el progreso de la clase, sin embargo existen factores externos, que son distractores y que pueden limitar el proceso de aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: Educación; Aplicación de zoom; Innovación; Internet

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on many industries, but mainly on the educational field. Education was carried out remotely due to COVID-19, using some applications, such as Zoom. This research aimed to analyze the opinions of a group of students of English as a Foreign Language in a secondary school about the Zoom application used in online classes. This is a cross-sectional study where qualitative and quantitative methods were used to acquire the information. Interviews and questionnaires were used to gather the data. The population consisted of 28 students. To obtain the results of the research, the interview script was analyzed which allowed us to know the students' perception about the use of Zoom application in English classes and with respect to the interview helped identify the challenges faced by the students in Zoom classes. Both results showed that the internet is an important factor for class progress, however there are external factors, which are distracting and can limit the learning process.

Keywords: Education; Zoom application; Innovation; Internet



Introduction

Technology has revolutionized the way we learn, and its positive impact on education is undeniable. In recent years, the use of modern internet technologies, particularly in teaching foreign languages, has gained significant relevance. Online resources, such as web-based dictionaries, grammar guides, and language learning websites, have proven effective in language acquisition (Rano N., 2021). Among these technologies, Zoom has emerged as a popular tool for facilitating direct interaction between teachers and students, offering numerous features to enhance the learning experience.

Zoom has become widely adopted due to its user-friendly features, accessibility across multiple devices, and diverse functionality. Its interactive tools, including emoticons, chat, microphones, and video and screen sharing, provide a dynamic learning environment. These features allow teachers to utilize interactive learning tools like Mentimeter and GoSoapBox, encouraging active engagement in the virtual classroom (Moorhouse and Kohnke, 2020; Kohnke, 2019).

Accessibility and technological challenges

When it comes to access and usability, Zoom proves to be a user-friendly platform for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Most EFL learners are already familiar with using technology, as they often rely on digital resources for language learning (Cutter, 2015). Zoom's accessibility across multiple devices, such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones, makes it convenient for EFL learners to join virtual language learning sessions from anywhere with an internet connection. Additionally, Zoom provides a straightforward interface that is easy to navigate, allowing EFL learners to quickly adapt to the platform and participate in online classes without facing significant technological challenges.

While Zoom offers a user-friendly platform for EFL learners, there can be technological challenges that students face, impacting their access and participation in online language learning. One common challenge is internet connectivity. In some regions or households, students may have limited access to high-speed internet, leading to audio or video quality disruptions during Zoom sessions (AlHazizi, 2020). This can hinder communication and engagement with the instructor and other classmates. Additionally, some students may not have access to compatible devices, such as laptops or tablets, which can limit their ability to join Zoom sessions or fully participate in interactive activities. These technological challenges highlight the need to consider alternative solutions or provide support to ensure equal access for all EFL learners in online language learning environments.

Engagement and interaction:

Zoom is a web-based video conferencing platform that allows individuals and groups to communicate, collaborate, and connect remotely. It provides a wide range of features and capabilities to facilitate engagement and interaction, making it a popular choice for virtual meetings, webinars, online classes, and social events.

The advantages of Zoom in language learning are manifold. Nadila Nuraziza et al. (2021) emphasize that Zoom facilitates direct and seamless communication between teachers and

students in various areas, making it an excellent choice for speaking-focused subjects. The application's ability to elicit questions from students, as well as the use of emoticons for expression, promotes increased student participation and a more orderly learning environment.

To maintain student interest during longer online sessions, teachers can employ Zoom's interactive features. This includes using polls and surveys integrated into Zoom to engage students and gather valuable feedback. Rosawi (2020) provides a useful guide for maximizing the use of Zoom in the classroom, particularly in utilizing the breakout rooms feature. The breakout rooms allow for small group discussions, fostering collaboration and meaningful interactions among students (Rakushin, 2021). However, according to Cavinato et al. (2021), breakout rooms provide numerous benefits, but it can be challenging for students to collaborate on answers to questions, and discussions may go more slowly than they would in a typical classroom setting.

Learning atmosphere and motivation

The emergence of virtual classrooms has had a significant impact on the traditional learning atmosphere. It increases accessibility, provides flexibility in study, and enhances active learning. Virtual classrooms have made education more accessible to learners, regardless of their geographical location. Students can participate in classes from the comfort of their homes, eliminating the need for travel or relocation (Francisco, 2020). This accessibility has opened opportunities for individuals who may have otherwise faced limitations or barriers to education.

Virtual classrooms provide flexibility in terms of scheduling and attendance. Students can access class materials and lectures at their convenience, allowing them to balance their education with other commitments such as work or family responsibilities. As a result, learners have more control over their learning experience, which can contribute to a more relaxed and positive atmosphere. However, group conversations in Zoom sometimes take a lot of time and are challenging for the teacher to supervise, according to Kohnke and Moorhouse (2020).

Virtual classrooms often encourage active learning through various interactive tools and features. Online platforms offer chat and messaging functionalities, multimedia content, virtual whiteboards, and breakout rooms for group discussions and collaborative activities. This fosters engagement and interaction among students, promoting a dynamic learning atmosphere.

Student Attitudes: advantages and disadvantages

Research suggests a strong correlation between student attitudes, behavioral goals, and actual use of Zoom (Alfadda and Mahdi, 2021). The convenience and efficacy of Zoom contribute to positive student perceptions and engagement. The platform provides educators with a tool for formative assessment, small group interactions, and extending learning beyond the traditional classroom (Kohnke, 2022). Additionally, Zoom's capabilities can be leveraged by teachers to create an active and involved learning environment.

The use of Zoom in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes can have both positive and negative effects on motivation and participation. Here is an exploration of how Zoom impacts these areas:

1. **Increased Accessibility and Convenience:** Zoom provides learners with the flexibility to attend EFL classes remotely, eliminating geographical barriers. This increased accessibility and convenience can enhance motivation among students who might otherwise have difficulty accessing traditional face-to-face classes. The convenience of attending classes from home can also contribute to higher participation rates.
2. **Enhanced Interaction and Engagement:** Zoom offers various features to facilitate interaction and engagement in EFL classes. These include chat, screen sharing, breakout rooms, and virtual whiteboards. These features can promote active participation and collaboration among students, which in turn fosters motivation to learn and engage with the language. Students have the chance to interact with peers and advance their English language skills by taking part in group activities. Ochonogor et al. (2012) found that through synchronous learning activities, students can improve their English speaking and writing skills. However, Mohamed (2020) emphasizes that instructors must carry out a variety of duties to assist students, including moving between breakout rooms, ensuring that they understand the activities, providing feedback to them, interacting with them socially, and making sure they are staying on task.
3. **Technological Challenges and Motivation:** While Zoom offers numerous benefits, technical challenges can negatively affect motivation and participation. Poor internet connections, audio or video disruptions, or compatibility issues with devices can lead to frustration and disengagement among students. Instructors need to address these issues promptly, provide technical support, and create an encouraging virtual environment to mitigate them. With a smaller group of peers, students can complete practical communication tasks and assignments in breakout rooms (Chandler 2016). However, educators, students, and administrators must actively participate in building a community of learners if technology is to effectively enhance interaction in online courses (Lawrence-Benedict et al. 2019).

Exploring Zoom Classes in Ecuador's Education

In Ecuador, many schools and educational institutes have opted for online learning platforms like Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, for this reason, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, through the deal N. MINEDUC-MINEDUC-2020-00014-A, agreed to suspend classes throughout the national territory in all their days and modalities and authorized administrative and teaching staff of the National Education System to continue their work through the modality of telework by the regulations that the governing body of work issued (education minister, 2020) Zoom classes in Ecuador follow a similar structure and format to online classes in other countries. The main difference lies in the specific content and curriculum covered in the classes, which can vary depending on the educational institution and grade level.

In terms of the advantages of Zoom classes in Ecuador, some benefits that this application could provide to Ecuadorian students are English language development. However, there are

also challenges and disadvantages to consider. Zoom classes allow students to participate in their education from the comfort of their homes (Villegas Oña, & Caceres Cacoango, 2022). This can be especially beneficial for students with mobility issues or those living in remote or rural areas where accessing physical classrooms may be difficult. On the other hand, zoom classes rely on stable internet connections and functioning devices. Inadequate internet infrastructure or technical issues with devices can hinder students' ability to fully participate in classes, leading to disrupted learning experiences.

Participating in Zoom classes helps students develop their technology skills, such as navigating online platforms, using video conferencing tools, and working with digital resources. However, implementing Zoom classes in poorer areas of Ecuador may face additional challenges and limitations. For example, students in impoverished areas may not have access to the necessary devices (such as laptops or tablets) required to participate in Zoom classes. Overall, while Zoom classes in Ecuador offer certain advantages in terms of accessibility and flexibility, they also have their own challenges. It is important for educators to adapt their teaching methods to ensure student engagement and well-being in the online learning environment. Undoubtedly, it has been a challenge to face the transformation and adaptation of classroom teaching activity to digital (Carrascal Domínguez et al., 2020)

The use of technology in education has profoundly impacted the learning experience, and the adoption of Zoom in online language learning has proven to be beneficial. Its interactive features, including emoticons, chat, and screen sharing, allow for direct engagement between teachers and students. Zoom's breakout rooms promote collaboration and meaningful discussions among students, enhancing the language learning process. Moreover, the positive correlation between student attitudes and the use of Zoom highlights its potential for creating an active and dynamic virtual classroom. With continued advancements in technology, the role of Zoom and similar platforms will only grow, further transforming language learning experiences. This study seeks to analyze the opinions of EFL students in high school about the Zoom application used in online classes.

Method

This study uses qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (survey) methods to acquire the information. Furthermore, it is a cross-sectional study. According to the definition provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), a cross-sectional study is a type of observational research design that involves collecting data from a population at a specific point in time. The study is oriented to identify EFL learners' views on the online classes' use of Zoom. Sampieri, R., Fernández, C. & Baptista, L. (2014) state that mixed methods are an effective way to describe, understand and explain educational phenomena. These methods are rich in the diversity of perspectives in the research context (p. 65). This research study was conducted in a High School, located in Santa Ana-Ecuador; the school has almost 300 students taking into account all levels, however, the population was made up of twenty-eight students from high school of which two answered the interview. The reason the researchers

chose this group is that they received intermediate English classes during the pandemic using Zoom as a learning medium.

As for the research design for the present study, cross-sectional research corresponds. According to the definition provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), a cross-sectional study is a type of observational research design that involves collecting data from a population at a specific time. The data collection techniques used were the semi-structured interview and the student survey; the instrument used was an interview script and the survey was a questionnaire.

The results of the interview script were analyzed, which allowed the researcher to know the perception of the students on the use of Zoom in the classes of English as a foreign language and their development in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as well as the obstacles presented during the classes; Also, it was created a survey with multiple choice affirmation which were filled in the Google Form survey, and they include Very agree (A), agree (B), neutral (C), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (E) are all acceptable responses. The queries are as follows:

1. I think Zoom was an excellent choice for teachers to teach us in virtual time.
2. I liked learning English through Zoom during the time of virtual classes.
3. The features of the Zoom app were easy to understand, which allowed me to do the activities in the English classes.
4. I found that learning through Zoom has helped me improve my SPEAKING
5. I found that learning through Zoom has helped me improve in READING
6. I feel that learning through Zoom helps improve LISTENING
7. I found that learning through Zoom improves WRITING

There were two open questions for students to express their opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of the use of Zoom to learn English

Results

The results and commentary are presented in this section. Data was gathered using a Google Form. The research discusses EFL learners' views on the online classes' use of Zoom. The questionnaires were divided into two parts, first, some questions where students may choose an option (very agree, agree, neutral disagree, strongly disagree) and explain their answers, and the second part students' opinions toward the implementation of Zoom where given some options and they can choose some or write according their thought.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of the ZOOM application

No	Questions	Answer (%)				
		Very agree	agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I think Zoom was an excellent choice for	17%	27%	14%	28%	14%

	teachers to teach us in virtual time.					
2	I liked learning English through Zoom during the time of virtual classes.	17%	11%	17%	38%	17%
3	The features of the Zoom app were easy to understand, which allowed me to do the activities in the English classes.	28%	28%	17%	24%	3%
4	I found that learning through Zoom has helped me improve my SPEAKING	24%	21%		34%	21%
5	I found that learning through Zoom has helped me improve in READING	14%	24%	24%	31%	7%
6	I found that learning through Zoom helps improve LISTENING.	7%	35%	17%	24%	17%
7	I found that learning through Zoom improves WRITING	14%		24%	45%	17%

In the table, we can see the answers of the students. In response to the first question, half of the students thought that the Zoom app was very helpful for online learning, while the other half didn't think so. Internet issues and students' inattention were two of the contributing factors. The student's preferences for the Zoom app are revealed in the second question. Some students expressed a preference for learning from home, while others said that the classes lacked energy or were distracting. Regarding the third issue, which concerned the students' development of activities, most of them said that they were simple to do, but a few said that because of time constraints, some students copied the activity. According to Cavinato et al. (2021), "breakout rooms provide numerous benefits, but it can be challenging for students to collaborate on answers to questions, and discussions may go more slowly than they would in a typical classroom setting". Question 4,5,6,7 focuses on the development of different skills in learning English using Zoom. In the question about encouraging SPEAKING, a minority of students indicated that they agreed since it promoted safety when speaking, However, a majority disagreed because only a small group always participated, or the lack of internet did not allow them to use the microphone. Regarding the question about encouraging

READING; a lower result agreed, indicating that it was easier to use a book and that Zoom encourages more reading, however, the majority disagreed, some indicating that they must have more advanced knowledge to be able to read. And some students remained indifferent indicating that they depended on the internet. The question about the development of LISTENING, the students claim that the audio was heard clearer, which helped improve pronunciation; However, some students indicate that everything depended on connectivity to do listening activities. Finally, the last question is about encouraging students in WRITING skills. a minority of the students agreed, indicating that Zoom chat is a good implement as a means of practice, some students remained indifferent, again claiming that it depended on the internet or equipment and most students didn't agree because time was short, there was often no communication with the teacher, and copying of homework was much encouraged.

Table 2. Students' opinion of the ZOOM application

No	Questions	Answer %			
		Available on all devices	Promotes all participation	Promotes confidence to learn	others
8	What are the advantages of using ZOOM to learn English?	13.45%	5.17%	7.24%	3.10%

Table 3. Students' opinion of the ZOOM application

No	Questions	Answer %			
		no connectivity	Does not Promote participation	Does not Promote confidence in learning	others
9	What are the disadvantages of using ZOOM to learn English?.	5.17%	13.45%	5.17%	5.17%

Questions 8 and 9 are open questions where students can choose some disadvantages or advantages, or even write new ideas according to their experiences in English classes by Zoom. According to the survey, the advantages are first point the application is available on all devices, second, it promotes participation, third, it promotes trust in learning, finally it reaches more people and allows you to make queries when you have doubts. On the other

hand, regarding the question about Zoom's disadvantages, the results indicate that some of the students agree that having connectivity problems is a disadvantage, it doesn't promote confidence to learn and finally, students explained that time is a disadvantage of the application and that a good dynamic must accompany it to encourage student participation whereas a minority of student add that zoom does not promote participation.

Through the interviews, the opinion of two of the previously surveyed students is made known. Both students expressed that the internet was their biggest difficulty when learning the skills of LISTENING, WRITING, READING, and SPEAKING. The presence of lag prevented them from easily performing certain activities. However, they also mentioned that they relied on other applications to listen before producing on their own, which helped alleviate their nerves when speaking. As for the Reading and Writing skills, both students mentioned that they were the easiest to perform in the application.

As for the use of Zoom as a means of learning, both students expressed that they do not like it since it requires their full attention. However, they consider that the pandemic period was a good choice to continue learning. They liked that Zoom could be used from anywhere and that they could watch recorded classes in case they couldn't attend. However, they considered it a disadvantage that it depended on the internet of the place where they were and mentioned that some classmates had to drop out because they lived in areas without internet. the result shows the EFL views about Zoom, but it clearly shows similar answers from other studies. NURAZIZA(2021) said " EFL students have a good perception and responses toward the implementation of ZOOM in online classes.....There are still many students who think that using Zoom as media to conduct e-learning is not the best choice"

Discussion

The modern and informed society has forced students who receive daily education to become digital people, with a high level of knowledge and use of new technologies compared to older generations, most EFL learners are already familiar with using technology, as they often rely on digital resources for language learning (Cutter,2015). Moreover, people have experienced a significant shift in the learning environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition to online platforms, especially Zoom, has brought both advantages and disadvantages to our English classes.

This research allows us to know the experience with the Zoom application in virtual English classes. Half of the students found Zoom to be helpful, promoting safety when speaking, making reading easier, improving pronunciation through clear audio, and providing a means of practice for writing skills. However, the other half, disagreed, citing issues such as lack of participation, internet problems, time constraints, and the need for more advanced knowledge. The research results are consistent with previous studies on the use of Zoom and other technological tools in schools and schools during the pandemic (Fainholc, 2020; Otero Rodríguez et al., 2020;). Overall, the results highlight the mixed opinions and challenges of using Zoom for language learning, with connectivity and engagement being recurring issues.

One advantage that stood out among students is the fact that Zoom is accessible on all devices. The advantages of Zoom in language learning are manifold. Nadila Nuraziza et al. (2021) emphasize that Zoom facilitates direct and seamless communication between teachers and students in various areas, making it an excellent choice for speaking-focused subjects. However, In some regions or households, students may have limited access to high-speed internet, leading to audio or video quality disruptions during Zoom sessions (AlHazizi, 2020). According to this survey, 17%-27% of students found Zoom to be helpful, while 14%-28% disagreed. Reasons for disagreement included lack of attention by students or internet problems the chat function, hand raising, and breakout rooms have encouraged active engagement and interaction with classmates and teachers alike. The breakout rooms allow discussions for small groups, fostering collaboration and meaningful interactions among students (Rakushin, 2021). However, according to Cavinato et al. (2021), breakout rooms provide numerous benefits, but it can be challenging for students to collaborate on answers to questions, and discussions may go more slowly than they would in a typical classroom setting. According to the research, in terms of activity development, 28% of students found them easy, while 17%-24% disagreed, mentioning copying as an issue. A few students expressed concerns that Zoom does not always promote active participation. Some may feel inhibited or less encouraged to contribute their thoughts and opinions compared to face-to-face interactions. While the personal connections formed on Zoom can enhance trust among learners, a few students highlighted that building confidence in learning may be more challenging in a virtual setting.

The research also explores the impact of Zoom on speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills. While some students agreed that Zoom was beneficial for these skills, others disagreed due to limited participation, internet issues, or time constraints. Zoom, like any other online platform, requires effective time management and engagement strategies from both teachers and students. Without proper planning and interactive activities, it can be easy for students to become disengaged or lose focus during online classes. , group conversations in Zoom sometimes take a lot of time and are challenging for the teacher to supervise, according to Kohnke and Moorhouse (2020). However, Kohnke (2022) said “The convenience and efficacy of Zoom contribute to positive student perceptions and engagement. The platform provides educators with a tool for formative assessment, small group interactions, and extending learning beyond the traditional classroom”.

Conclusion

We live in the age of digitalization. Innovation and technology have become part of our life. Today we can communicate and learn with the Internet through video conferences, and we can do it all over the world. The pandemic has had many different effects, but an important one is in education because even if people were inside their homes, they continued learning. The purpose of this study was for the researchers to discover more about how EFL students

felt about the adoption of Zoom to assist online learning. To complete the study, the researchers distributed the questionnaire and conducted interviews with EFL students.

Using the results, the researchers discovered that the Zoom application has had a mixed impact on their virtual classes. While some students found it helpful and enjoyed learning from home, others had issues with attention and internet problems. Furthermore, the effectiveness of Zoom in virtual classes seems to depend on individual preferences and circumstances. Ultimately, the results were more explicit in the interview where the students identified the internet as their biggest difficulty when learning English skills online.

As we navigate through the world of Zoom-based English classes, it is important to acknowledge both the advantages and challenges that come with this shift to virtual learning. While Zoom provides accessibility, encourages participation, and fosters trust in learning, we also need to address connectivity issues, promote active participation, and find ways to boost confidence and engagement. By understanding and addressing these aspects, we can make the most of our online English classes and continue to thrive in our language-learning journey.

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