



EFL Teachers' and Students' Perceptions towards Virtual Teaching: A Qualitative Analysis of Benefits, Challenges, Future Directions, and Effectiveness

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Abstract

The present study aimed to analyze English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and students' perceptions on learning effectiveness, negative factors, positive features, and future directions of virtual education. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions, and journals. All the data were carefully studied and coded through MAXQDA (version 2020) software. The results indicated that poor internet connection along with low interaction between students and the teacher were the most frequently noted negative points of online classes. Accordingly, providing high-speed internet, supporting students, and having more interaction are the first essential elements in virtual education. Besides, flexibility, time-saving, and reduced cost considerations were considered the positive aspects of online classes. Regarding students' learning performance, the results were of mixed nature. Providing training courses for teachers, using different materials during the class, and the most importantly having high-speed internet are some implications of this study.

Keywords: Virtual Education; Online Learning; Qualitative Data Collection; Triangulation; Virtual Learning Environment

1. Introduction

In the age of modernity, technology seems to play a significant role and is becoming a key instrument in individuals' lives. [Heidari Tabrizi and Onvani \(2018\)](#) noted that technology is an important part of academic settings and daily life. Powerful technological tools have impacted all aspects of the economic, business, and educational sections of the world ([Singhal, 2004](#)). More importantly, technology has had a very important role in different aspects of education and language learning ([Hsu, 2017](#)) as it has changed the ways we learn or teach languages ([Farr & Murray, 2016](#)). Teachers can utilize multitude of type's technology available for language teaching and learning such as corpora, computer games, interactive and collaborative technologies, etc. to promote students' interest, motivation, and performance ([Farr & Murray, 2016](#)).

The widespread use of technology has assisted traditional classrooms in being upgraded into online platforms and online learning. As a result, many investigators have become interested in examining distance learning and virtual learning environments. A large number of language learners from all over the world are choosing to participate in online courses, whether completely online class or blended, which is the combination of online classes with a traditional type ([Sharma & Westbrook, 2016](#)). However, in 2019, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most universities and schools over the world were closed suddenly and inevitably, many teachers and students shifted to online education ([Pelikan et al., 2021](#); [Shah et al., 2021](#)). Teachers had to develop new skills and gain more computer literacy to gauge themselves with online instruction ([Bozkurt et al., 2020](#)). Moreover, students, who were accustomed to daily life in school, had to adjust themselves to the new educational context ([Pelikan et al., 2021](#)).

Although before the lockdown, there were still some online and virtual classes available, far too little attention has been paid to the significance of online learning from the teachers' and learners' perspectives. In the realm of language teaching and learning, EFL teachers' and learners' perception of the use of technology is still under-researched and requires further attention. The importance of a virtual environment is comprehensible when people want to participate in a course for which they cannot participate in in-person classrooms during a pandemic.

Overall, this study sought to examine the negative points, positive aspects, and future directions of virtual education relying on Iranian EFL teachers' and students' perceptions. Moreover, the student's learning efficiency in virtual classes was analyzed, too. As a result, the following research questions guided the present investigation:



1. What is the perception of students on negative factors, positive aspects, future directions, and learning effectiveness of virtual teaching and learning?
2. What is the perception of teachers on negative factors, positive aspects, future directions, and learning effectiveness of virtual teaching and learning?

2. Review of the Related Literature

In 2010, Hopkins examined the speaking skill of students in online classes. In this regard, students had to complete speaking tasks in Synchronous Audiographic Conferencing (SAC) environment with each other. They had to set a time for doing the tasks, and there was no need for the presence of the teacher. Generally, the findings of the research revealed that students were satisfied with the online speaking course, because they could interact with other distance students and they could practice speaking English as well. At the beginning of the course, students had some level of anxiety, but this feeling became less till the end of the course. Also, students had no problem with technology and using the language in online classes. About the absence of the teacher, the ideas were different. Some of them said that they were more relaxed in the absence of the teacher as they had more autonomy. Yet, some others declared that there was a need for teacher's feedback.

Baturay (2011) wanted to analyze if there was any relationship among learners' sense of community, perceived cognitive learning, and satisfaction at an e-learning course. One hundred seventy-eight elementary-level students participated in the totally online course and they were taught through Learning Management System (LMS). The findings of the study indicated that all those variables were related to each other. If students were satisfied with the e-course, they felt connected to their classroom community. Moreover, students' satisfaction had an effect on their cognitive learning, too.

Mohamed (2018) examined and reviewed studies about e-learning. The researcher explained the definition of e-learning as using the computer and technology for delivering information and content to learners via intranet or the internet. In the article, the researcher mentioned some advantages and disadvantages of online classes. The major benefits were the learners' interest, academic engagement, reduced information overload, etc. Some of the negative points of e-learning were the lack of interaction between students and teachers, the cost of applying e-learning like the software and hardware costs, and the lack of other skills like cooperation, social interaction, and planning. Besides, the researcher referred to some challenges towards e-learning such as technical challenges, administrative challenges, and pedagogical challenges.

More recently, [Pelikan et al. \(2021\)](#) investigated the students' self-regulated learning, passive procrastination, and intrinsic motivation to understand how students managed distance education in lockdown. In this research, two groups of students participated, students with high perceived competence and students with low perceived competence. The results of the study revealed that students with high perceived competence were more successful in handling their tasks and time and had higher motivation in challenging situations. On the contrary, students with low perceived competence were revealed to have more difficulty in dealing with their tasks and had more passive procrastination.

[Şahin Kizil \(2021\)](#) examined the influence of predictive power of perceived learning, learner satisfaction, and sense of community on learners' academic achievement in distance learning. This study was done at a university in Turkey in which students had to participate in an obligatory online English course. Several instruments were used for collecting data. The outcomes of the research revealed that if students have more perceived learning, the level of their academic achievement will be higher. Learner satisfaction also has a positive effect on academic achievement and learners' needs and expectations should be considered in online courses. About the sense of community and academic achievement, this study showed that teacher presence and cognitive presence had crucial roles in students' achievement. However, this study found no significant relationship between social presence and academic achievement.

In 2021, [Shah](#) and co-workers studied the influence of the online learning environment on student's engagement in relation to their basic physiological needs in Pakistan. The results showed that the learning climate is not significantly influential on students' engagement. The study said that designing the online learning environment in a way that satisfies students' basic psychological needs, which are competence, autonomy, and relatedness, can be helpful for more students' engagement in online classes. Paying attention to students' basic psychological needs will also help them to be strong in these challenging situations in the future.

In another study, [Holzer et al. \(2021\)](#) conducted a research to examine the students' self-regulated learning, well-being, and basic need satisfaction in the challenging situation of Covid-19. They wanted to understand the relations of need satisfaction (experienced competence, autonomy, and relatedness) with students' well-being during that situation. They gathered data from students of two countries, namely Austria and Finland. The findings were similar in both countries. The results showed that all three sources of basic needs are relevance to students' well-being, positive emotion, and intrinsic motivation.



3. Method

3.1. Participants

In the present research, two groups of Iranian EFL teachers and students participated. They were selected based on convenience and criterion sampling.. In this study, all EFL teachers and students had the experience of participating in virtual classes, so all of them were familiarized with online and virtual classes which were their specific criteria in this study.

The participants of open-ended questions were five EFL teachers including four female teachers and one male teacher. Two teachers hold B.A. while three were M.A. students in TEFL. Their ages ranged from 21 to 35 with the experience of teaching English varying from 3 to 6 years. Four EFL students participated to answer the open-ended questions, too. Their age ranged from 23 to 31. Their English proficiency levels varied from intermediate to advanced level.

In this study, five non-native female English teachers participated to be interviewed. Although all of them were M.A. students Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) as well, the interview questions concerned their perceptions regarding virtual education in their profession. Their age ranged from 24 to 38 years, with an average age of 31.4. Their English teaching experience varied from 2 to 15 years, with a mean of 7. They were teaching English in private institutes. Table 1 shows the profile of teacher participants. Moreover, five female EFL students were interviewed, too. They were M.A. students in TEFL. Their age ranged from 23 to 45. As they were M.A. students, they were at an advanced English proficiency level. Table 2 depicts the profile of student participants. Respondents were assured their identities and responses would be kept confidential. Thus, they were given pseudonyms to stay anonymous and were coded accordingly. The following tables show the information of the participants:

Table 1

Background Information of the Five Teacher Interviewees

Participant	Gender/age	Degree	Years of experience
Participant A	Female/38	M.A. in English teaching	15
Participant B	Female/37	M.A. in English teaching	10
Participant C	Female/30	M.A. in English teaching	5

Participant D	Female/24	M.A. in English teaching	2
Participant E	Female/28	M.A. in English teaching	3

Table 2*Background Information of the Five Students Interviewees*

Participant	Gender/ age	Level of English proficiency	Education Background
Participant F	Female/45	Advanced	M.A. student in English teaching
Participant G	Female/40	Advanced	M.A. student in English teaching
Participant H	Female/35	Upper intermediate	M.A. student in English teaching
Participant I	Female/34	Advanced	M.A. student in English teaching
Participant J	Female/23	Upper intermediate	M.A. student in English teaching

3.2. Data Collection

A semi-structured interview was used in this study which was triangulated with open-ended questions and journals. A brief explanation of the purpose of the study was given to the participants. Besides, the participants in the study were assured that their names would be coded and stay anonymous in the research. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was decided that the interviewer and interviewees would not meet each other in person. So, the questions of the interview were sent as a PDF file to participants either on Telegram or WhatsApp messaging application. The participants had enough time to think about the questions and answer them. They could either answer the questions by recording their voice or by writing the answers. The questions of the interview were conducted in L1 (Persian) to ease the comprehension and responding process. All the recorded voices were transcribed carefully to be analyzed later. As in this study, two groups of participants were interviewed; two sets of questions were conducted.



To gain more in-depth and comprehensive results, open-ended questions were applied. An explanation was given to them about the purpose of the research. They had enough time for thinking about questions and answering them. For the convenience of the participants, the questions were conducted in their mother tongue, and they answered the questions in their mother tongue, too. They either wrote their answers or sent their voice. All the answers were transcribed to be analyzed. Then the key parts of the answers were translated as codes in analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis

This research was a qualitative study using a triangulating method by conducting interviews, open-ended questions, and journal analysis. First, the researcher studied all data and classified them into four categories of negative points of the virtual classrooms, positive points of the virtual classrooms, future directions for the virtual classrooms, and students' learning performance both for EFL teachers and students.

The data were studied until the codes emerged. The embedded codes were classified into different categories and subcategories and were revised several times by two experts in the field. For analyzing and tabulating the qualitative data, MAXQDA (version 2020) software was used. All codes were identified from the texts. The software provided the frequency tables of each dimension of the study and the visual maps of the classification of codes.

4. Results

4.1. EFL Teachers' and Students' Negative Perceptions towards Virtual Classes

The data of negative perceptions towards virtual classes were coded according to the information gathered by interviews, open-ended questions, and journals. All data from the mentioned resources were classified into two basic categories 1) teachers' attitudes and 2) students' attitudes, each of which was classified into different subcategories. For instance, teachers' worries encompass students' problems with lessons, students' cheating, students' concentration, and students' presence. The result is presented in Figure 1.

To present a vivid picture of the yielded categories and subcategories, each dimension is tabulated and the corresponding examples of the protocols are displayed in Appendix 1.

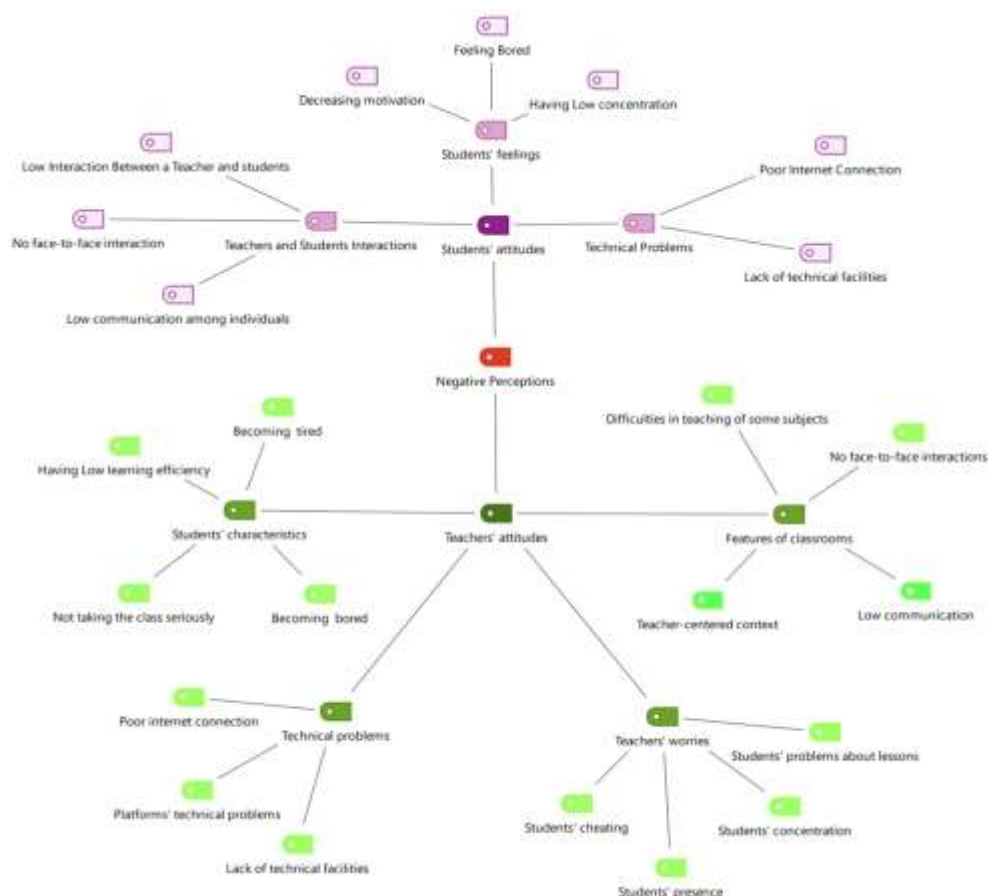


Figure 1. The Model of EFL Teachers' and Students' Negative Perceptions towards Virtual Classes

After analysis of the data based on the codes of Figure 1, the frequency count of each code was tabulated as follows (Table 3):

Table 3

Frequency of the Identified Codes of EFL Teachers' and Students' Negative Perceptions towards Virtual Classes

Code System	Frequency
Negative Perceptions	



Teachers' attitudes	
Students' characteristics	
Having Low learning efficiency	2
Becoming tired	3
Becoming bored	2
Not taking the class seriously	4
Features of classrooms	
Difficulties in teaching some subjects	2
No face-to-face interactions	5
Low communication	7
Teacher-centered context	2
Technical problems	
Lack of technical facilities	2
Platforms' technical problems	4
Poor internet connection	9
Teachers' worries	
Students' problems with lessons	5

Students' concentration	6
Students' presence	7
Students cheating	3
Students' attitudes	
Students feelings	
Feeling Bored	1
Having Low concentration	2
Decreasing motivation	2
Teachers and Students Interactions	
Low communication among individuals	1
No face-to-face interaction	2
Low Interaction Between a Teacher and students	4
Technical Problems	
Lack of technical facilities	1
Poor Internet Connection	10

As can be seen in Table 3, the most paramount codes can be listed as follows:

1. Poor internet connection (technical problems/ students' attitudes, n=10)



2. Poor internet connection (technical problems/teachers' attitudes, n=9)
3. Low communication (features of classrooms/ teachers' attitudes, n=7), Students' presence (Teachers' worries/ teachers' attitudes, n=7)
4. Students' concentration (teachers' worries/ teachers' attitudes, n=6)
5. No face-to-face interactions (features of classrooms/ teachers' attitudes, n=5), Students' problems about lessons (teachers' worries/ teachers' attitudes, n=5)

According to the frequency list, poor internet connection comes in first place as it had the greatest frequency among other factors. The second most frequent factors are low communication and students' presence. In online classes, there is low communication between students and the teacher. Besides, teachers mentioned that they were worried about students' presence during the class. The third most frequent factor is student's concentration. Teachers said that they were not sure about the students' concentration during the class.

4.2. EFL Teachers' and Students' Positive Perceptions towards Virtual Classes

The information gained from three resources was carefully studied and was used to categorize the positive perceptions towards virtual classes. The data were classified into two parts of 1) teachers' attitudes and 2) students' attitudes with various subcategories. Figure 2 shows the classification of categories that come to play as positive points of virtual classes.

The most frequently mentioned positive aspects of online classes were being time-saving, having no place limitations, no transportation, etc. More factors and examples are presented in Appendix 2.

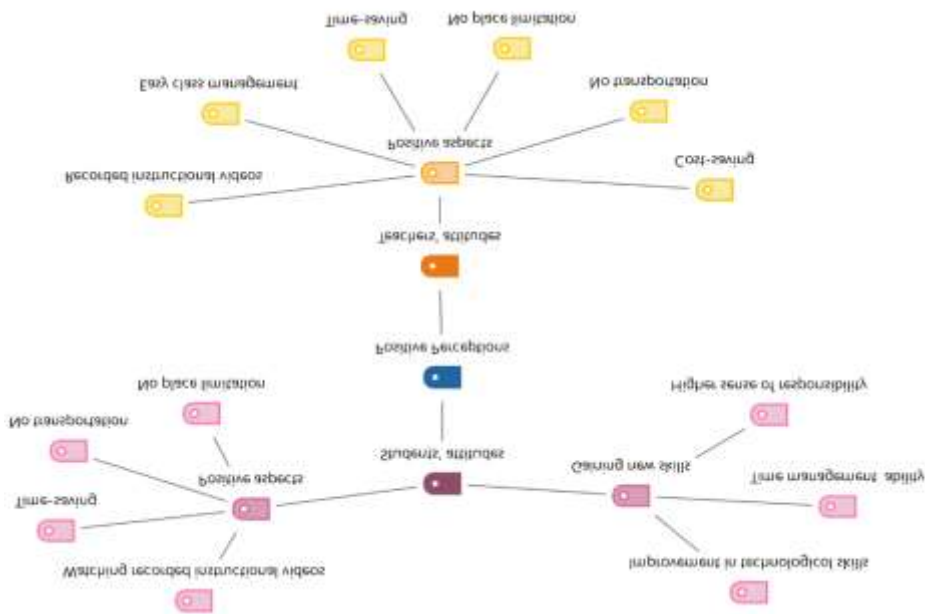


Figure 2. The Model of EFL Teachers' and Students' Positive Perceptions towards Virtual Classes

After analyzing data by MAXQDA 2020 software, the frequency of the identified codes was tabulated in the following table (Table 4).

Table 4
Frequency of the Identified Codes of EFL Teachers' and Students' Positive Perceptions towards Virtual Classes.

Code System	Frequency
Positive Perceptions	
Teachers' attitudes	
Positive aspects	
Cost-saving	5
Recorded instructional videos	2



Easy class management	5
No place limitation	4
No transportation	8
Time-saving	6
Students' attitudes	
Positive aspects	
Watching recorded instructional videos	5
Time-saving	4
No place limitation	5
No transportation	5
Gaining new skills	
Time management ability	1
Improvement in technological skill	5
Higher sense of responsibility	2

The most frequent codes of positive perceptions can be listed as follows:

1. No transportation (positive aspects/ teachers' attitudes, n=8)
2. Time-saving (positive aspects/ teachers' attitudes, n=6)

3. Cost-saving (positive aspects/ teachers' attitudes, n=5), Easy class management (positive aspects/ teachers' attitudes, n=5), Watching recorded instructional videos (positive aspects/ students' attitudes, n=5), No place limitation (positive aspects/ students' attitudes, n=5), No transportation (positive aspects/ students' attitudes, n=5), Improvement in technological skill (Gaining new skills/ students' attitudes, n=5)

According to the frequency list, the most frequent factor in positive perceptions of virtual classes is no transportation as referred by teachers. Teachers mentioned that students and teachers do not have to commute to institutes for holding classes. The second most frequent factor which was raised by teachers is time-saving. The third frequently emerged factor was cost-saving accompanied by the ease of class management. The teachers also highlighted the role of watching recorded instructional videos, no place limitation, no transportation, and improvement in technological abilities which were stated by students.

4.3. EFL Teachers' and Students' Future Directions towards Virtual Classes

In this case, the data were gathered from interviews, journals, and open-ended questions to codify the future directions of virtual classes. The codes were classified into two categories: 1) Teachers' attitudes and 2) Students' attitudes. Figure 3 demonstrates future directions for online classrooms.

Teachers and students suggested useful directions for improving online classes. Some of the directions that were mentioned are improving the internet quality, recoding the online classes, having face-to-face interaction, etc. In Appendix 3, the factors, sub-factors, and examples of future directions are presented.

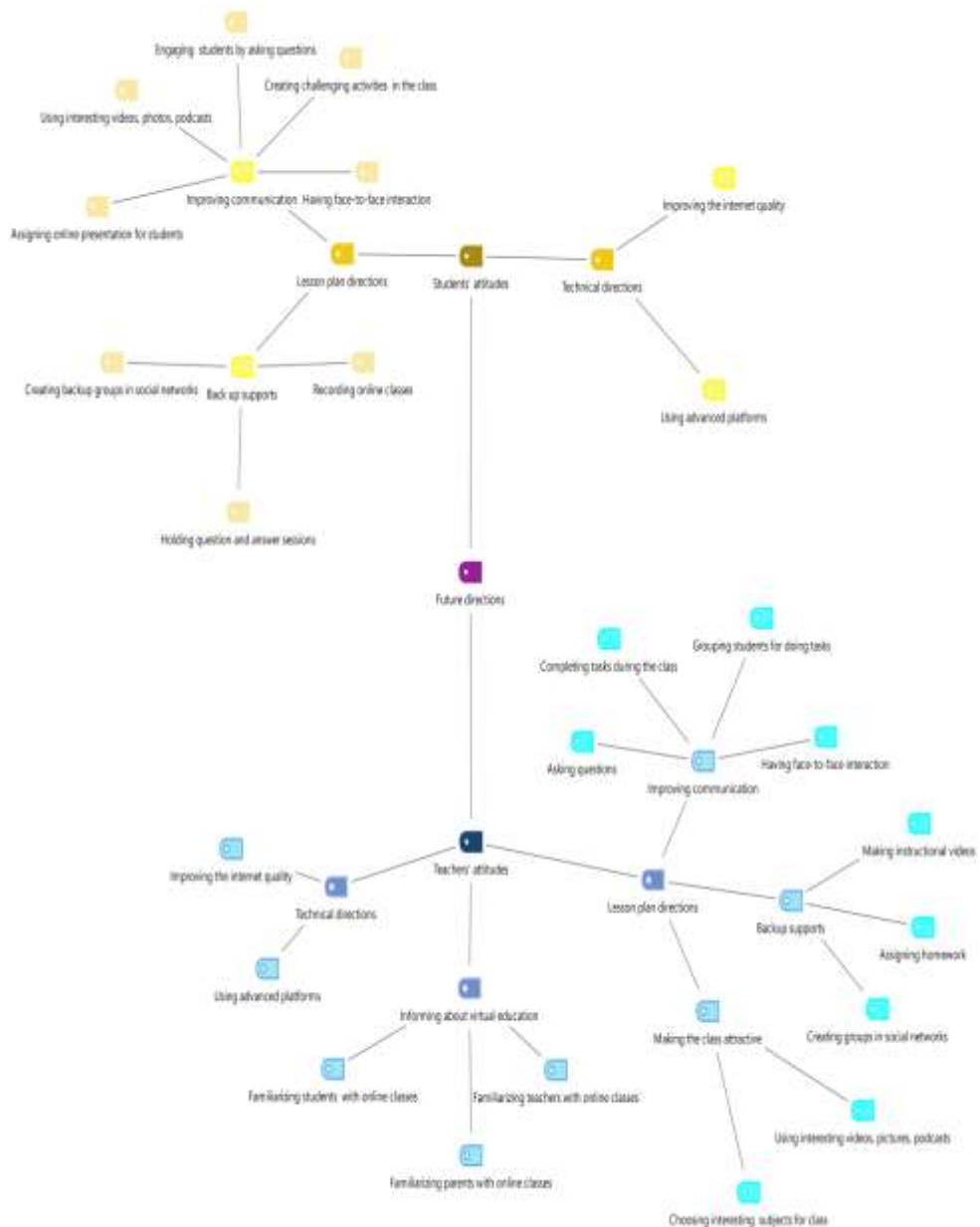


Figure 3. The Model of EFL Teachers' and Students' Future Directions toward Virtual Classes

After analyzing data and mapping the codes, the frequencies of codes for future directions of virtual classes were tabulated as follows (Table 5):

Table 5

Frequency of the Identified Codes of EFL Teachers' and Students' Future Directions toward Virtual Classes

Code System	Frequency
Future directions	
Teachers' attitudes	
Informing about virtual education	
Familiarizing students with online classes	2
Familiarizing parents with online classes	3
Familiarizing teachers with online classes	1
Lesson plan directions	
Backup supports	
Assigning homework	3
Creating groups on social networks	5
Making instructional videos	3
Improving communication	3
Asking questions	5
Completing tasks during the class	2
Grouping students for doing tasks	3



Having face-to-face interaction	4
Making the class attractive	
Choosing interesting subjects for class	1
Using interesting videos, pictures, podcasts	3
Technical directions	
Improving the internet quality	5
Using advanced platforms	5
Students' attitudes	
Lesson plan directions	
Improving communication	4
Assigning online presentations to students	1
Creating challenging activities in the class	3
Engaging students by asking questions	2
Having face-to-face interaction	2
Using interesting videos, photos, podcasts	4
Back up supports	
Creating backup groups in social networks	1

Holding question-and-answer sessions	3
Recording online classes	4
Technical directions	
Improving internet quality	7
Using advanced platforms	3

According to Table 5, the most frequency codes can be listed as follows:

1. Improving internet quality (Technical directions/ students' attitudes, n=7)
2. Creating groups in social networks (backup supports/ lesson plan directions/ teachers' attitudes, n=5), Asking questions (Improving communication/ lesson plan directions/ teachers' attitudes, n=5), Improving the internet quality (technical directions/ teachers' attitudes, n=5), Using advanced platforms (technical directions/ teachers' attitudes, n=5)
3. Having face-to-face interaction (improving communication/ lesson plan directions/ teachers' attitudes, n=4), Improving communication (lesson plan directions/ students' attitudes, n=4), Using interesting videos, photos, podcasts (improving communication/ lesson plan directions/ students' attitudes, n=4), Recording online classes (backup supports/ lesson plan directions/ students' attitudes, n=4)

The most frequent factor about future direction is improving internet quality which was mentioned by students. The second group of most frequent factors is creating groups in social networks, asking questions, and using advanced platforms. The third position in the list goes for having face-to-face interaction, improving communication, using interesting videos, photos, and podcasts, and recording online classes.

4.4. EFL Teachers' and Students' Attitudes about Students' Learning Effectiveness in Virtual Classes

The collected information was coded and classified into two main categories 1) students' attitudes and 2) teachers' attitudes. Figure 4 illustrates the EFL teachers' and students' outlooks on learners' learning efficiency in virtual classes.

The teachers' and students' perceptions of learning effectiveness in virtual education were varied and were classified into three sub-factors lower, higher, and no difference (Figure 4). The examples of students' learning efficiency from teachers' and students' perceptions are presented in Appendix 4.

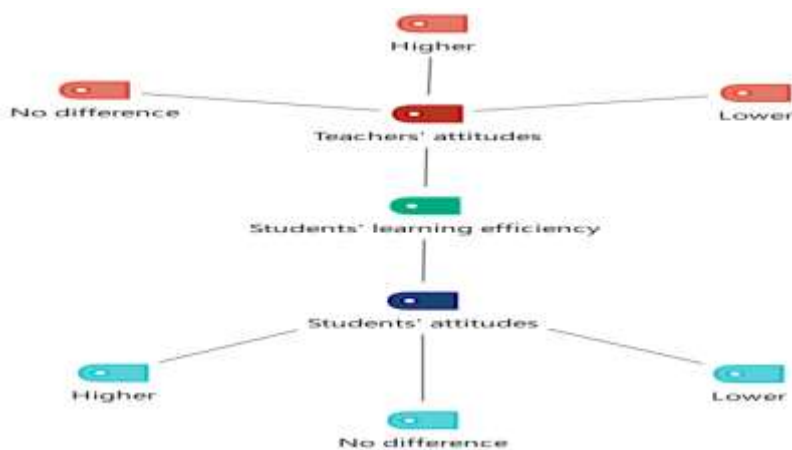


Figure 4. The Model of EFL Teachers' and Students' Attitudes about Students' Learning Efficiency in Virtual Classes

After analyzing data, the frequency of the identified codes was tabulated in the following table (Table 6).

Table 6

Frequency of the Identified Codes of EFL Teachers' and Students' Attitudes about Students' Learning Efficiency in Virtual Classes

Code System	Frequency
Students learning efficiency	
Teachers' attitudes	

No difference	3
Higher	2
Lower	7
Students' attitudes	
No difference	2
Higher	3
Lower	3

The most frequent factors of teachers' and students' viewpoints about learners' learning efficiency are:

1. Lowered (teachers' attitudes, n=7)
2. No difference (teachers' attitudes, n=3), increased (students' attitudes, n=3), lowered (students' attitudes, n=3)
3. Higher (teachers' attitudes, n=2), no difference (students' attitudes, n=2)

According to Table 6, most teachers believed that students' learning efficiency decreased in online classes. The second most frequent factors are no difference (stated by teachers), increased (stated by students), and lowered (stated by students).

5. Discussion

The present study was carried out to explore the learning effectiveness, benefits, snags, and future directions of virtual teaching among Iranian EFL teachers and students. Regarding the negative aspects of online classes, teachers and students believed that poor internet connection and technical problems were the major predicaments of online classes. Previous research studies of blended and online learning referred to a slow internet connection as one of the obstacles to virtual classes as well (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005; Maqableh, 2021; Mohamed, 2018).



Teachers stated that low communication and not being able to have face-to-face interaction are one of the biggest problems of virtual classes. As a result, online classes are mostly teacher-centered rather than student-centered. Not being able to communicate is one of the major problems of distance education (Sun, 2011). Teachers also were worried about students' presentations, students' concentration, students' problems, and students' cheating in online classes. They believed that students might not have enough concentration during class and they can cheat very easily in exams. Moreover, teachers declared that students do not take online classes very seriously as they became bored and tired during classes. Like teachers, students were not satisfied with the interactions between students and the teacher in online classes. Moreover, they stated that they had a lower concentration in distance education which had affected their motivation accordingly. Maqableh (2021) also stated that distraction and reduced focus were negative points of online classes from students' perspectives.

Regarding the positive features of virtual classes, teachers stated that they did not have to commute to the institutes or schools; thus, they did not have to spend time and money on commuting. Factors such as time-saving and cost-saving were also mentioned by other researchers in the field (Maqableh, 2021). Teachers also claimed that the problem of place limitation was solved; therefore, they could teach from any location and they had students from different cities. Researchers have also referred to distance education as a means of providing training all over the world and in different locations (Mohamed, 2018).

Teachers said that they can manage and control online classes more easily than traditional classes. For example, they do not have to make the class quiet or put students in different groups. Teachers teach the lessons without any distribution of students. As a result, teachers have more confidence in such classes. Lazarevic and Bents (2021) analyzed the stress of students in traditional classes and online classes. The results indicated that students in online classes had lower stress due to the flexibility of online activities and they had lower social stress.

Another positive aspect of online classes was recording instructional videos. Students said that instructional and recorded videos helped them lot, because they could watch them as much as they wanted. Mohamed (2018) stated that in online learning, learner convenience is increased and students can study at their own pace and whenever they want.

Teachers and students stated some directions for improving online classes. The most frequent direction is the improvement of the internet quality was stated by the two groups. Wright (2017) has also referred to the significance of the high speed of the internet as a prerequisite for maintaining instructional quality in online classes. Further, teachers said that some classes should be held for

teachers, students, and even parents to become familiar with a virtual learning environment. In this case, [Mohamed \(2018\)](#) has also suggested assigning training workshops for students and teachers as a recommendation for gaining the highest advantage of online classes.

Teachers suggested creating groups on social networks, recording instructional videos, and assigning homework as backup support for students. In this vein, [Sampson \(2003\)](#) has also underlined the role of effective support in increasing the learners' performance.

Choosing interesting topics and using various pictures, videos, podcasts, etc. can make students more engaged during online classes. The lessons in online classes should be motivating and interesting to increase the students' learning ([Wright, 2017](#)). Content design is considered an indispensable component of online education ([Sun, 2014](#)). As the interaction in online classes seems to be relatively low compared to in-person classes, teachers are required to insist on improving communication by asking questions during the class, assigning some tasks to students, and having face-to-face interaction. Similarly, students suggested improving communication by having face-to-face interaction, challenging activities, and asking questions ([Bervell et al., 2020](#)).

Regarding students' learning efficiency in online classes, there were various opinions. In comparison to traditional classes, most of the teachers thought that students' learning efficiency decreased in distance education. This line of finding is compatible with [Jaschik et al.'s study \(2014\)](#) which found outcomes in online learning were less than those in traditional classes. However, some other studies have shown that the way of delivering the content did not negatively affect students' learning. They said that students, who had been active and motivated in traditional classes performed well in online classes, too. This is following [Harker and Koutsantoni \(2005\)](#) who stated that one's level of learning efficiency is related to the students' commitment to learning rather than the means of content presentation.

6. Conclusion

The study showed that slow internet connection, and low interaction between students and the teacher in and outside the online classes were the most negative aspects of online classes. Thus, improving the internet speed, using more advanced platforms, improving interaction by creating groups, supporting students, and using attractive materials were some future directions suggested by teachers and students. They also mentioned time and cost considerations, recording instructional videos, and flexibility as positive points of distance education. Regarding the students' learning efficiency in online classes, there were three points of view. Most of them believed that students' outcomes were



lower than traditional classes. Others thought that there was no difference between students' outcomes in traditional and online classes. A few believed that their learning efficiency was higher in online classes. The findings suggest several courses of action for policymakers, administrators, supervisors, managers, and English teachers. First of all, the speed of the internet must improve. Alongside the internet, the platforms that are used for online classes should be improved. Policymakers should provide platforms with more and better options.

There are some implications for managers and supervisors of institutes and schools. Managers should provide some training sessions for teachers about how to use online platforms and how to teach online. Also, students need to gain information about the online class environment and how it works. Also, online classes with a high number of students do not have remarkable efficiency. As a result, online classes should be held with fewer students in which there would be opportunities for more interaction. Further, the results can be suitable for teachers, too. Teachers should participate in training courses for online classes. Interaction in online classes is important to the point that teachers should try hard to engage students with various activities. Teachers can make the class more enjoyable by using interesting videos, power points, and pictures. Supporting students outside class time is essential. Teachers should support their students by sending instructional videos, answering their questions, and clarifying the objectives of the lessons.

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Appendix 1. Interview Questions for Teachers and Students

Role	Questions
Teachers	1. What are the positive points of virtual classrooms?
	2. What are the negative points of virtual classrooms?
	3. What do you worry about while teaching online?
	4. In your opinion, what are the future solutions and directions for improving virtual classes?
	5. What are your suggestions about improving the interaction and communication between students and the teacher during online classes?
	6. How is your students' learning efficiency in online classes? What is your students' opinion about online classes?
Students	1. What are the positive points of virtual classrooms?
	2. What are the negative points of virtual classrooms?
	3. What are your suggestions for improving the interaction between students and a teacher?
	4. In your opinion, what are the future solutions and directions for improving virtual classes?
	5. What kind of characteristics or abilities did you gain during virtual classrooms?



6. How is your learning efficiency in virtual classes? Do you prefer virtual education to traditional education?

Appendix 2. Open-ended Questions for Teachers and Students

Open-ended questions

1. I don't like virtual education, because ...

2. I like virtual education, because...

3. Virtual education will be better in some ways, like...

4. The students'/ my learning efficiency has increased/ decreased in virtual classes, because...

Appendix 3. Conceptualization of Factors and Sub-Factors of EFL Teachers' and Students' Negative Perceptions towards Virtual Classes

Negative perceptions	Sub factors	Examples:
Students' attitudes	a) Teachers and students interaction	1. Low interaction between a teacher and students
		• Online classes are not as good as traditional classes and it is due to the absence of interaction between a teacher and students. In many cases, the teacher and students have not seen each other. As a result, a good interaction doesn't happen between them.
		2. No face-to-face interaction
		• Students and a teacher do not have a face to face interaction with each other, and as a result the interactions between them are low.
	b) Students' feelings	3. Low communication among individuals
		• Students do not have interactions with each other.
		1. Decreasing motivation
		• Virtual classes can cause decreasing motivation in long term.
		2. Feeling bored
		• One of the negative points of online classes is that they are boring.

Teachers' attitudes	c)Technical problems	3. Having low interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My concentration during online classes was really low.
		1. Poor internet connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical problems, low connection, and internet disconnection are the most problems that students have in online classes that cause students distraction.
	a)Students' characteristics	2. Lack of technical facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students may not have access to mobiles or computers to participate in online classes.
		1. Becoming tired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many students are tired of online classes.
		2. Becoming bored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students think that online classes are boring.
		3. Having low learning efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learning efficiency has become lower in online classes.
		4. Not taking the class seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not like virtual classes, because students don't take them seriously and they don't take them like a real class. For example, a student is at a party and at the same time has an online class. If it was a traditional class, the student would not be at the party and would pay attention to the teacher.
	b)Technical problems	1. Poor internet connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a problem with the internet. My internet or my students' internet may have a low connection or may be disconnected, and we cannot enter the online classroom.
		2. Lack of technical facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many students do not have technical tools like mobile phones, laptops,



			etc.; so, they cannot participate in online classes.
	3. Platforms' technical problems		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The facilities of the online platforms are limited. The board of the platforms is not like a real class board that you can write on it easily. Also, many times there is the problem of poor internet connection and you cannot upload the files (videos or pictures) that you have prepared for the class.
c)Features of classrooms	1. Difficulties in the teaching some subjects		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching some subjects is hard in online classes.
	2. No face to face interaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In my opinion, the biggest problem with virtual classes is that we don't have face-to-face interaction with students. In traditional classrooms, the interaction between the teacher and students was much better, so students paid more attention to the lessons.
	3. Low communication		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication and group work of the students in virtual classes have decreased. It is the teacher that mostly talks during the class and just teaches the lessons till the end of the class.
	4. Teacher-centered context		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I think that virtual classes are more formal than face-to-face classes, so sometimes I feel that communications in my classes are not good

		<p>enough and the class is teacher-centered. Students don't ask questions and don't participate. But, in face-to-face classes, I could engage students in discussions much better.</p>	
d)Teachers' worries	1. Students' problems with lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not like virtual classes, because if students have any problems, we rarely can understand them. Understanding the students' problems is hard. 	
	2. Students' concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In virtual classes, you cannot understand whether students have enough concentration or not. 	
	3. Students' presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When I started teaching online, the first point that came to my mind was that if students had been present in the class or not. 	
	4. Students' cheating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In virtual education, students can cheat very easily. 	

Appendix 4. Conceptualization of Factors and Sub-Factors of EFL Teachers' and Students' Positive Perceptions towards Virtual Classes

Positive perceptions	Sub factors	Examples:	
Students' attitudes	a)Positive aspects	1. Watching recorded instructional videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In virtual classes, students have the opportunity to watch and listen to the recorded files many times and solve their problems in lessons.
		2. Time-saving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For virtual classes, we don't spend a lot of time on transportation.
		3. No transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the benefits of virtual classes is that you don't have



Teachers' attitudes	Positive aspects	b)Gaining new skills	4.No place limitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to transport and go to your class.
			1. Improving technological skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the important advantages of virtual classes is that you have no limitations in place and time.
Teachers' attitudes	Positive aspects	b)Gaining new skills	2. Time management abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the best advantages of virtual classes was gaining new computer skills and knowledge of technology.
			3. Higher sense of responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the abilities that I gained was that I could manage my time better.
			1. Recorded instructional videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My sense of responsibility has improved during virtual education.
				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers can send recorded videos to students, so they can watch videos many times and whenever they want.
			2. Time-saving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers can send recorded videos to students, so they can watch videos many times and whenever they want.
			3. Cost-saving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual classes have some positive points. For example, it saves the time of students and teachers.
			4. Easy class management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers don't have to spend a cost on transportation.
				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handling virtual classes is much easier. There is no need that the teachers to spend extra energy controlling the class. For example, making the students quiet or doing the absent and present task. The teacher teaches the lessons very easily without any distribution of students.
			5. No place limitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In virtual classes, you can teach many students from different cities.
			6. No transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I like virtual classes because I'm in my own home and there is no need to transport me to work.

Appendix 5. Conceptualization of Factors and Sub-Factors of EFL Teachers' and Students' Future Directions towards Virtual Classes

Future direction	Sub factors		Examples	
Students' attitudes	a)Lesson plan directions	1. Improving communication	1.1. Assigning online presentations for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should give a presentation in online classes about lessons.
			1.2. Using interesting videos, photos, podcasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the teacher uses power points, videos, and pictures for teaching the syllabus, the efficiency of the class will improve.
			1.3. Engaging students by asking questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers should ask questions during the virtual classes and give feedback to them.
			1.4. Creating challenging activities in the class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers should create a challenge in online classes. For example, they can offer a topic and students discuss it.
			1.5. Having face-to-face interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and students must have a face-to-face interaction.
		2. Backup supports	2.1. Creating backup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be a group on



			groups in social networks	social media, so students and a teacher can communicate with each other.
			2.2. Holding question and answer sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If I were my teacher, I would hold a session before the classes, so students could talk about different subjects.
			2.3. Recording online class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers should record the classes. Because if a student misses a class, she or he can watch the videos and learn the lessons later
	b)Technical directions	1. Improving the internet quality		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality of the internet must be improved.
		2. Using advanced platforms		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers should use better platforms with fewer limitations and more options.
Teachers' attitudes	a)Lesson plan directions	1. Improving communication	1.1. Asking questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I think that the environment of the online class should be such that students

	know their names are going to be called at any moment and they should speak.
1.2. Completing tasks during the class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers can ask students to complete a task during the class and answer the questions.
1.3. Grouping students for doing tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I ask my students to make a group of two or three and then turn on their webcams to communicate and speak with each other.
1.4. Having face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For improving the virtual learning environment, classes should be like video calls. It is because, if we can have both the picture and the voice of all participants, the class will be more real-like. And it can be better if several persons



2. Backup supports

2.1. Making instructional videos

- interact during the class.
- One of the activities that I did to improve the quality of my teaching was recording and making some instructional videos for students. I explained grammar points in those videos and sent them to the Whatsapp group.

2.2. Assigning homework

- After finishing the online classes, I ask my students to send their homework in a determinate time. In this way, if they have a question or any problem, they can ask me.

2.3. Creating groups in social media

- I made a group in the Telegram app to use it in situations where we don't have a good internet connection and we cannot enter

			the online platform. So, I use the group for teaching the lessons.
	3. Making the class attractive	3.1. Using interesting videos, pictures, podcasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For online classes, it is better to use some interesting podcasts, videos, etc. for making the class more attractive.
		3.2. Choosing interesting subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers should choose new and attractive topics for discussion in the class.
b) Technical directions	1. Improving the internet quality		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For improving the virtual learning environment, having high-speed internet is important.
	2. Using advanced platforms		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For improving the virtual learning environment, I think that it is better to use more advanced applications and platforms. It is better to use platforms where we can



c)Informing
about
virtual
education

1.
Familiarizing
students with
online classes

2.
Familiarizing
teachers with
online classes

3.
Familiarizing
parents with
online classes

have both the
voice and the
picture of
students.

- There should be some classes for students to become familiar with online classes, to know how to work with online platforms, to increase their knowledge about technology, etc.
- There should be some workshops for teachers to know how to teach in online classes.
- There should be some classes for parents to know what online class is. Parents must gain knowledge about virtual classes. Also, we have to ask parents to have more control over their children during the time of online classes

and be
assured that
their children
take part in
the class.

Appendix 6. Conceptualization of Factors and Sub-Factors of EFL Teachers' and Students' Attitudes about Students Learning Efficiency in Virtual Classes

Students' learning efficiency	Sub factors	Examples:
Students' attitudes	a) Lower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, the learning efficiency in online classes is lower than in traditional classes.
	b) Higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My learning efficiency in virtual classes is higher because I am more relaxed. So, I can concentrate better.
	c) No difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personally, my learning efficiency in online classes is not different from traditional classes.
Teachers' attitudes	a) Lower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, students' learning efficiency is not like in traditional classes. Because they don't study and practice enough.
	b) Higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a private class with one student. This class is held on Skype and we have face-to-face interaction. In such a class, the learning efficiency of students is high.
	c) No difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students are hard-working and try a lot for learning. As a result, their learning efficiency in online classes has not changed in comparison with traditional classes. They study hard in online classes like traditional classes.
