Benefits of Teaching English to Children in Virtual Classes: Teachers' Perspectives from Khanh Hoa Province, Viet Nam

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, technological advancements have greatly impacted the education industry, leading to the rise of online teaching and learning as a promising trend worldwide. However, in Viet Nam, research on virtual classrooms for young learners has been relatively limited. As a result, a recent study sought to examine English teachers' perspectives on the benefits of teaching English to children virtually. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to collect data through an online questionnaire distributed to 52 English teachers in Khanh Hoa Province, Central Viet Nam, who had at least one-year experience in teaching English to children online and in-depth interviews with 15 of them. The findings revealed that virtual classrooms offer numerous benefits for teachers, such as integrating all four language skills, enhancing teaching and learning performance, improving their digital skills, keeping up with educational technology trends, accessing a wealth of resources on educational websites, and fostering creativity in developing activities that enhance children's engagement and motivation in English lessons. Overall, this study highlights the valuable benefits of teaching the English language to children in virtual settings. The findings hold relevance for other stakeholders involved in the development of virtual language education in Viet Nam and similar contexts.

Introduction

Online learning has become popular due to technological advancements. It allows students to attend classes and complete courses through distance learning and virtual classrooms, making it an unconventional pathway to learning (Ko & Rossen, 2017). The traditional classroom can now be virtualized, leading to the fact that virtual classrooms are increasingly used in different levels of education, representing a significant evolution in how education is delivered (Martin & Parker, 2014); these virtual classrooms are anticipated to be the future of the education

system in the high-tech era due to their popularity and usefulness (Alhat, 2020). In today's post-pandemic world, EFL teachers have been continually eager to access flexible online education systems coming with new technologies and teaching models (Fran, 2022). As a result, the rise of hybrid or blended learning presents a practical and engaging approach by merging conventional in-person instruction with the advanced digital features of online learning environments (Singh et al., 2021).

English language education is a major concern for educators, teachers, and parents worldwide, especially in virtual classrooms for students of all types, especially children. Thus, it is worth noting that introducing and maintaining English language education for children at a young age is crucial for their progress in acquiring a second language and developing a strong foundation for learning English in the future (Hummel, 2014).

Viet Nam's education system actively promotes using technology in classrooms. The widespread availability of the Internet and online educational platforms has made this integration easier. As a result, virtual classrooms have become increasingly popular as a modern teaching approach (Le & Pham, 2023). Therefore, teachers, particularly English teachers, are expected to have perceptive insights into online/ virtual teaching or blended learning so that both teachers and students can keep up with rapid technological changes in education. In the post-Covid-19, educational institutions in Viet Nam, particularly in Khanh Hoa Province, have adapted to a "new normal" period. This period is characterized by a mix of traditional and blended teaching approaches, with an increased reliance on technology in the process of teaching and learning. Assessing the effectiveness of online learning in English language instruction is crucial to maximize its benefits and mitigate any drawbacks.

The research is driven by our firsthand experience teaching English online in Khanh Hoa Province during the pandemic and thereafter. Many language centers and EFL teachers in the region have continued online instruction as a viable method, especially when traditional classroom settings are not feasible. This study pinpoints the perspectives of local English teachers who have taught children online for at least three years. Its aim is to identify the benefits of virtual classrooms and then stimulate ways to enhance teaching and learning outcomes in similar contexts.

Research question

To fulfill the aim, the research was then conducted to answer this question: *What are the teachers' perspectives on the benefits of virtual classrooms in teaching English to children in Khanh Hoa Province?*

Theoretically, based on the benefits reaped by English teachers in Khanh Hoa Province to leverage virtual learning platforms to maintain and enrich children's English learning, the study will provide a valuable reference for teachers, both in Viet Nam and globally, who are focused on enhancing teaching and learning quality at the elementary level during the digital transition, then contribute to future scholarly work in this field, offering insights in online English education. Practically, the study offers guidance and recommendations for English teachers in Khanh Hoa Province and beyond with a focus on optimizing the benefits of online English language education for young learners and developing greater confidence and flexibility in employing technology-based teaching strategies in upcoming EFL classes.

Literature review

Virtual classroom in language education

A virtual classroom is a form of electronic classroom in which students can interact, show their presentations, use various learning resources, and collaborate with groups (Joan, 2018). Virtual classrooms are part of a virtual learning environment, also known as a learning management or online delivery system that supports distance learning (JISC, 2010; Ko & Rossen, 2017). Put differently, learners engage with a curriculum that is delivered digitally, with teachers providing lessons through online videos or audio. This teaching can occur in either a self-directed (asynchronous) format or a live (synchronous) environment. In this current study, we totally focus on the synchronous environment when mentioning virtual classrooms.

Teachers create online classes and enroll students in such classes; inside the courses, teachers can easily combine a number of resources to design interactive learning activities (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). The online classroom creates a dynamic learning space through the use of internet technology, allowing students and educators to work together, interact, share their thoughts, and communicate within a framework that is both educationally and technically organized (Elfeky & Elbyaly, 2023). Additionally, virtual learning can be adapted and merged with conventional education to create a hybrid learning model, which incorporates technology and digital media alongside traditional classroom teaching led by instructors (Jamilah & Fahyuni, 2022). Virtual platforms are increasingly popular for language teaching, allowing for greater student-teacher interaction and personalized learning.

Teaching English to children in virtual classrooms

Understanding children's learning characteristics

Children are receptive to activities centered on real-life experiences and draw knowledge from their surroundings; thus, visual, auditory, and tactile experiences are just as crucial for comprehension as the explanations provided by teachers (Harmer, 2007). Also, children learn English best through play and other physical activities, but they cannot decide what to learn by themselves and concentrate on the same thing for a long time (Harmer, 2015). In addition, due to their short attention span, children can easily get bored by activities that are slow-spaced, theoretical, and not exciting; children love discovering things, so they can be well engaged in physical movements or games requiring imagination and creation, and they are easily attracted to resources equipped with technology. Thus, to keep children's enthusiasm during a lesson, teachers should praise and acknowledge them whenever they have good performances. When learning a new language, their comprehension is primarily facilitated through their seeing, moving, and hearing, which makes the physical world a constant dominant factor (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

Unlike face-to-face classrooms, virtual classrooms permit students and teachers to see, communicate, and interact with each other through the screen of digital devices that are installed with communication software (e.g., Skype, Zoom, Messenger, Zalo, etc.), so using webcams, microphones, or live chat, students can pose questions in real-time, resulting in a more interactive learning experience. Overall, the virtual classroom offers an engaging learning atmosphere through the use of internet technology, enabling students and teachers to work together, interact, share their thoughts, and communicate within a framework of well-organized

educational and technical processes (Elfeky & Elbyaly, 2023).

As mentioned in the previous section, thanks to its features, the virtual learning environment is quite applicable for children. Therefore, in virtual classrooms, teachers can and should encourage and mentor the children, model the language, and create suitable settings for them to learn the new language better.

Building an effective virtual learning environment

A lot of research findings concur that the primary school setting enhances children's self-confidence, self-discipline, cooperative behavior, gender awareness, symbolic communication, logical reasoning, creativity, ability to solve problems, concentration, and engagement with tasks (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). It is the classroom that plays an important role in children's acquiring the target language. It can be created from successful interactions between children and the teacher, as well as among the children in a classroom. When children feel safe and happy in their classroom, they can be motivated to become independent and explore new territories in their educational journey (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

Furthermore, flexibility in grouping can create an effective working atmosphere for children to practice the language and enhance their face-to-face communication. These setups are effective methods for increasing the duration of student speech while reducing the amount of time teachers spend talking (Harmer, 2015). Following this, children can actively generate learning motivation for each other and regulate the pleasant atmosphere in the classroom.

Thus, to teach English effectively to children, teachers should create an engaging virtual learning environment. By using colorful displays and English content, children are more likely to be motivated and excited about learning. This helps them gain more exposure to the target language naturally, leading to a more effective learning method.

Benefits of virtual classrooms in teaching English

Developing teachers' digital skills

Virtual classrooms provide substantial opportunities to enhance teachers' information and computer technology (competence relating to digital skills in the twenty-first century) (Omboto & Kanga, 2022). With online teaching, teachers spend much time using computers and the Internet to administrate virtual classes, prepare lessons, design activities, and update trends in education. Put differently, adept use of ICT by teachers in virtual classrooms can lead to successful outcomes in language education, especially through the use of email, blogs, and video conferencing. These tools enhance students' interactions and communications with native speakers and various communities, allowing them to apply the language in genuine contexts and for actual purposes. This, in turn, enhances teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward digital technology, opening numerous possibilities for their creativity in teaching the English language (Karsenti et al., 2020; Paudel, 2021).

Employing materials and online resources

A virtual classroom is beneficial for teachers to access a wide range of online materials that serve English language teaching and learning. Indeed, online courses provide teachers with authentic and huge resources of materials required for designing lessons, administrating students and virtual classes, and allowing adjustments to subjects and content needs (Paudel, 2021). Effective materials ought to cover topics that are relevant, captivating, and significant to students. They should feature language both contextual and authentic and prioritize the understanding of meaning over the structure of language. Additionally, there should be an integration of skills and a repetition of concepts for reinforcement (Amato, 1988, as cited in Garton & Copland, 2019).

Although many technology tools can be beneficial for online learning, primary school teachers seem to be familiar with the course management system or learning management system (LMS), an e-learning platform that provides an integrated toolset (including tools such as chat box, discussion board, grade book, e-mail, and content storage such as a digital dropbox) to the online teachers and students (Dawley, 2007; Boettcher & Conrad, 2010), and a software tool designed for administrating, documenting, monitoring, and reporting on training initiatives, including both classroom and online activities, e-learning courses, and educational materials (Nedeva & Dimova, 2010). Generally, as a web-based technology, the LMS is popular for planning, implementing, and assessing a specific learning process. By using such kinds of tools, teachers can share the screen and documents while presenting their lessons or build Web page classrooms for storing course content. Depending on the nature of the class and lesson content, teachers can flexibly choose appropriate materials and platforms to design activities to help students get involved in the lesson.

Increasing students' interest and engagement in learning

The virtual classroom, equipped with audio and video capabilities, enabled two-way communication among students, allowing them to clarify questions and offer immediate feedback while participating in the activity (Gedera, 2014). In synchronous learning environments, immediate feedback and engagement with both peers and the instructor appear to boost motivation and enhance students' learning (Schullo et al., 2007). Besides, the graphical richness of the world and the liberty provided to students to digitally rebuild and witness their imaginative creations come to life enhance the appeal of the learning material and facilitate experiential knowledge acquisition. This leads to a rise in students' eagerness to interact with the learning content and engage in their educational journey (Christopoulos et al., 2018). It is a fact that students today are completely accustomed to the digital environment. As a result, many find features like interactive online whiteboards, messaging, breakout rooms, instant messaging, and games in virtual classrooms enjoyable, making online education more entertaining and engaging (Arden, 2021).

Thus, multimedia in virtual classrooms can enhance children's learning experience. Audios and videos, online whiteboards, interactive games, etc., help increase their engagement and communication. Children today are more adaptable to digital tools, and their use can boost motivation and participation. Teachers should make use of dynamic technology in virtual environments to improve their students' learning.

Previous related studies

Many studies have been conducted on the benefits of the virtual classroom teaching system in contemporary English language teaching and learning worldwide. Meena (2019) found that virtual classrooms can be successful if teachers use technology and pay attention to pedagogic and educational matters. Dash (2022) showed that students were more enthusiastic and excited to learn in this new way and suggested that teachers should welcome technology and use it to support teaching and learning. Lo (2023) investigated teachers' perspectives on EFL virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 emergency in Hong Kong using interviews and contributed to emphasize how digital technologies can enhance education and language learning.

In Viet Nam's educational setting, concerns over online English teaching and learning have been aroused in light of research whose context can vary from primary to higher education. Pham's (2018) research discovered that students benefit from easy access to a wide array of engaging learning resources, including complimentary online materials. This accessibility boosts their motivation and involvement in both self-directed study and face-to-face learning activities. Additionally, students gain increased chances to enhance their communication abilities and English language proficiency. In a subsequent study, Pham (2020) examined the perspectives of undergraduate EFL students on the impact of virtual learning and discovered that online platforms like Edmodo, Moodle, MyELT, and Google Classroom can increasingly foster autonomy and interest among students in online or hybrid English intensive courses. Vo & Le's (2023) research on university teachers' perceptions of online teaching found that most lecturers felt gratified by teaching virtual classes and satisfied with their lesson contents during the COVID-19 outbreak and perceived that both face-to-face traditional teaching and online teaching are effective. There has also been a surge of interest in exploring teachers' perceptions (Luu, 2021; Vo, 2022; Dau, 2022; Le et.al, 2022; Cao, 2023). Despite using different research methods to answer specific research questions and connecting with teachers at different school levels, most of these studies concluded that EFL teachers show enthusiasm for using online learning systems and tools, express a willingness to improve their ICT expertise to enhance the effectiveness of remote teaching, and agree that virtual instruction provides numerous advantages for EFL teachers and students, such as efficient organization and management of courses, a variety of instructional approaches, flexibility in learning and teaching activities, and improved student engagement and autonomy.

Although various studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of virtual classrooms in different contexts, they all suggest similar findings about the benefits of virtual classrooms in teaching and learning English online. While there is a significant amount of research conducted in foreign contexts, there is limited research on the perspectives of primary school teachers in Viet Nam regarding teaching English to children in virtual classrooms. Therefore, there is a research gap that needs to be addressed in this area.

Methodology

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The research was conducted in Khanh Hoa Province. The English program for children here, i.e., primary students, is aligned with Viet Nam's National English curriculum framework, of

which online learning is an important part. Also, this locality is a popular tourist destination in Central Viet Nam for international visitors. Thus, the children's demand to learn English is on the increase. The teacher participants are those currently working for different public and private schools and language centers, and some are freelancers. All the participants had experience in teaching English to children for at least one year or three online courses, which helped to make sure that their feedback was based on their real teaching practice and experience. They were contacted through Khanh Hoa Province's English teacher groups and English teacher communities on Zalo and Facebook. The study collected convenient samples. There were 52 teachers, including 45 females (86.5%) and 7 males (13.5%). Their demographics can be seen as follows.

Table 1

Demographics of the participants

Age	≤ 25	11 (21.2%)	*Working place*	Public schools	25 (48.1%)
	26 – 34	38 (73.1%)		Private schools	6 (11.5%)
	35 – 44	2 (3.8%)		Language centers	13 (25%)
	≥ 45	1 (1.9)		Other places	8 (15.4%)
Years of teaching English to children	1 – 5	34 (65.4%)	*Years of teaching English online to children*	≤ 1	35 (67.3%)
	6 – 15	14 (26.9%)		1.5 – 2	12 (23.1%)
	16 – 25	1 (1.9%)		2.5 – 3	1 (1.9)
	≥ 26	0 (0%)		> 3	4 (7.7%)

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of participants have ample experience teaching English in virtual classrooms for at least one year. We can confidently assume that they have explored the benefits of teaching English to children in virtual classrooms and have found ways to maximize such benefits. Therefore, their responses are highly reliable and applicable.

Design of the Study

The research is a case study investigating the perspectives of local teachers in Khanh Hoa Province on the benefits of virtual classrooms in teaching English to children. The research utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods via an online questionnaire and interviews to address its objectives, as outlined in the introduction. For the quantitative data, the first part of the questionnaire consisted of 16 items to explore the possible benefits of teaching English to children online. In terms of choosing options, the participants select the ones that describe their agreement or disagreement corresponding to the 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree). For the qualitative one, semi-structured online interviews were conducted with 15 of 52 participants based on their agreement to share deeper insights into the benefits of teaching English in virtual classrooms and their acceptance to talk via Zoom to ensure a private and comfortable setting to express their ideas conveniently. In detail, there were two questions in the interview section: the former was about the benefits of teaching English to children in virtual classrooms, and the latter was about the easiest skills to teach English to children in virtual classrooms.

Data collection and analysis

The formal process of data gathering commenced following a thorough examination of the pilot study and the execution of Cronbach's Alpha to test the reliability of the pilot questionnaire. In fact, English teachers in Khanh Hoa Province have an official community via the Zalo group, so the process of delivering the questionnaire was approved and carried out after the selected teacher participants were contacted. The teachers had two weeks to think and complete the questionnaires at their ease and convenience. The data was then synthesized and analyzed with SPSS version 22.0 in the form of descriptive statistics.

The interviews were carried out a month later so that the researchers had enough time to process the data collected from the questionnaire and find common benefits. Thus, the interviews would be conducted effectively and relevantly to the questionnaire. The researcher conducted 5-20-minute interviews with the participants via Zoom. Communication was in Vietnamese to ensure that the participants felt relaxed in their responses and explanations. To analyze the qualitative data, the recordings were first transcribed into English using the Microsoft online transcript tool. After that, the transcripts were sent back to the interviewees for their checking to maintain the accuracy of their opinions, and all of them accepted the transcripts. All the data obtained were tabulated and coded. The names of 15 interviewees were coded into T1-T15. The researcher the transcripts were analyzed with thematic and comparative approaches, and key elements were categorized into groups to better match the questionnaire data.

As previously stated, this paper employed a mixed-method research approach with a quantitative survey followed by in-depth interviews. To certify the legitimacy and reliability of the research findings, the author implemented methodological triangulation, effectively minimizing any potential research biases that may have been present.

Findings and discussion

Teaching English language skills in virtual classrooms

Table 2

Teaching language skills to children in virtual classrooms	*Mean*	*SD*
1. I can teach listening to children easily and effectively.	3.4	1.07
2. I can teach reading to children is easy and effectively.	3.42	1.09
3. I can teach speaking to children is easy and effectively.	3.62	1.12
4. I can teach writing to children easily and effectively.	3.28	.96
5. I can teach integrated skills in online lessons.	3.69	.85
6. I can provide opportunities for children to practice all four language skills.	3.9	.77
Total	*3.55*	*.98*

The average scores for teaching English language skills in virtual classrooms ranged from 3.28 to 3.9, with an overall average of 3.55. This means the teachers agreed on using virtual classrooms for teaching English language skills and showed positive attitudes towards teaching integrated skills and providing opportunities for students to practice. Thus, virtual classrooms can be effective in teaching language skills to children, as demonstrated in Table 2.

The results in the table are relatively in line with the findings from the responses from the 15 teacher interviews. They agreed it is acceptable to teach language skills in virtual classrooms: oral skills are easiest, followed by listening, with reading and writing more challenging. The majority of them find teaching speaking straightforward due to direct interaction and abundant online resources (T1, T2, T6, T7, T8, T10, T13, T14), and some effectively combine speaking and listening instruction using interactive methods and digital tools (T3, T6, T7, T8, T10). Reading, easier than writing but harder than listening, benefits from engaging methods and visual aids for better vocabulary retention (T2, T3, T7, T8, T13, T4, T9, T11, T15). Overall, virtual classrooms allow for innovative use of digital resources to enhance lesson engagement and student interest (T1, T7, T8, T12, T15).

The scores from the table and the consensus among the 15 interviewed teachers indicate that virtual environments foster an environment conducive to teaching language skills, though they might have varying degrees of effectiveness across different skill areas. Overall, the teachers view the leveraging of digital resources and interactive methods positively as a means to teach English language skills effectively. In addition, they recognize the need for further exploration of strategies to overcome certain limitations of virtual classrooms, particularly when teaching complex skills such as writing, to fully harness the potential of online education. The insights gleaned from their feedback underscore the importance of a nuanced understanding of the opportunities for teaching English language skills in virtual classrooms.

The results of this study align with prior research demonstrating the efficacy of virtual classrooms in facilitating English language instruction. Hamouda (2020) found that most of the students highlight the benefits of oral skills, while Soliman (2014) and Khoshsima and Sayadi (2016) noted improvements across all language skills, thanks to diverse online resources and interactive strategies. Hossain (2021) revealed the majority of teachers appreciate the ease of teaching speaking virtually, enhancing teacher-student interactions, and they prefer using audio-visual aids online for better educational outcomes. Bazo and Cabrera (2002) emphasized primary students' engagement with English through music and visuals and suggested that success in virtual English teaching relies on the creative and flexible use of digital tools.

Teaching and learning performance in virtual classrooms

Table 3

Teaching and learning performance in virtual classrooms	*Mean*	*SD*
7. I can help children to attain their lessons' learning outcomes in virtual classrooms.	3.45	.87
8. I can upload lessons in virtual classrooms for children to revise them conveniently at home.	3.89	1.00
9. I can conduct written exams and oral exams for language skills in virtual classrooms.	3.49	.81
Total	*3.61*	*.89*

According to Table 3, the average mean of items 7-9, which ranges from 3.45 to 3.89, indisputably reflects the overwhelmingly positive perception of teachers regarding their competence and effectiveness in conducting virtual classrooms.

As per the feedback from the teacher interviews, they found that employing online assessment tools featuring automated grading systems helped them evaluate their students' learning outcomes with ease, and it not only saved them ample time in grading but also provided prompt feedback to their students (T1, T5, and T7). Moreover, a few interviewees opined that introducing online exams to children at an early age could increase their familiarity with digital tools and technology, thereby preparing them for the digital demands of higher education (T3, T5, and T10).

The feedback from the teacher questionnaire responses and interviews shows that incorporating online assessment tools with automated grading into virtual classrooms can provide numerous benefits, both operationally and pedagogically. By streamlining the assessment process, teachers can save valuable time while immediately providing actionable feedback to children. Additionally, this proactive measure equips children with crucial digital literacy skills that are essential for success in today's increasingly digital world. Teacher interviews support the widespread adoption and integration of digital assessment tools in educational settings, emphasizing their role in improving the efficiency of the teaching and learning process while also preparing children for the future.

In previous studies, most teachers agree that using virtual classrooms brings convenience for their student assessment in both summative and formative forms during the COVID-19, and students' learning outcomes are maintained positively (Le et al., 2022). Similarly, Luu (2021) points out a result that online teaching is effective in both course content and assessment; and it is convenient for teachers to provide learning materials using learning management systems. The results are aligned with the findings of the current research in terms of teaching and learning performance in virtual classrooms.

Developing digital skills through virtual classrooms

Table 4

Teachers' developing digital skills in virtual classrooms	*Mean*	*SD*
10. I can explore many effective online platforms to design teaching activities.	4.09	1.05
11. I can improve my information and communication technology competence when I conduct online classes.	4.04	1.12
12. I can receive technical support and training from schools and language centers where I am currently working.	3.67	1.00
Total	*3.93*	*1.05*

According to the data, the scores for items 10-12 had a range of 3.67 to 4.09, with an average mean of 3.93. These results suggest that teaching online has played a vital role in enhancing the digital proficiency of teachers.

In interviews, many teachers shared favorable opinions about incorporating technology into their online instruction. For some, virtual classrooms presented the chance to explore innovative teaching methods by embracing digital tools and technologies, which allows the development of digital skills of both teachers and children (T4, T7, T8, T11, and T15). However, a few teachers felt the need for more comprehensive professional development and ongoing support to effectively integrate technology into their teaching methodologies (T4, T8, and T10).

Teachers are using interactive tools, multimedia content, and gamified learning platforms to make English lessons in virtual classrooms more engaging (T1, T5, T7, T8, T11, T12, and T14). However, some have concerns about equitable access to technology and resources (T2, T3, T9). In short, their attitudes towards developing digital skills range from excitement about innovation to concerns about equitable access and the need for support and training.

The findings provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of online teaching on digital proficiency and the integration of technology in educational settings. In the teachers' view, the shift towards virtual classrooms has necessitated and facilitated a deeper engagement with digital tools and platforms, leading to improved digital skills among them. While there is clear enthusiasm for these innovations, the discussions also highlight critical areas for further development, including the need for comprehensive training and support for teachers and the imperative to ensure equitable access to digital resources for all children.

The current findings are relevant to those of previous studies that examined the beneficial impact of employing virtual classrooms on enhancing teachers' digital competencies. Most of the interviewees in Zhang's (2020) research consider it crucial and necessary to enhance their capability to utilize digital tools for teaching English and to achieve proficiency in employing these tools within a professional setting, coupled with effective teaching methodologies. Minea-Pic (2020) also claims that virtual classrooms are vital in developing teachers' digital skills. Specifically, the author highlights that teachers possessing greater digital skills or the ability to swiftly explore and critically apply online resources tend to be more effective in their teaching, achieving their objectives in a shorter period. Moreover, teachers with advanced skills are better at selecting their online educational materials, opting for higher-quality courses or resources, and employing these resources in more sophisticated ways.

This research is relevant to previous studies on virtual classrooms and teachers' digital skills. Zhang (2020) found that it is pivotal for teachers' improvement of their digital tools proficiency for teaching English in a professional context. Minea-Pic (2020) highlights that virtual classrooms are essential to develop teachers' digital competence. Teachers with higher digital skills can navigate online resources efficiently, enhance their teaching effectiveness, and select better-quality courses. Also, the findings in this study support the argument that technology can help teachers create high-quality teaching materials, increase their ICT competencies, and improve the teaching process, which has been proven by Le et al. (2022), who affirmed that the use of technology in online classrooms can enhance teacher participation and efficiency, particularly for primary school students in complex epidemic situations, and in Elfeky and Elbyaly (2023), who supported the impact of online classrooms on enhancing teachers' digital competencies.

Classroom management and engagement in virtual classrooms

Table 5

Classroom management and engagement in virtual classrooms	*Mean*	*SD*
13. I can engage my students in classroom activities.	3.71	.82
14. I can manage collaborative activities (pair work/group work) in online lessons.	2.87	1.03
15. I can maintain interaction with different types of students during an online lesson.	3.51	.77
16. I can make my students feel excited to take part in classroom activities.	3.54	.95
Total	*3.41*	*.89*

This table shows that participants were able to manage and engage children in virtual classrooms, except for item 14. The means of the items ranged from 3.51 to 3.71, with an average mean value of 3.41. Although most teachers agreed that children were excited to join classroom activities, collaborative activities may not be an advantage of teaching English in virtual classrooms. That's why item 14 has the lowest score of 2.87.

The teacher interviewees shared their views on the results in the table above. Digital tools and resources offer diverse learning experiences, enhance engagement, and aid in classroom management (T1, T2, T7, T8, and T11). Digital platforms are an effective solution for teachers to manage their classrooms seamlessly, offering a comprehensive set of features such as organizing materials, assigning tasks, tracking progress, and regulating student behavior (T4, T8, and T14). Virtual classrooms provide adaptive learning tools that personalize content and pace for individual students, catering to their specific learning requirements (T10 and T15). Online platforms provide real-time feedback, fostering interactive learning and helping students stay on track (T2, T9, T10, and T13). Interestingly, all 15 interviewees agreed that multimedia elements like videos, simulations, games, and interactive quizzes make learning engaging, leading to increased student participation and attentiveness.

The combination of table data and teacher interviews provides a comprehensive examination of classroom management and engagement. The statistics demonstrate numerous benefits of virtual classrooms, with the exception of fostering effective collaboration among students. Every one of the fifteen interviewees agreed on this point. While virtual classrooms prove effective in areas such as classroom management, engagement, and individualized learning, facilitating successful collaborative activities remains a challenge. The insights gathered suggest that while technology provides a strong foundation for managing and improving learning, continued innovation and support are necessary to overcome the obstacles to collaborative learning.

These discoveries align with those outlined in a recent study conducted by Le et al. (2022), who found over half of the 70 primary school English teachers agree that technology helps them manage their classrooms and design activities that capture children's attention in virtual classrooms. Likewise, Suleiman and other researchers (2022) highlighted the benefits of virtual classrooms, including student-centered approaches, increased diversity and creativity, accommodation of various learning styles, and greater student participation in lessons. In

addition, the viewpoints of educators on utilizing multimedia elements like videos, simulations, games, and interactive quizzes to foster interaction in virtual classrooms align with the findings of Sri and Krishna's (2014) research. This study highlighted the importance of tailoring instruction to accommodate three primary learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Consequently, incorporating captivating graphics and interactive features, as seen on platforms like Kahoot, Quizizz, and Booklet, can effectively sustain children's interest and involvement in the lesson. By leveraging technology, virtual classrooms offer numerous benefits that improve classroom management, boost student engagement, and provide personalized learning experiences to cater to individual needs.

Conclusion

In short, the findings are grouped into four sub-themes, showing the great benefits of virtual classrooms for teaching English to children at primary schools and highlighting that most of the teachers found virtual classrooms to be an effective tool for teaching English to children.

First, EFL teachers can teach children all the four language skills. In detail, teaching the speaking skill was the least challenging, followed by listening, reading, and writing skills. The integration of these skills was identified as a successful approach to teaching English in virtual classrooms, as it provided children with more opportunities to practice the language. However, it is remarkable that teaching the English language to children in virtual classrooms should focus more on speaking skills rather than writing skills. While listening and reading skills remain important aspects of online teaching, prioritizing speaking skills is essential for effective language learning.

Second, teachers conveyed positive views regarding the utilization of virtual classrooms for enhancing teaching and learning performance. This encompassed tasks such as uploading learning materials, assessing children's progress, and preserving their educational achievements.

Third, teaching English through virtual classrooms offers immense benefits for teachers, including the development of digital skills, keeping abreast of technological advancements in education, accessing a vast array of teaching resources on educational websites, and fostering creativity in designing activities that increase children's motivation and engagement in English lessons. Many teachers admit that using virtual classrooms in teaching English was a great way to help them develop their digital skills. Importantly, they had opportunities to innovate and enhance their teaching methods by embracing technologies, applying interactive tools, multimedia content, and gamified learning platforms in order to make English lessons more engaging and enjoyable, which is extremely effective in teaching English to children.

Fourth, virtual classrooms offer numerous advantages, including the promotion of teachers' familiarity with evolving technology trends in education, access to an extensive pool of teaching resources on educational websites, and the stimulation of their ingenuity in designing activities. As a consequence, virtual classrooms can significantly boost children's motivation, interaction, and engagement while learning English.

The current study sheds light on teachers' perspectives on virtual classrooms, but it has

unavoidable limitations. The sample size is small, and the research design may not control for all variables. Further investigation should involve broader and more varied participant groups, employ diverse research methodologies, and extend the study's scope. Hopefully, the research has provided a general picture of the benefits of teaching English to children in virtual classrooms and can be a useful reference for educators interested in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning at the primary level amid the shift to digital platforms in Viet Nam and similar contexts.

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