"Perceptions about Teaching Effectiveness and Learner's Achievement in Online Oral Communication Classes"

Muhammad Hassan Abbasi[1], Muhammad Wasif Khan[2,] Moomal Chandio[3,] Maryam Javed[4]

[1]*Lecturer Department of English Dawood University of Engineering & Technology Karachi*
[2]*Lecturer English, FAST Karachi Campus*
[3]*Visiting Lecturer English, NED University of Engineering & Technology Karachi*
[4]*BS English Scholar Bahria University Karachi Campus*

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 epidemic has spread throughout the world and has had a significant impact on education. As the global pandemic introduced new ways of imparting knowledge and broaden the scope of education from face-to-face to virtual settings due to social distancing. Hence, online learning has brought new teaching pedagogies and methodologies to integrate language skills in learners. Therefore, communication and English language skills teaching practices and student achievement in Pakistani context needs to be explored. Consequently, the present study aims to explore the perceptions of undergraduate students towards teaching effectiveness and learner's achievement in online oral communication skills in classes. For this purpose, a qualitative case study has been undertaken and data has been collected using purposive homogenous sampling from 15 students enrolled in BS English oral communication course by using semi-structured interviews within a public sector university. The collected data has been coded and analyzed using Saldana's model of thematic analysis. The findings suggest that although there are advantages and disadvantages virtual and traditional language teaching and acquisition of speaking skills. Yet, speaking skills can be effectively taught virtually through interactive lessons, activities and continuous assessment that promotes learning achievement for future. The present results are effective for language teachers, language centers, language learners and institutions for developing and designing effective online courses for learning different skills of English language.

Introduction

Online Education introduced a new way of teaching. Hence, the educational sector rapidly shifted from traditional face-to-face classes to virtual and hybrid classes. In this circumstance, teaching language based skills appeared to be the most difficult task. As teaching language skills requires engagement and interaction to effectively learn that skill (Apriyana, 2021).

The major aim of introducing oral communication skills course is to let the students overcome their speaking anxiety and fear of speaking. The students are engaged in a variety of activities to build confidence and gradually learn to speak in pairs, groups and lastly in front of a large audience. However, the teacher's role is of importance as the implementing authority to overcome fear of speaking through variety of activities. However, in traditional classes as reported major focus is on listening skills (Hamad, 2013 & Alharbi 2015). Also, the multilingual context where the learners are exposed to more than two languages and where the L1 has a major influence on L2 acquisition for speaking skills is a concerning issue.

In traditional classes, students have more opportunities to interact and communicate with the teacher and gain information and use it for different functions Also, the non-verbal language supports the content of the teacher and students develop an understanding by facial expressions and non-verbal cues. (Alwamleh et al,. 2020).

In such a context, the online learning system was introduced due to pandemic as an alternative to physical classes worldwide. Hence, teachers were required to use online platforms, Learning Management System (LMS) and digital applications for improving the quality of teaching and providing opportunities for learning. As, different public and private universities adopted this medium to continue the educational process. Hence, such initiatives always have repercussions. As the lectures were delivered online, teachers and students face problems especially students from different disciplines enrolled in English classes where the major focus is on four skills of language.

Online Education

Most of the studies that have been conducted to know the attitudes and perceptions of learners about online learning in Philippines and Indonesia reported that although learners believed that online medium was the only way to engage learners during pandemic. Yet most of them have negative attitudes towards learning English skills and using the daily digital platforms for effective learning and assessment. (Fansury et al., 2020). Still, many studies have been conducted that discussed the positive attributes of online education as it promotes student engagement with the material by providing e-version of the resources which are less-costly, learning opportunities and a sense of community. (Nguyen, 2015).

The major aim of online classes is quite similar to traditional classes. However, it tends to be more engaging, requires the learners to listen, understand and share their ideas and information in a meaningful manner. Holistically, online classes especially English classes whose sole purpose is communication intends to develop a sense of community among the learners (Alwamleh et al., 2020).

Statement of Problem

Oral communication skills has been taught in physical classes mostly which involves engaging students in groups and debates (Majeed, A, 2019). Hence, engaging them in different activities by using the physical space and interaction with peers. However, online education introduced a new

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

way of teaching that require technological pedagogy with a focus on learner centered activities. As in Pakistan, as per HEC guidelines online learning was the only medium of instruction to be implemented by universities. Therefore, the speaking skills course was taught online. Hence, the present study focuses on the perceptions of students enrolled in oral communication courses about their learning experiences, interactional practices and achievement. As speaking skills is one of the productive skill required for acquisition of language, therefore the focus of this study has been speaking skills which has not been explored previously .(Ferdig *et al*., 2020). Similarly, it provides an insight to the learners achievement in online speaking classes which can be effective for future implementation.

Research Gap

Previous studies that have been conducted on traditional speaking skills classes focusing on task-based learning. (Majeed, 2019). Also, most of the studies have been conducted to analyze and identify the problems of learners while acquiring language skills (Apriyana, 2021). However, identifying and exploring the problems, perceptions and attitudes of learners in online oral communication classes is yet to be explored. Also most of the studies have used quantitative methods to identify the attitudes of learners while taking oral communication skills course online (Alzamil, 2021; Paechter and Maier (2010) and Alwamleh *et al*., 2020). However, the present study fills the gap by exploring the perceptions of learners enrolled in an oral communication skills course and learning about their experience in an online speaking class which is yet to be explored. Hence, this study enhances the available literature and data by learning and exploring the

perceptions of English major students enrolled in an online semester.

Objectives of Study

To explore the perception of undergraduate students towards oral communication skills in online classes.

Research Questions

What are the perceptions of undergraduate students towards oral communication skills in online classes?

Literature Review:

Perceptions are broadly defined as how an individual perceives reality. This reality is selected, organized and interpreted to produce meaningful utterances (Kotler, 2000). Perceptions can be positive and negative depending on the human experience and these are developed by satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards the external world.

Online learning has been explained in a variety of ways. As Benson (2002) defines it as a way of distance education. However, Benson (2002) and Conrad (2002) also explains it in terms of access and gaining a learning experience by using the digital medium. Similarly, Ally (2004) discusses online classes as an alternative way of connectivity, learning mobility and creating interactivities opportunities for learners.

Speaking skills acquires utmost importance in English language courses. (Alsaedi, 2012 & Fulcher, 2003). Hence, the speaking process involves "talking, talking, listening, watching, interviewing, analyzing, interpretation" (Alwamleh *et al*., 2020, p.3). Learners are specifically introduce to oral communication courses. As it teaches them the art of speaking through various activities and enhance their confidence (Apriyana, 2021). Oral communication courses primarily goal is to teach learners about

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

different types of speaking strategies and skills involved in each of them. Beside the theoretical foundations, major focus of such courses has been to provide real-life experience to learners for professional life.

Hence, speaking skills were primarily taught using traditional classroom settings where debates, discussions, presentations and interviews can easily be conducted individually and in-groups as well. However, the pandemic introduced a new reality where these activities have to be done using the virtual platform. Hence, globally, this shift in teaching was integrated.

Communication in Online Classes

Alwamleh *et al*., (2020) narrated that interaction on platforms requires well-planned curriculum with engaging activities and use of multiple resources and digital tools. However, one drawback that online classes have sometimes is absence of teacher's physical presence and non-verbal gestures. Though the digital platform provides some non-verbal gestures and sign. Yet, many people do not want to show their physical presence. This creates a hindrance in the learning process and communication. However, still there are many advantages of communication in online classes.

Fedynich (2013) narrated that easy access and convenience to online classes through technology has enhanced the feasibility and attractiveness of online classes. As such classes provide a direct communication platform to learners and teacher to interact with each other. In the same way, online education has provided multiple platforms to learners for communication. Students can communicate synchronously using platforms like Zoom, Google Meet and Teams or use chat options and breakout rooms. Moreover, they can practice asynchronously as well using digital platforms or by posting and sharing their audios and videos with the instructor. By being exposed to all these forms of communication, students can easily communicate (Morrison *et al*., 2019).

Consequently, online speaking classes provides an equal opportunity to all the speakers. Especially, the introverts who hardly speak in the traditional classes are more active in online classes (Garnham and Kaleta, 2002). Such students participants synchronously and asynchronously by sharing their voice, perceptions and modifying it. Hence, Kupczynski *et al*., (2008) reports that students overall active participation increases in online speaking classes.

Beside the pros of interactive online classes, there are drawbacks as well. As most of the participants in a study as reported by Boling *et al*., (2012) found out that students narrated that online classes focuses and benefit individual learners. Hence, interaction takes place only with those few individuals. Learners highlighted that only individuals communicate while for other communication seems to be text-dependent and assignment based communication. Overall, Vonderwell (2003) concluded that online learning tends to be less personal and promotes isolation, as one of the students remarked that 'it is not like a person to person interaction. It's more like computer to computer interaction'. (Kear, 2010).

Attitudes and Effects of Online Speaking Classes

Alzamil (2021) investigated the attitudes of Saudi students studying in English program at a university. The data was collected using a questionnaire having closed ended questions on a 5-point Likert-scale, from participants enrolled in speaking and listening course. The main objective of the study was to know about the importance of learning English language specifically the speaking skills. Also, guidance, instructions

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

and feedback by the teachers while teaching speaking skills in online classes. The findings using descriptive statistics reported that students have positive impact about learning speaking skills, however most of them believe that the traditional classrooms has more advantages than online learning. Similarly, Paechter and Maier (2010) explored the opinions using a questionnaire from Australian undergraduates. The findings suggested that although learners' preferred online classes as it provides more learning opportunities, still participants narrated that face-to-face medium is best way to communicate and improve speaking skills.

Apriyana (2021) explored the perception of students using Google meet for speaking skill in online learning during Covid-19 among 12th standard students. The findings show that student had both positive as well as negative attitude towards online learning through the use of Google meet. There are several benefits of learning to speak English using Google Meet in online classes, including the ability for students to be more independent in their learning so that they do not have to rely on teachers, the ability to learn anytime and anywhere. While the negative side highlight's teacher lack of ability and material for online speaking prompts and situations and training.

Subsequently, Alwamleh *et al*., (2020) investigated the effects of online learning on communication between language teachers and learners in a university in Jordan. This quantitative study utilized semi-structured online survey using random sampling to collect the data. The analysis reported that students face a lot of content and technological issues, lack of motivation and sense of isolation to take online classes. Hence, face-to-face classes provided them the best solution to all these

problems. That is why most of the participants prefer physical classes.

Although Alzamil (2021), Paechter and Maier (2010) investigated the attitudes of learners using a questionnaire and quantitative approach. Yet, the voice and perceptions of learners remain unexplored. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the views of participants learning English speaking skills through the virtual platform using a qualitative approach. The in-depth exploration is useful in knowing the perspectives of learners due to global transformation of the English community which has shifted to online platform throughout the world.

Methodology
Research Approach

This study aims to explore the perceptions of undergraduate students towards oral communication skills. Therefore, qualitative approach has been selected to conduct this study. Creswell (2012) explains that qualitative studies explores a problem and try to develop a detail in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Nunan (1992) refers it as 'grounded, detailed, descriptive and inductive. It focuses on the detailed analysis of the data and formulate an understanding about the problem.

Research Design

In studies where qualitative approach has been adopted for analyzing the phenomenon to get comprehensive data and learner's perspective; case studies has been used more often. As the present study aims to explore the perceptions of those students who were enrolled in online education; case study has been selected as the most appropriate research design within qualitative study. Case studies provides insights about learners in detail. Creswell (2012) has defined case study as in-depth

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

investigation of a bounded system (individuals) based on extensive data collection. Hence, for the present study, multiple case studies have been selected to know about their subjective perceptions about oral communication skills while attending classes online. For the present study, multiples perspectives of cases were essential; therefore multiple case studies have been selected to get a closer and better understanding about the learning experience and perceptions during classes. Duff (2008) explained that in such studies multiple cases forms the base to personalize and get detailed information from multiple respondents to get a clear understanding of the issue.

Research Population

The research site selected foe the present study is a public sector-university located in the central hub of Karachi. Students from diverse backgrounds and different cities take admission in different disciplines offered in morning and evening within this university. Therefore, this research site has been selected as it would provide diverse views of the respondents. Similarly, the population of this study includes Bachelor of Science undergraduate students enrolled in different programs studying oral communication course in the university as shown in Figure 2.4. However, the target population included Bachelor of Science undergraduate students specializing in English and enrolled in online classes studying oral communication course. The students of BS English have been selected because they are introduced to the four skills of language during the first two semesters. Also as their main goal is to be able to communicate in an effective way in English, therefore they have been selected.

Figure 1
Research Population of the study
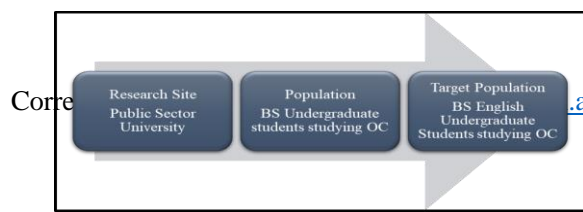
Source: Research Population. Adapted from "Educational Research: Planning, conducting and
evaluating quantitative and qualitative research", by J.W Creswell. 2012, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Parentice Hall, Copyrights 2015 by the Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd.

Sample

In qualitative studies, data has to be drawn from a selected number of participants. As the focus was in-depth exploration of a phenomena and developing an understanding about the views, feelings and emotions of learners. As the main purpose of this study was to elicit detailed responses from participants. Hence, purposive homogenous strategy has been selected in alignment with the research approach, design and sample which means participants with similar traits and membership as students of BS English undertaking oral communication course in online semester as per the policy of university (Creswell, 2012).

The sample size for the present study includes 15 undergraduate BS English students enrolled in Oral communication course during online classes. The sample size of 15 is appropriate as the researcher started to receive similar data from the participants. Hence, saturation point was reached. Therefore, sample size was enough to extract data as per the objectives of the study. As in qualitative case study, few respondents are highly effective in exploring the phenomenon. Hence, for the present study 15 participants provided the data to explore the perceptions of learners in online classes for oral communication skills.

Data Collection Procedure and Tools

As the study focuses on knowing the perceptions of learners learning oral

Corre_____.abbasi@outlook.com

communication skills in online classes. Hence, interviews were conducted to know the actual perceptions of learners. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were taken from the fifteen participants which includes fourteen female and one male student. In English discipline, there is a large proportion of female students as compared to male students. Students were briefed about the study and they were asked to voluntarily participate in the study and interview protocols were designed in which some questions were drafted to be asked during the interview. The questions were adapted from Sellnow-Richmond *et al*., (2020).

Before the actual study, piloting was done. Piloting was done to check the accuracy of the interview tool, questions and identify potential problems in inquiring and responding. Therefore, two participants were selected for piloting from the target population and sample selected for study, i.e. undergraduate English students enrolled in Oral communication skills course. The same procedure was followed as devised for the actual interviews. Additionally, the participants were inquired whether the face difficulty in answering any question or they believe that questions lack clarity.

After piloting, formal consent was taken from the actual participants before the data collection process started. The interview data was recorded and taken in English as most of the students are literate as they are studying in a reputed undergraduate university in the English program. The recorded data was transcribed for data analysis. Interview with each participant lasted for 40 minutes. However, it varies with each respondent. The time taken to take the interview was 5 to 6 hours. The interviews were taken as per the comfort of participant in an informal setting outside the classroom. So the respondent can freely express their views. The interviews were

taken in canteen and garden area of the university. Beside the audio-recording, field notes were also taken to develop a better understanding about the perceptions of learners.

Data Analysis

The recorded data was transcribed and it was further formalized for thematic analysis. The data was analyzed for codes, similar categories, themes and sub-themes to have a clear understanding of the perceptions of participants. Themes and sub-themes are shown in findings in detail. The transcribed data was shown to an expert for accuracy and exact representation of the ideas, thoughts and feelings shared by the participants. Similarly, the guidance of supervisor was also taken into consideration.

Ethical Consideration

Formal consent was taken from all the participants before the data collection process. The aims and objectives were shared with the participants. The participants were ensured that the recorded data will be used for educational purpose. The responses of the participants were kept confidential as specific code; symbol letters to hide the identity of the participants. After the transcription of the recorded interview, data was shown to the respondents for accurate representation and analysis of their response. Also, the respondents were assured that their data would not be shared with anyone and no one would exploit them in future. In the same way, time, and availability of the participants was given due preference.

Thematic Analysis

The primary aim of the present research was to explore the perceptions of undergraduate students towards learning speaking skills in oral communication course in online classes. For this purpose, an in-depth exploration was required to know

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

about the actual views and perceptions of students. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted and the recorded data was transcribed and further analyzed for thematic analysis. The transcribed data was analyzed using Saldana' Model (2009) of thematic analysis which divides the raw data into codes, categories, sub-themes and finally the main themes are generated. The findings from the collected data from 15 participants are presented holistically in figure 3.2 below.

Figure 2
Perceptions of Undergraduate Students about Oral Communication Skills

Teaching Effectiveness

In communication courses, teaching pedagogy is given more importance. As, teacher's main role is to impart the knowledge and create opportunities where learner is able to acquire the skill. Therefore, teaching of speaking skills was also prime responsibility of teacher in online classes.

Lecture Delivery

Teaching speaking skills is an important component which is required for learning English language skills. Consequently, to boost the confidence of learners, speaking is the most effective skill that students must acquire. Subsequently, the participants recall that '*teaching was solely lecture based with no involvement of* learners' (SS01). Similarly, another

participant remarked that '*it seems we were merely listening all the lectures*' (SS08*).* In the same way, another participant remarked about the quality of lectures that 'mainly the teacher used slides and explains those slides and then topics were assigned to present" (SS05). Comparatively, another participant remarked that online classes were student centered and the teacher gave us '*impromptu speaking situations and at other time the teacher divided us into group for communication and discussion"* (SS15).

Content

Online education introduced a new way of teaching where teacher all of a sudden have to shift to new ways of imparting the skills. Learning speaking skills in classes required change in content and interactive lessons. Some of the teachers were successfully in putting their efforts successfully, as one participant said that '*the teacher provided us different speaking materials and presentation on different topics* (SS13). Subsequently, another participant said that "such *courses require practice and the main focus was on activities rather than lectures*" (SS02). As *SS10* said that the teacher *"designed different speaking tasks to make us interact in the online class"*

Engagement Strategies

When the participants were inquired about the different strategies for interaction during the classroom. Most of the participants explained that the teacher used variety of techniques to engage the learners as shown in Figure 4.4 which included activities related to speaking, listening and watching videos.

Figure 3
Engagement Activities in Online Classes

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com
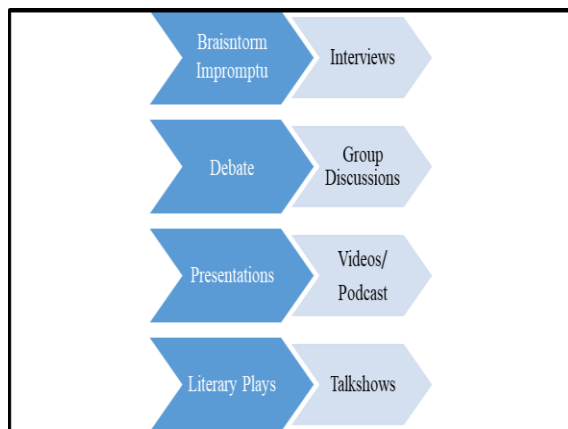
Speaking skills are acquired by engaging the learners into different activities. The participants remarked that the teacher used variety of activities to make us engage in the online classes. As a participant said "*the teacher used to give us different topics and assigned us time to search and speak on that topic to improve our speaking skills*" (SSO6). A similar version was narrated by SS07 "*we used to brainstorm about the topic in two or three minutes and after that we use to rehearse and finally speak on the assigned topics for two minutes*"

In speaking classes, it is highly important that learners are given an opportunity to express themselves. Hence, as narrated by SS09 (learner) narrated that '*teacher use to engage the whole class by giving them an opportunity to share their personal opinion on a topic*". Hence, another participant shared the similar view that the "*teacher used to engage class by giving them a chance to speak individually with supportive speaking guidelines by the teacher*". Also for practicing individually presentations, the learners remarked that 'the teacher suggested "*You need to practice in front of mirror; read-aloud and one should practice individually*" Another participant remarked that "*the teacher asked us to record our individual presentations for practice*" (SS08). Hence, the teacher used

both traditional and online activities for practice in online classes.

While narrating about the different activities used in the online classes. SS10 explained that the teacher "*conducted interviews, engaged us in group discussions and one-on-one interaction as well.* Similarly another participant said that "*we were engaged in individual and group debates on different social and political topics by freely expressing our views*" (SSO4). Additionally, another participant said that the teacher "*made us listen to podcasts and watch different videos and shows of speakers like Ted talks and other videos* (SS12). Similarly, another participant narrated that "*by listening to native people, our vocabulary and way of expressing our self-improved.* Similarly, another participant narrated that "*our pronunciation ad fluency improved*" (SS02)

While remarking about the different activities and imparting online medium to teach speaking skills SS10 summarized that "*Since during that time, online learning and teaching was a new thing to students and teachers as well. So it took us a while to get used to of this medium and for teachers to figure out ways to give us different opportunities where we can communicate. Hence, the teacher gave us opportunity to debate virtually on random topics. Also we were given scenarios and plays for dialogues and practices our skills in an effective manner. In the same way, the teacher made us do talk shows; so all these methods and activities were very really helpful and productive*"

Hence, in the words of a participant "these activities provided us an opportunity to share our opinions, feelings, thoughts and emotions virtually and boosted our confidence" (SS13). However, the "*teacher could have used different online games as well*". (SS15)

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

Digital Applications

Online teaching requires the use of different platforms and digital tools for speaking practice. So, the learner narrated that '*after the class ends, the teacher assigned a topic and inquired about our opinions on the WhatsApp group through voice notes (SS12).* Another participant remarked '*it was interesting as we only used voice note for chitchat, songs and communication with larger groups. However, we were using the same application for sharing our opinion' (SS09).* In the same way another participant remarked '*using WhatsApp for raising our voices was the best technique' (SS14).* In short, most of the participants believed that '*this daily usage application made them leaders expressing their pros and cons' (SS13).*

Similarly, most of the participants remarked that "*listening to the teacher during online classes improved our speaking skills*" (SS14). Another participant said that "*Microsoft Teams provided us the best platform to improve our speaking skills*" (SS12). Additionally, SS04 narrated that "*digital platform was easy to use and listen to everyone, as all the teachers were using it, so there were no technical problems while attending the speaking skills classes. (SS04).* Digital tools are an effective way to practice. As the participant explained that "*the teacher used and shared different YouTube vides to give us knowledge about public speaking, improving our listening and listening to people's ideas*" (SSO7). Additionally, another participant remarked that "*we were given the names of different websites and were required to listen to podcast and* videos" (SS14). In the words of SS11, "*these opportunities boosted our confidence and improved our speaking power*"

Learning Assessment

Assessment is an important part of acquiring any skill. Therefore, the participant narrated that "*beside in-class activities and sessional marks*" (SS06). *We were evaluated on impromptu speaking prompts and interviews*" (SS04). Most of the participant remarked that the assessment criteria included "*a rubric having a scale, on which the performance of learners was marked*" (SS01). Another participant remarked that "*the rubric included confidence, language skills and knowledge*" (SS08). "*It included pronunciation and correct usage of grammar"* (SSO7). Similarly, another participant remarked that "*the major focus was on "confidence and us of language as students faced connectivity issues during online exams*" However, one participant remarked that the teacher could have "*used recorded presentations using voice over on PowerPoint or a recorded video*" (SS07)

Learning Achievement

The final achievement in a course is using language outside the classroom and for different functions. The participants while commenting about their progress in online speaking classes said that "*online speaking classes were really beneficial not only for me but whole class because we really improved our speaking skills as we were assigned how to give effective presentations and now that is our prime activity in each course*" (SSO3). Hence, most of the participants felt fluent in all the conversations and believed they can easily communicate in English.

Most of the participants believed that their pronunciation improved as one participants said "*by listening to native speakers and feedback from the teacher, our pronunciation improved.* Another participant narrated that "*the teacher suggested different online tools to improved*

139

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

pronunciation" (SS12). In the same way, most of the participants expressed that "*now we feel confident and motivated while giving presentations physically and through computer mediated technology as well.* (SS01). Another participant remarked that, *"we can easily give presentations through computer and using technology in an effective way in future as well"* (SS15).

Level of Proficiency

Participants narrated that teacher used a rubric to rate the oral communication skills of the learners at the end of the semester during online classes. The participants attained intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced level of speaking skills. As one of the participant narrated "*I attained advanced speaking skills by being pro-active in all the activities during and after online classes*. (SS03). Also another participant remarked that "*I attained intermediate level proficiency as correct usage of grammar was a problem for me"* (SS14).

Traditional versus Virtual Oral Communication Classes

The participant while narrating their views about tradition and online speaking classes highlighted several differences as shown in Figure 4.7. As in the words SS01 "*there were few opportunities for interaction for some of the learners, as in traditional classes beside the teacher, there are always opportunities to communicate with the peer and classes mates*". However, SS08 presented a contrastive view "*we were provided opportunities to interact in groups and peers to interact with each other"*. Also, few participants remarked that the course required the teacher to be subjective with the participants. Hence, *"the teacher provided opportunities to express our opinions and perceptions in detail on any topic*" (SS10). Similarly, the participants also narrated that

in traditional classes, teachers "*use informal topics to enhance the confidence of learners; however to some extent most of the assigned topics were formal as the teacher's lectures were ministered*" (SS12). Additionally, some of the participants explained that "*in traditional classes, you can easily interact with the teacher and understand different gestures. However, in online classes, nonverbal communication was a hurdle which isn't the case in physical classes"* (SS11)

Figure 4
Face-to-Face versus Online Speaking Classes
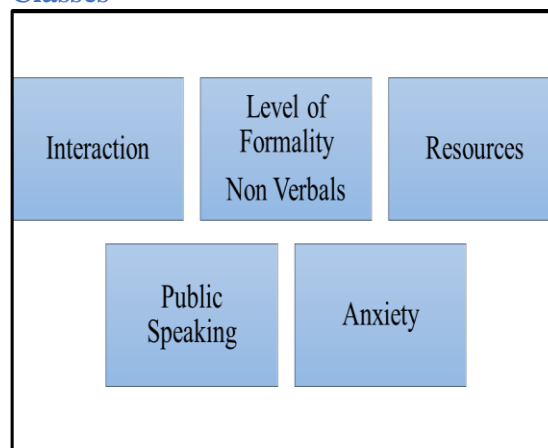
Resources

While inquiring about their perceptions for learning speaking skills in traditional and online classes, the participant's gave mixed responses. As SS01 narrated that "*we face problems in content and resources; as the teacher used very few resources. So we have to search different resources on our own"*. Another participant remarked that "*we actually got enrolled in different online speaking course to improve our speaking skills*" (SS07). However, the participant believed that "*in traditional classes; the teacher provide all the resources and different engaging opportunities as well*" (SS13)

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

Public Speaking

Most of the learners believed that physical classes provide the best platform to improve public speaking as compare to online classes. As SS04 narrated that "*I did not have an opportunity to improve my public speaking in online classes. In fact, our confidence decreased as we got reduced time, waiting for us to express and internet connectivity while speaking and listening*" Hence, our public speaking skills were not improved at all". However, another participant gave a contrastive view that "*the teacher provided us many opportunity and most of us took advantage of it. Due, to this course our public speaking skills got enhanced*" (SS08).

Anxiety

SS10 expressed the view that "*what I think, stage anxiety gets better in online classes. Since we know that people can't really see us and there isn't a crowd in front of us, so it really relieves the anxiety and boosts the confidence and prepares you for the real stage*". However SS05 believed that "*online classes provided us restricted opportunities and we were not exposed to a large crowd and were limited in number. Hence, we were not able to learn or improve public speaking skills*" SS06 shared a similar view that "*we were just given the opportunity to present once or twice which did not improve public speaking. As speaking, while standing in front of whole class is very different from speaking while sitting in a room alone with just your laptop*". Yet, most of the participants believed that anxiety was reduced and these online classes provide opportunities to the introverts and reluctant students as a participant said "*Microsoft teams was the best medium for introverts to express their views in chat and WhatsApp voice notes; as they know nobody is going to judge them*". (SS13). In the same manner, another participant said "*large classes provide less opportunities for introverts to speak but in online they were the best speakers*". (SS07).

SS08 while narrating his experience about the difference narrated that
"*I really missed physical interaction while attending online class. As this course is all about physical interaction, you should be their physically so that you can connect with your audience, with your teacher. In online classes we sometime missed the opportunities to grab all that useful knowledge that's why physical classes would be much better than online for speaking skills*"

Discussion

The findings of Alzamil (2021) and Paechter and Maier (2010) are in agreement with the present study. As most of the learners reported that traditional classes provides more opportunities to the learners than online learning. However, the present study differs as the analysis provided that online engagement can be equally interactive as well through a variety of activities. It enhances public speaking skills and reduces speaking anxiety. In the same, most of the participants agreed that online classes provides more opportunities of self-learning and practice using digital resources, yet the Saudi English major participants as explored by Alzamil (2021) agree with Pakistani respondents that face-to-face classes are much more convenient and easy for learning speaking skills and improving English language.

Similarly, the findings reported that the material and content is lecture-based. Similar, findings were reported by Alwamleh *et al.,* (2020). Alwamleh *et al.,* (2020) narrated that students felt isolated in online classes. They believe that communication level decreases on digital medium. However, the present study shows

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

that beside the disadvantages of communication between the teacher and students. The digital platforms and tools provided an opportunity to practice speaking skills and communicate in an effective way as reported by Fedynich (2013) who reported that online education is convenient for communication. A similar way is provided in this study as learners reported that "*our teacher through different activities provided us a chance to communicate with peers and groups which increased our confidence*" (SS11). Hence, beside the teaching pedagogy which improved over the time, students as reported in this study felt that online communication provide more opportunities to individual learners and especially they shy students who are hesitant to speak in physical classes. These findings are in agreement with Garnham and Kaleta, (2002).

Hence, the present study provides an insight that speaking skills in an online medium can be made interactive and engaging as reported by Kupczynski *et al*., (2008). Also, through online teaching of speaking skills, the present speaking skills of students can be improved as narrated by the participated in this study. The analysis shows that participants achieved a higher level than the present one in speaking skills due to online teaching of speaking skills. These findings provide a contrastive view to the studies conducted before the present study where online teaching of speaking skills was merely compared with the traditional teaching

Conclusion

The findings of the study showed learner's perceptions with regard to the teaching methodology, pedagogy, engagement activities, speaking skills assessment and achievement. Similarly, learner's perceptions also highlighted the differences between online and traditional

classes where speaking skills are taught. The findings reveal that although learners believed that online education was the only medium to be used during online classes yet they could be made more effective using technology and digital tools. The learners believed that online lectures can be improved by developing and drafting interactive lectures that focuses on activities and not merely lecture oriented classes. It was also highlighted that as it is a practical course so that the theoretical aspects can be reduced to provide more opportunities to engage.

Comparatively, most of the learners believed that the engagement strategies used by the teacher for oral communication in online classes were interactive and included different kinds of activities. The teacher used different strategies and activities to impart the knowledge about the parameters of speaking in different situations. Similarly, the teacher provided opportunities to speak through impromptu speaking prompts, individual presentations, group discussions, plays, talk-shows, debates and videos. The findings suggested that the participants remarked that the teacher effectively used the easily available digital tools like Ted Talks and YouTube videos to provide a native-like speaking environment and to improve our speaking and listening skills. Hence, most of the learners reported that the teacher effectively used different activities to teach us speaking skills with limited available resources and boosted our confidence and motivation.

Results also showed that the assessment was merely for sessional marks, midterm and final term. However, as the course demands more practice therefore, the teacher was able to achieve this goal by enhanced speaking opportunities. Additionally, learning achievement showed the level of speaking skills students were able to achieve as a result of taking this speaking skills courses

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

online and the level angers from intermediate to advanced speaking skills.

References

Alharbi, H. A. (2015). Improving Students' English Speaking Proficiency in Saudi Public Schools. *International Journal of Instruction, 8*(1), 105-116. https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2015.818a

Ally, M. (2004). Foundations of educational theory for online learning. The*ory and practice of online learning*, *2*, 15-44.

Alsaedi, A. (2012). *The teaching of EFL speaking in developed secondary public schools for females in Saudi Arabia: A case study*, (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Southampton, Southampton, UK.

Alwamleh, M.,Al-Twait, L.M.,& Al-Saht, G.R. (2020). The effect of online learning on communication between instructors and students during Covid-19 pandemic. *Asian Education and Development Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-06-2020-0131

Alzamil, (2021). Teaching English Speaking Online versus Face-to-Face: Saudi Students' 12 (1), *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ), 12* (1), 19-27. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no1.2

Apriyana, Desi (2021). *Students' Perception of using Google Meet for Speaking Skills in Online Learning during Covid-19*

Pandemic at the Twelfth Grade Students of SMAN 3 Jamb in Academic Year 2020/2021. University of Batanghari, Jambi.

Boling, E.C., Hough, M., Krinsky, H., Saleem, H. & Stevens, M. (2012). Cutting the distance in distance education: perspectives on what promotes positive, online learning experiences", *The Internet and Higher Education, 15*(2), 118-126.

Benson, A.D. (2002). Using online learning to meet workforce demand: a case study of stakeholder influence, *Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 3*(4), 443-452.

Caner, M. (2012). The definition of blended learning in higher education. In Panagiotes, S. and Anastasiades (Eds), Blended Learning Environments for Adults: Evaluations and Frameworks, IGI Global, New York, pp. 19-34.

Conrad, D. (2002). Deep in the hearts of learners: insights into the nature of online community. *The Journal of Distance Education, 17*(1), 1-19.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. New York: Pearson

Duff, A.P. (2008). *Case Study Research in Applied Linguistics*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fedynich, L.V. (2013). Teaching beyond the classroom walls: the pros and cons of cyber learning. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies, 13*, 1-7.

Fansury, A. H., Januarty, R., & Ali Wira Rahman, S. (2020). Digital Content for Millennial Generations: Teaching the English

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com

Foreign Language Learner on COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University, 55*(3), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.35741/issn.0258-2724.55.3.40

Fulcher, G. (2003). *Testing Second Language Speaking*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Ferdig, R. E., Baumgartner, E., Hartshorne, R., Kaplan-Rakowski, R., & Mouza, C. (2020). Teaching, technology, and teacher education during the covid-19 pandemic: Stories from the field. Waynesville, NC, USA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).

Getange, K.N. (2016). Motivational strategies and teachers' productivity: lessons of experience frompublic secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. *IOSR Journal of Research and Method in Education, 6* (4), 33-38.

Hamad, M. M. (2013). Factors Negatively Affect Speaking Skills at Saudi Colleges for Girls in the South. *English Language Teaching, 6*(12), 87-97. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n12p87

Kear, K. (2010). Social Presence in Online Learning Communities, Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Networked Learning 2010, 3-4 May 2010, Aalborg, Denmark.

Kupczynski, L., Brown, M. & Davis, R. (2008). The impact of instructor and student interaction in internet based courses. *Journal of Instruction Delivery Systems, 22* (1), 6-11.

Majeed, A. (2019). *Developing Speaking Skills and fluency of ESL students through Task-Based Teaching*. An Unpublished thesis MS thesis, Department of Humanities, NEDUET.

Morrison, G.R., Ross, S.J., Morrison, J.R. & Kalman, H.K. (2019). Designing Effective Instruction John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Nunan, D (1992). *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press.

Paechter, M., & Maier, B. (2010). Online or face-to-face? Students' experiences and preferences in e-learning. *The internet and higher education, 13(*4), 292-297. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2010.09.004

Sellnow-Richmond, D., Strawser, M. G., & Sellnow, D. D. (2020). Student perceptions of teaching effectiveness and learning achievement: A comparative examination of online and hybrid course delivery format. *Communication Teacher*, *34*(3), 248-263.

Stake, R. E. (2003). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (2nd Ed.). London: Sage.

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage.

Vonderwell, S. (2003). An examination of asynchronous communication experiences and perspectives of students in an online course: a case study. *The Internet and Higher Education, 6*. (1), 77-90.

Corresponding Author's Email Address: mhassan.abbasi@outlook.com