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Emergency Remote Teaching During COVID-19: Saudi University Teachers' Perceptions of EFL Classroom Interaction in Synchronous Online Lessons

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Abstract

COVID-19 caused a shift in language teaching from face-to-face lessons (F2FLs) to synchronous online lessons (SOLs) conducted via videoconferencing systems (VCS). This paper explores teachers' perceptions about VCS affordances for classroom interaction, their ability to create learning opportunities, and the challenges they faced and suggestions on how to overcome them. Following a mixed-methods approach, 20 English as foreign language (EFL) teachers at a Saudi University completed questionnaires and five participated in semi-structured interviews. Findings indicated that the webcam was the least used VCS functionality to facilitate interaction. Teachers thought that they created learning opportunities in SOLs but not as much/well as in F2FLs. Insufficient technological and pedagogical knowledge and skills were identified as main challenges which impeded interaction in SOLs.

Keywords: Emergency Remote Teaching, Classroom Interaction, EFL, Synchronous Online Lessons

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Introduction

Due to COVID-19, nearly all education systems have shifted their language teaching, unexpectedly, from F2FLs to SOLs (Bozkurt et al., 2020). This sudden shift resulted in what has been termed Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) defined as "a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances" (Hodges et al., 2020, para. 13). In this context, most universities worldwide, and in Saudi Arabia, delivered their SOLs via VCS since they might be the best possible alternative because they offer various affordances, such as text-chat, screensharing, breakout rooms, and webcams, which support and facilitate interaction (Barley, 2021). Overall, online language learning via VCS is a growing, valuable area of research within Computer-Assisted Language Learning (Wigham & Satar, 2021). VCS affordances have been investigated in second language (L2) interaction by several scholars in distance education contexts (e.g., Guichon & Cohen, 2014; Guichon &

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Wigham, 2015; Dey-Plissonneau, 2019), but not much in emergency remote English language teaching (ER-ELT) contexts.

Additionally, an increasing number of studies have focused on online pedagogical interaction (Wigham & Satar, 2021). Classroom interaction is essential because it improves language learning (Mackey & Goo, 2007). Through features of interaction, it is possible "to understand learning more fully" and how learning opportunities are influenced or mediated (Walsh & Sert, 2019, p. 752). Some of these features were investigated mostly in F2FLs (e.g., Walsh & Sert, 2019; Zolghadri et al., 2019). Thus, more research is needed from different geographical locations (Walsh & Sert, 2019) and in SOLs, especially during ER-ELT since the literature around this area is exceptionally limited.

Research has shown that in Saudi Arabia, VCS platforms were widely adopted by teachers and students during ER-ELT, yet it's a fairly new technology and several challenges may impact pedagogical interaction in such platforms (Alahmadi & Alraddadi, 2020). Various challenges were also reported in certain ER-ELT studies, such as digital illiteracy and pedagogical challenges (e.g., Alvi et al., 2021; Hazaea et al., 2021). Educators require specific online competencies to resolve the challenges they face during SOLs (Moorhouse et al., 2021). We do not yet have a full understanding of whether and how university EFL teachers created L2 learning opportunities in SOLs during ER-ELT, which features of VCS they largely used, which challenges they faced, and how such challenges can be overcome. Thus, this study will explore the perceptions of EFL teachers via a mixed-methods approach during ER-ELT to address three questions:

RQ1: How often do EFL teachers use VCS affordances to facilitate L2 classroom interaction?

RQ2: Based on features of classroom interaction, are EFL teachers able to create L2 learning opportunities in SOLs via VCS? If yes, to what extent compared to F2FLs?

RQ3: What are the challenges that might hinder L2 classroom interaction in SOLs? How might these challenges be overcome?

Literature Review

This section will review the relevant literature around interaction, the theoretical framework, VCS affordances and constraints, ER-ELT, and online teacher competencies.

Interaction and Sociocultural Theory

Interaction is key in L2 classrooms. It can give us insights into the learning process (Walsh & Sert, 2019) and promotes L2 development and acquisition (Li, 2017). Several

scholars argued that the processes of interaction are the root of any L2 learning in a classroom (Ellis, 1990). Additionally, Allwright (1984) suggested that these processes also present opportunities for L2 learning. Therefore, teachers are required to understand the different forms and patterns of communication and sustain the most proper ones (Walsh, 2002) to mediate L2 learning opportunities using a range of interactional practices and features, such as elicitation techniques and repair (Walsh & Sert, 2019). Some features of classroom interaction are valuable indicators for language acquisition, understanding, and eventually learning (Musumeci, 1996, as cited in Walsh, 2002). Employing these interactional features can enhance classroom interaction and participation. When students participate and engage in interaction, learning opportunities of L2 are created and mediated (Walsh & Sert, 2019); thus, promoting language development. In this study, we draw on Walsh (2013) and Walsh and Sert (2019) to understand teachers' perceptions on whether (and how) they could create L2 learning opportunities in F2FLs and SOLs. We specifically focus on two practices: (1) teachers' control of the interaction, via encouraging participation, inviting learners to interact/discuss, self-expression, or managing turns, and (2) speech modification techniques, through checking comprehension, co-constructing (negotiating) meaning, and using gestures.

Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) stresses the social, dynamic, and cooperative nature of language learning and the crucial role of social interaction for L2 development. It argues that individuals collaboratively co-construct new meanings that are developed publicly as a speech but internalised privately as thoughts. To do so, they make use of symbolic tools (their language) and other ones (e.g., technology) to interpret the world or process new understandings (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). The theory also argues that learning and knowledge are created inside cultural contexts, via social interactions, and through mental meaning-makings (Karpov, 2014). Thus, learning can be seen as an interactive, contextual process. It is an interactive process since, for example, interaction or language modelling act as a catalyst. It is also a contextual process "because the depth and quality of learning depend on far-ranging factors, some specific to the learner and others particular to the environment" (Frechette, 2020, p. 364), as in the technological platforms that are utilised in learning. These platforms, as in VCS or audioconferencing systems, can assist L2 interaction and development by transforming the learning process (Peterson, 2009) and features of interaction via their affordances which will be explained below.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC): VCS Affordances and Constraints

VCS are Synchronous CMC (SCMC) platforms that offer various features for communication, including voice/text-chat, interactive whiteboards, file sharing, and webcamming. These features allow interlocutors to create and understand meaning via the wide range of communicative forms and modes, such as language, sound, or gestures. VCS affordances are "the profound mediating effects on communication" that could enhance language learner interaction (Barley, 2021, p. 98), whereas their constraints, as in the restriction of number of people visible on the screen at one time,

might limit interaction or the learning/teaching experience. Although VCS are "complex multimodal environments" with various layers of mediation in interaction, they allow for new forms of meaning-making "as they support oral interaction" through various affordances (Barley, 2021, p. 97-100). Dey-Plissonneau (2019) investigated the affordances in L2 tutor-tutee multimodal interactions via VCS and noted that text-chat allows interlocutors to co-construct lexical explanations, whereas breakout rooms offer teachers the opportunities to facilitate parallel group interaction. Wigham and Satar (2021), in their multimodal (inter)action analysis, stated that screensharing can bring the resources into interaction, while text-chat "enables the language teacher to capitalise on the multimodality of the teaching medium" (p. 2). Several scholars have investigated video-mediated interaction through webcam in online teaching/learning (e.g., Castelli & Sarvary, 2021; Develotte et al., 2010; Guichon & Cohen, 2014; Guichon & Wigham, 2015; Kozar, 2016; Satar, 2013; 2015; 2016; 2020; Satar & Wigham, 2017; 2020). That is because VCS allow access to non-verbal means of communication which can improve interaction and maintain social connections or mutual attention (Barley, 2021).

Overall, VCS facilitate multimodal interaction if the affordances are carefully chosen and utilised to efficiently support interlocuters, the learning process, and pedagogical gaols (Barley, 2021). This is even more pressing today, especially during the sudden shift of instructional delivery of English lessons into an ER-ELT caused by COVID-19 and its effect on interaction, which will be explored below.

Emergency Remote English Language Teaching (ER-ELT) and Online Teacher Competencies

Interaction in an ER-ELT context has come to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Gao & Zhang, 2020; Moorhouse et al., 2021). In Saudi Arabia, many challenges were reported: students' lack of motivation to participate (Hashmi et al., 2021; Khalawi & Halabi, 2020), technical challenges (Khafaga, 2021), digital illiteracy, pedagogical challenges, and lack of engagement (Hazaea et al., 2021). Hazaea et al. (2021) suggested institutions to provide teachers with technical support, alternative platforms, or reinforce camera usage. In regard to camera usage, Al-Samiri (2021, p. 152) stated that "lack of visual input… is a significant challenge for" English students at Saudi universities. Although it is considered a challenge, turning on webcams is optional but cannot be made obligatory because of the cultural constraints in Saudi Arabia and the need to respect "users' privacy" (Al-Samiri, 2021, p. 152). As one of the authors is from Saudi Arabia themselves, we can report that in Saudi Arabian traditions, people value their privacy and the secrecy of their home. Learners might choose not to turn on their webcams because they do not wish to show their house, family members by accident, or their face for personal reasons, as in not wanting others to take screenshots or recordings, or for religious purposes when it comes to Muslim women who cover their face.

Nevertheless, several online teacher competencies may compensate the absence of non-verbal means of communication or enhance interaction in VCS.

Moorhouse et al. (2021) suggested three competencies during ER-ELT. First, online classroom management competence is the ability to manage the learning process without the physical proximity, employ students' time in class and out-of-class, help them adjust to the new environment, and, most importantly, use VCS affordances, such as screensharing or breakout rooms, to support L2 learning and interaction. Second, online classroom interactional competence is the ability to offer longer wait-time and space, give students time to prepare for discussions in breakout rooms before going public, or create a cooperative space for learning via game-based platforms or social media. Third, technological competence helps educators feel proficient in using VCS to offer opportunities for numerous forms of interaction. The third competence is somehow analogous to Guichon's (2009) competency of multimedia regulation. It is described as learning to use the most suitable communication tools "and to manage the ensuing interactions with the most adequate modalities" (p. 170). Finally, Guichon (2009) also outlined two other competencies. The competency of socio-affective regulation which is creating a rapport with learners, and the competency of pedagogical regulation which is having expert knowledge of L2, offering clear instructions and feedback, and "deploying an array of strategies to facilitate second-language learning" (p. 170).

Methods

This research used a mixed-methods approach. Although mixed-methods research require extensive effort and expertise, it enables researchers to investigate their research focus more comprehensively (Dörnyei, 2007). In this study, quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire, whereas qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. In this section, we explain the participants, data collection tools and procedures as well as methods of analysis.

Participants and Context

Participants were male and female EFL teachers in a Common First Year (i.e., preparatory or foundation year) at a public university in Saudi Arabia, who taught via Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, or Microsoft Teams amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were selected based on non-probability and convivence sampling techniques (Dörnyei, 2007). The Scientific Research Committee at the university circulated the questionnaire via email where 20 teachers responded to it (Table 1) and five of them volunteered in their questionnaires to participate in the semi-structured interviews (Table 2) via an audio-recorded Zoom call.

Table 1

Questionnaire Participants' Demographics

Demographics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	8	40.0
	Female	12	60.0
Age	21-25	0	0
	26-30	4	20.0
	31-35	8	40.0
	36-40	2	10.0
	41 and above	6	30.0
Nationality	British	3	15.0
	Canadian	2	10.0
	Jordanian	1	5.0
	Pakistani	2	10.0
	Saudi	7	35.0
	South African	2	10.0
	USA	3	15.0
First Language	Arabic	8	40.0
	English	10	50.0
	Urdu	2	10.0
Teaching Experience	less than 1 year	0	0
	1-3 years	3	15.0
	4-6 years	7	35.0
	7-9 years	4	20.0
	10 years or more	6	30.0
VCS Experience	6 months or less	1	5.0
	7-11 months	4	20.0
	1-2 years	14	70.0
	3-5 years	1	5.0
	6 years or more	0	0
VCS that teachers use when teaching	Zoom	18	90.0
	Blackboard Collaborate	18	90.0
	Microsoft Teams	2	10.0

Table 2

Interview Participants' Demographics

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	First Language	Nationality	Teaching Experience	VCS Experience	VCS used	Interviews' Date and Recorded Time
T1	Female	26-30	Arabic	Saudi	4-6 years	1-2 years	Zoom and Blackboard Collaborate	29/6/2021
T2	Female	41 and above	English	South African	10 years or more	7-11 months	Blackboard Collaborate	1/7/2021 39:32
T3	Female	31-35	Arabic	Jordanian	7-9 years	7-11 months	Blackboard Collaborate	29/6/2021 33:10
T4	Female	36-40	Arabic	Saudi	1-3 years	1-2 years	Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, and Microsoft Teams	30/6/2021 50:17
T5	Male	41 and above	English	United States of America	10 years or more	3-5 years	Zoom and Blackboard Collaborate	1/7/2021 46:47

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Instrument development went under a gradual process, outlined by Dörnyei (2007, pp. 112-113) to ensure their reliability and validity. The electronic questionnaire consisted of seven factual questions for the demographics, and 35 closed-ended statements that were divided into three sections: section one (VCS affordances) to answer RQ1, section two (learning opportunities) with two parts (Part A: F2FLs, and Part B: SOLs) to answer RQ2, and section three (challenges) to answer RQ3. The questionnaire included a numerical rating scale with four adverbs for section one to measure its frequency, and four points Likert scale for sections two and three to indicate the extent to respondent's agreement/disagreement with each statement (Dörnyei, 2007). Nearly all statements were adapted from the literature in which relevant content to this study was paraphrased to construct questionnaire's items. For example, item 1 in Table 3 (I use breakout rooms/groups to facilitate parallel group interactions) was constructed from Dey-Plissonneau's study (2019) who said that VCS:

> [o]ffers breakout rooms that allows one or a group of participants to isolate themselves from the rest of the group for a certain time. This facilitates parallel group collaborations (pp. 30-31).

Only a reference to the source is provided next to the rest of items (see Tables 3, 4, and 7) due to lack of space.

A pilot questionnaire was circulated at two different Saudi universities, to which 11 EFL teachers responded. SPSS was used to do a Reliability Analysis to calculate the Cronbach Alpha. The section's acceptable level should be higher than Cronbach's Alpha 0.7; however, for scales with less than ten items, it is difficult to get a high Alpha; thus, the Cronbach's Alpha should be higher than 0.5 (Pallant, 2020). After running the reliability analysis, the questionnaire was amended by deleting the item 'I can listen to students carefully when they talk'. In doing so, the section's Alpha increased, and all items were estimated as reliable: section one (0.549 > 0.5), Part A of section two (0.924 > 0.5), Part B of section two (0.563 > 0.5), and section three (0.738 > 0.7).

Since questionnaires alone often "offer little scope for explorative, in-depth analyses", follow-up qualitative data were collected through five semi-structured interviews to obtain a holistic perspective to strengthen, support, and complement the questionnaire's results (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009, p. 108). The guide (Appendix 1) consisted of 13 questions which aligned with the questionnaire items. The interview questions were piloted with one volunteer teacher who also responded to the pilot questionnaire. No problems were observed with the pilot interview questions.

Data Analysis Methods

To analyse the questionnaires, SPSS, version 26, was utilised to generate descriptive statistics: weighted mean (*M*) and standard variation (*SD*) (Dörnyei, 2007; Pallant, 2020). Paired-samples t-tests were used to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference in teachers' perceptions about the extent to which they were able to create learning opportunities of L2 in SOLs compared to F2FLs.

For interview analysis, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and analysed based on Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic networks analysis. Data were broken into basic themes (BT), organising themes (OT), and global themes (GT) to construct web-like thematic networks and explore the most significant themes. This analysis is a top-down (deductive) approach in which codes, as in chatting, gestures, and sharing, that relate to the research questions and sections' items were identified before analysis (see Appendix 2).

Findings

In this section we present our findings for each research question.

RQ1: VCS Affordances

This section reports the frequency of EFL teachers' use of VCS affordances to facilitate L2 classroom interaction (RQ1). Table 3 illustrates quantitative results about teachers' perceptions in relation to their frequency of using VCS affordances.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Section One: VCS Affordances

Adapted from	Statements		Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	*M*	*SD*
(Dey-Plissonnea, 2019).	1. I use breakout rooms/groups to facilitate parallel group interactions.	N	4	10	6	0	2.90	.718
		%	20.0	50.0	30.0	0		
	2. I use the text-chat to offer written clarifications.	N	7	7	5	1	3.00	.917
		%	35.0	35.0	25.0	5.0		
	3. I use the text-chat to overcome audio breakdowns.	N	7	6	6	1	2.95	.944
		%	35.0	30.0	30.0	5.0		
	4. I screen share the lesson's questions to trigger participation.	N	16	3	0	1	3.70	.732
		%	80.0	15.0	0	5.0		
(Barley, 2021).	5. I turn on my webcam so that the learners can see my visual cues (visual cues are eye contact, hand gestures, and body language).	N	1	2	4	13	1.55	.887
		%	5.0	10.0	20.0	65.0		
(Moorhouse et al., 2021).	6. I look at the learners' webcam images when they are turned on to monitor their engagement.	N	1	0	1	18	1.20	.695
		%	5.0	0	5.0	90.0		

As shown in Table 3, the highest mean score was reported for the fourth statement (*M* = 3.70, *SD* = .732), in which 80% of the teachers reported that they always used screenshare to support participation. The second most frequently used affordance was text-chat, and 35% of the teachers reported that they always used the text-chat 'to offer written clarifications' (*M* = 3.00, *SD* = .917) or 'to overcome audio breakdowns' (*M* = 2.95, *SD* = .944). The fifth (*M* = 1.55, *SD* = .887) and the sixth (*M* = 1.20, *SD* = .695) statements had the lowest average scores. To sum up, of all the affordances considered, the most used one was screensharing the lesson's questions to trigger participation, whereas the lowest used affordances were turning on the webcam and looking at the learners' webcam images to monitor their engagement.

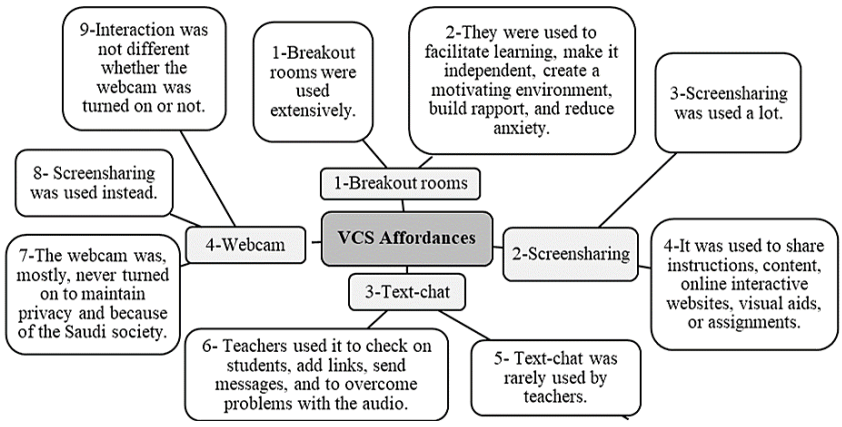
Figure 1 shows the thematic network which represents EFL teachers' perceptions about their use of VCS affordances to facilitate interaction in relation to four organizing themes: breakout rooms, screensharing, text-chat, and webcam.

OT1: Breakout Rooms

Interview participants suggested that break-out rooms were perceived favourably by all teachers and were used "extensively" (T5) during the classes. Teachers reported that they used break-out rooms for a variety of purposes: "to facilitate learning" (T3), make learning "more independent" (T3), to create "a motivating environment" by assigning roles (T3) or by organising "some group work activities" (T1). It was also suggested that break-out rooms helped build rapport and reduce anxiety to participate more freely since they "are not recorded" (T1).

Figure 1

Thematic Network for 'VCS Affordances'



OT2: Screensharing

Interviews suggested that screen share was used "a lot" since "it is very, very important… to have visual aids" for students to "be more focused" (T1). It was used to share instructions (T1 and T4), PowerPoint presentation (T2 and T5), the book, "online interactive websites, like Quizizz and Kahoot!", pictures, worksheets (T3), or assignments and videos (T4).

OT3: Text-chat

Interviews suggested that text-chat was "rarely" used (T4 and T1) unless to "check on the students" while "playing a video" or when they "are in breakout rooms" (T1). Teachers also reported that they used it when they needed to add links (T3) or to overcome problems with the microphones/audio (T5).

OT4: Webcam

Most teachers did not turn on their webcams (T1, T4, and T5). That was because of the Saudi "society" and its "restrictions" (T1), to maintain privacy and traditions (T4), or because if only the teacher turned it on, the platform would become, undesirably, "a teacher-centred platform" (T5). Screensharing was used instead since students might get distracted when webcams are turned on (T1) by facial features, backgrounds, and the lips' movement (T4). Out of the five interviewees, only T2 "always" turned her webcam on to "use gestures and… props". On the other hand, T3, who used to turn it on but then turned it off, did not see any benefits or difference in interaction as she explained:

> "I used to open it… in the first semester… but in the second semester, it was not obligatory, so I did not open it… because… students are not opening their cameras, so I did not find any benefits and I did not feel that students interaction was… more… when I turned my camera on in comparison with when I turned it off, so I did not see any difference when I opened the camera in comparison [with] when I do not open it" (T3, interview, 2021).

When teachers used breakout rooms, screensharing, text-chat, webcam, and/or other tools/methods to employ features of interaction, they believed that they created L2 learning opportunities, which will be explored below.

RQ2: L2 Learning Opportunities

This section presents findings in relation to RQ2, i.e., teachers' perceptions about the extent to which they were able to create L2 learning opportunities in SOLs compared to F2FLs based on features of interaction. A paired-samples t-test was generated to answer this question. As shown in Table 4, all the items were statistically significant ($p < .05$), which meant that for all the seven features of interaction, teachers did not think they were able to create L2 learning opportunities in SOLs as much/well as they can in F2FLs.

Although all items indicated a statistically significant difference between F2FLs and SOLs, descriptive statistics (Table 5) demonstrate certain patterns in relation to how teachers' perceptions shifted. In items 1-5 (encouraging participation, managing turns, inviting learners to interact/discuss, co-constructing meaning, and checking comprehension), we clearly see that fewer teachers 'strongly agreed' that they could create these opportunities in SOLs, and they largely 'agreed' that they could. While their perception towards opportunities they could create for students' self-expression (item 6) depicted a more positive picture for SOLs with 50% of teachers still strongly agreeing with the statement, responses to item 7 (use of gestures to help communicate) indicated largely negative perceptions in SOLs: while 85% of the teachers strongly agreed that they were able to use gestures for communication in F2FLs (*M* = 3.80, *SD* = .523), none strongly agreed to this statement in SOLs and in fact 50% strongly disagreed with it (*M* = 1.80, *SD* = .894).

Table 4

Paired-Samples T-Test of Section Two: Learning Opportunities

Adapted from	Statements	Pair	Mean	SD	*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
(Zolghadri et al., 2019).	1. I can encourage students to participate in the class discussions.	In F2FLs In SOLs	.90000	.78807	5.107	19	.000***
(Walsh, 2013; Walsh & Sert, 2019).	2. I can manage students' turns in the class discussions.	In F2FLs In SOLs	.65000	.87509	3.322	19	.004**
(Zolghadri et al., 2019).	3. I can invite students to interact with each other in groups to encourage active participation.	In F2FLs In SOLs	.80000	.89443	4.000	19	.001**
(Walsh, 2013; Walsh & Sert, 2019).	4. I can work together with students to co-construct (negotiate) meaning in interaction.	In F2FLs In SOLs	.80000	.69585	5.141	19	.000***
	5. I can check students' comprehension.	In F2FLs In SOLs	.70000	.47016	6.658	19	.000***
	6. I can offer opportunities for students to express themselves.	In F2FLs In SOLs	.35000	.48936	3.199	19	.005**
(Zolghadri et al., 2019).	7. I can use gestures to help communicate what I mean more clearly.	In F2FLs In SOLs	2.0000	1.16980	7.646	19	.000***

Note. *$p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 227).

To sum up, Table 5 indicates that most teachers strongly agreed with all features of interaction in F2FLs, while most of them agreed with almost all items in SOLs, except for item seven (20 % disagreed and 50 % strongly disagreed). Thus, we calculated Pearson's r correlation coefficients to understand whether there were any relationships between teachers' perceptions towards their ability to use gestures to express meanings in the two teaching settings and whether they turn on the webcam, their overall teaching experience, and their VCS experience. Table 6 indicates that teachers' perceptions towards their ability to use gestures to communicate meanings more clearly in SOLs was significantly and positively correlated with how often they turned on their webcams (r = .610, $p < .01$). This means that teachers who turned on their cameras more often were able to use their gestures to convey what they wanted to say more clearly. Moreover, there was a moderate significant correlation between the frequency of turning cameras on to use visual cues and teaching experience (r = .482, $p < 0.5$). This indicates that more experienced teachers were more likely to turn their webcams on in order to capitalise on visual cues while teaching. On the other hand, teachers' VCS experience was not related to how frequently they turned on their webcams (r = -.116, $p > 0.5$).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Section Two: Learning Opportunities

		Part A: In English face-to-face lessons (F2FLs)						Part B: In English synchronous online lessons (SOLs)					
Statements		**StA[1]**	**A[2]**	**D[3]**	**StD[4]**	***M*[5]**	***SD***	**StA**	**A**	**D**	**StD**	***M***	***SD***
1. I can encourage students to participate in the class discussions.	N	19	1	0	0	3.95	.22361	5	12	2	1	3.05	.75915
	%	95	5	0	0			25	60	10	5		
2. I can manage students' turns in the class discussions.	N	15	4	1	0	3.70	.57124	5	12	2	1	3.05	.75915
	%	75	20	5	0			25	60	10	5		
3. I can invite students to interact with each other in groups to encourage active participation.	N	16	4	0	0	3.80	.41039	6	10	2	2	3.00	.91766
	%	80	20	0	0			30	50	10	10		
4. I can work together with students to co-construct (negotiate) meaning in interaction.	N	15	5	0	0	3.75	.44426	3	13	4	0	2.95	.60481
	%	75	25	0	0			15	65	20	0		
5. I can check students' comprehension.	N	16	4	0	0	3.80	.41039	4	14	2	0	3.10	.55251
	%	80	20	0	0			20	70	10	0		
6. I can offer opportunities for students to express themselves.	N	17	3	0	0	3.85	.36635	10	10	0	0	3.50	.51299
	%	85	15	0	0			50	50	0	0		
7. I can use gestures to help communicate what I mean more clearly.	N	17	2	1	0	3.80	.52315	0	6	4	10	1.80	.89443
	%	85	10	5	0			0	30	20	50		

Note. [1]Strongly Agree: StA, [2]Agree: A, [3]Disagree: D, [4]Strongly Disagree: StD, [5]Mean: M

Next, we turn to interview participants' comments in relation to their ability to create L2 learning opportunities in SOLs under two techniques: *Teachers' Control of the Interaction* (Figure 2) and *Speech Modification Techniques* (Figure 3).

OT1: Encouraging Participation

Interviews suggested that to encourage participation in SOLs, teachers used "random name pickers", "personalised activities" (T1), "Quizizz or Kahoot!" (T3), "google docs", or participation check lists (T2). Teachers "follow[ed] somewhat the same" practice in both environments, "except in face-to-face, [the teacher] can physically ask students to work together" (T5). It was more "challenging" to encourage participation in SOLs because the teacher could not "really see what the student [was] doing, or if she [was] active or not" (T1).

Table 6

Pearson's Correlation (Bivariate)

		Item 7 (In F2FLs).	Item 7 (In SOLs).	Item 5	Teaching Experience	VCS Experience
7. I can use gestures to help communicate what I mean more clearly (In F2FLs).	Pearson Correlation	1	-.315	-.204	-.222	.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	.176	.388	.348	.507
	N	20	20	20	20	20
7. I can use gestures to help communicate what I mean more clearly (In SOLs).	Pearson Correlation	-.315	1	.610**	.302	-.092
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.176	0	.004	.195	.699
	N	20	20	20	20	20
5. I turn on my webcam so that the learners can see my visual cues (visual cues are eye contact, hand gestures, and body language). *(From Table 3).*	Pearson Correlation	-.204	.610**	1	.482*	-.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.388	.004	0	.031	.626
	N	20	20	20	20	20
Teaching Experience	Pearson Correlation	-.222	.302	.482*	1	.397
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.348	.195	.031	0	.083
	N	20	20	20	20	20
VCS Experience	Pearson Correlation	.158	-.092	-.116	.397	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.507	.699	.626	.083	0
	N	20	20	20	20	20

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

OT2: Inviting Learners to Interact/Discuss

To invite students to interact/discuss in SOLs, teachers called them back to the main room to discuss the task "together" (T4), or gave "them a poll afterwards to get their individual ideas" (T5). However, "sometimes people do not participate at all" in breakout groups, whereas interaction in groups "is not really a problem in" F2FLs (T2). That is because F2F discussions are "more motivating for [students]… because they will see each other, they well use like facial expressions and body language"; thus, "interaction will be more effective" (T3).

OT3: Self-Expression

Teachers could offer opportunities for students to express themselves in SOLs "by providing them with online interesting activities, using games and puzzles, [or] giving them the opportunity to be more independent in learning by using breakout rooms" (T3). "[P]ersonalised" questions could be used to "reflect", but self-expression was "way easier" in F2FLs since the teacher could "resort to less resources and get more outcome" (T1).

OT4: Managing Turns

To manage students' turns in SOLs, teachers looked at the 'Raise Hand' feature and text-chat (T2), "randomly chose students" (T5), or pushed them to speak-up (T4). Although managing students' turns in SOLs was similar to F2FLs (T3), it was difficult to tell if a "student [was] done talking or not because" the visual aid was missing (T1).

Figure 2

Thematic Network for 'Learning Opportunities (Teachers' Control of the Interaction)'

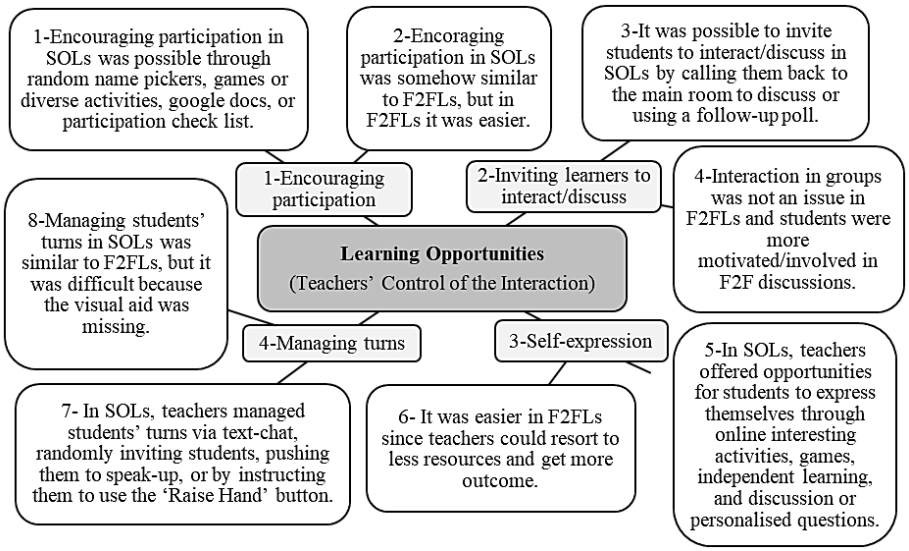
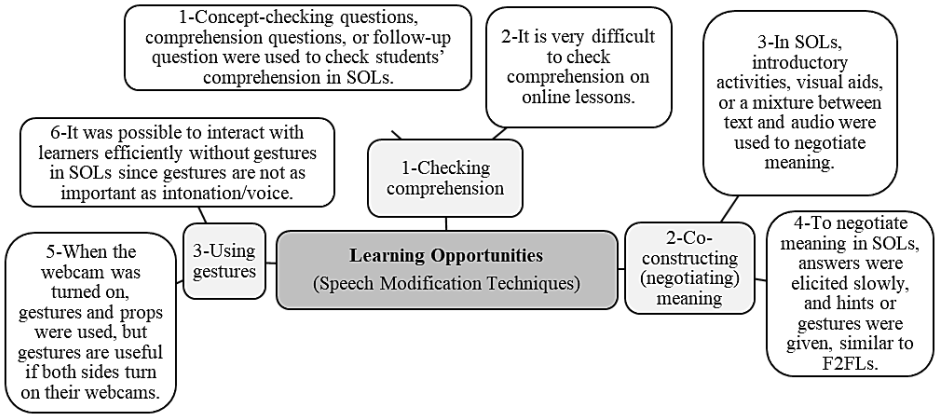


Figure 3

Thematic Network for 'Learning Opportunities (Speech Modification Techniques)'



OT1: Checking Comprehension

Interviews suggested that to *check* students' *comprehension* in SOLs, teachers used "concept-checking questions" (T5), and "comprehension questions" or "follow-up questions" (T1). However, "it is very, very difficult to check comprehension on online lessons" because in F2FLs "you could tell from the faces of students… if they are following or not" (T1).

OT2: Co-Constructing (Negotiating) Meaning

To co-construct meaning in SOLs, teachers used "introductory activities like brainstorming" or visual aids (T3), and "a mixture between text and audio" (T1), but students used chat when answers were elicited slowly, and hints or gestures were given to negotiate meaning and "it [was] pretty much the same [in F2FLs]" (T2).

OT3: Using Gestures

Interviews suggested that "gestures and… props" could be used "to explain" words, make "language come alive", help "ideas to stick", make learners "be more interested", and "get them to interact" (T2). Without gestures, "it would be… challenging to actually teach" lower-level students (T1). They are "very important for students to be like interacting and participating more"; however, they will be useful if both sides turn on their webcams (T3). In contrast, most teachers stressed that they were able to interact with learners efficiently without gestures in SOLs (T1, T4, and T5) since "gestures are not as important as, for example, intonation, voice, and so on" (T1). T5 elaborated:

> "English is historically a context poor language. In other words, it does not require a lot of gestures. Most of the meaning is in the words itself… There are not many gestures that are useful for communicating language other than maybe dimensions, for example, big and small, that would have been helpful, but beyond these very simple dimensions, gestures would not have helped the students" (T5, interview, 2021).

To recapitulate, teachers explained their varied practice in SOLs which could create learning opportunities. When compared to F2FLs, most features and practice were implied as feasible in SOLs, but some were more challenging to perform.

RQ3: Challenges

This section reports the *challenges* that hinder classroom interaction in SOLs and *suggestions* to overcome them (RQ3). Table 7 demonstrates descriptive statistics in relation to the *challenges*.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Section Three: Challenges

Adapted from	Statements ***In online classes, classroom interaction is hindered:***		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	SD
(Khafaga, 2021)	1.by audio echoes.	N	3	7	5	5	2.40	1.046
		%	15.0	35.0	25.0	25.0		
(Moorhouse *et al.*, 2021).	2. by the restrictions on the number of students visible on the screen at one time.	N	4	5	9	2	2.55	.945
		%	20.0	25.0	45.0	10.0		
	3. by internet connection issues.	N	6	10	2	2	3.00	.918
		%	30.0	50.0	10.0	10.0		
	4. because communication through both speech and writing is possible.	N	3	8	9	0	2.70	.733
		%	15.0	40.0	45.0	0		
	5. when students' webcams are turned off.	N	6	5	5	4	2.65	1.137
		%	30.0	25.0	25.0	20.0		
	6. when students respond only on text-chat.	N	9	5	6	0	3.15	.875
		%	45.0	25.0	30.0	0		
(Alvi *et al.*, 2021).	7. when students are unfamiliar with the tools of the platform.	N	10	7	1	2	3.25	.966
		%	50.0	35.0	5.0	10.0		
(Moorhouse *et al.*, 2021).	8. when teachers lack technological skills to use the platform effectively in online classes.	N	13	4	3	0	3.50	.761
		%	65.0	20.0	15.0	0		
	9. when teachers lack skills to manage the online environment.	N	10	6	3	1	3.25	.910
		%	50.0	30.0	15.0	5.0		
	10. when teachers lack knowledge on how to use videoconferencing systems to encourage learner-learner interaction.	N	10	5	4	1	3.20	.951
		%	50.0	25.0	20.0	5.0		
	11. when teachers lack knowledge on how to use videoconferencing systems to encourage learner-teacher interaction.	N	10	5	4	1	3.20	.951
		%	50.0	25.0	20.0	5.0		

As shown in Table 7, 85 % of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that classroom interaction was hindered *'when teachers lack technological skills'* (*M* = 3.50, *SD* = .761). Over three-quarters of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed that students'

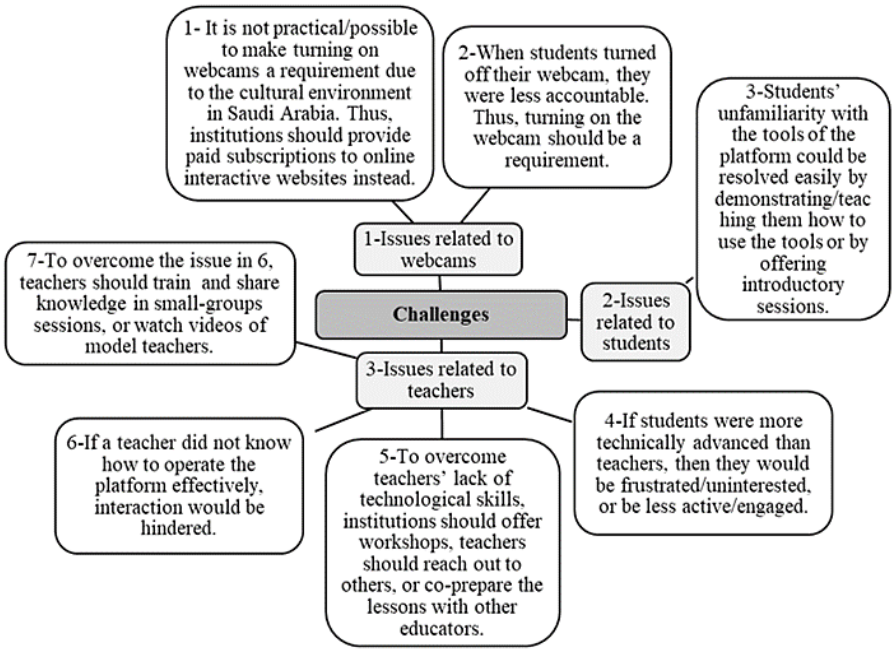
unfamiliarity with the platform tools (*M* = 3.25, *SD* = .966) and teachers' lack of pedagogical skills (*M* = 3.25, *SD* = .910) hindered interaction. Additionally, 75 % of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that classroom interaction was hindered *'when teachers lack knowledge on how to use'* VCS *'to encourage learner-learner interaction'* or *'learner-teacher interaction'* (*M* = 3.20, *SD* = .951). The lowest mean scores were reported for technological issues and limitations (item 2: *M* = 2.55, *SD* = .944, item 1: *M* = 2.40, *SD* = 1.046) where approximately half of the teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed with each challenge.

To summarise, teachers' lack of technological and pedagogical skills or knowledge in online teaching (items eight to eleven) and students' unfamiliarity with the platform tools (item seven) were the main challenges that might hinder interaction in SOLs, whereas technological issues and limitations (items one and two) were not much of a problem in this setting.

Next, we explore EFL teachers' perceptions about the *challenges* that might hinder interaction in SOLs and suggested solutions in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Thematic Network for 'Challenges'



OT1: Issues Related to Webcams

In relation to challenges caused by students' turning off their webcams, interviewees suggested that the experience was like "working in this black hole" where learners "are less accountable" (T2), whereas "being visible puts them… on the spot" (T5). There was also a "drop-off in participation online" (T5). Teachers suggested that turning on webcams should be a requirement/obligatory for both teachers and students (T5 and T3) because, "classes would be more interactive" (T1). However, it is not practical nor possible to pressure students/teachers to turn on their webcams due to the cultural environment in Saudi Arabia (T1 and T2). T2 further clarified that their university:

> "strongly encouraged us to open our webcams and we were told it was going to become compulsory, but because of … cultural environment we are in, I do not think they have a strong enough case to force women to show their face on webcam. I mean if outside women are wearing niqab and it is like strongly wrong in the culture to show your face, I mean now you are putting it on the Internet, anyone can hack… or they could be scared that… someone's brother or father or some man might be around" (T2, interview, 2021).

OT2: Issues Related to Students

Interviewees suggested that students' unfamiliarity with the platform tools "can be easily overcome" by "teach[ing] students how to use the tools" (T1), or "make[ing] an introductory session" (T3).

OT3: Issues Related to Teachers

Interviewees also indicated that if students were "more technically advanced than" teachers, then they would be frustrated/uninterested, or be less active/engaged (T1). Teachers provided some suggestions to overcome teachers' lack of technological skills: institutions should "offer workshops", as their university did, and teachers should "co-prepare the lessons" with other teachers to "learn about new websites, [or] new tools" (T1), or reach out to others, as in their colleagues, supervisors, or the university (T2 and T3). Additionally, T1 said:

> "If a teacher does not know how to operate breakout rooms effectively, then the learner-learner interaction would be hindered a lot because students' interaction with each other is very much decreased via online learning… if it is all conducted in the main room" (T1, interview, 2021).

Teachers' lack of knowledge on how to use VCS to encourage interaction and manage the online environment properly was highlighted as a challenge. To overcome this challenge, interviewees suggested for teachers to take responsibility for improving their knowledge (T4), train on using the interactive whiteboard and annotation (T5), to share "their knowledge" in "small-groups sessions", or watch "recorded videos of model teachers" who use VCS "the best" (T2).

Discussion

This study aimed to understand teachers' perceptions towards classroom interaction in SOLs via VCS during ER-ELT at a Saudi University. We sought to answer three questions in relation to (1) teachers' frequency of using VCS affordances, (2) their perceptions towards their ability to create L2 learning opportunities in SOLs compared to F2FLs, and (3) the challenges they faced when creating such opportunities and their suggestions as to how to overcome them.

In relation to the first question, our findings indicated that the most used VCS affordance was screensharing 'the lesson's questions to trigger participation'. Additionally, some interviewees stated that they shared instructions or visual aids, as in videos or pictures. This is, in some way, analogous to Dey-Plissonneau's (2019) study where one tutor "systematically shared the questions and instructions on screen", perhaps, "to trigger participation" (p. 160). Screensharing could also help bring the lesson resources into focus (Wigham & Satar, 2021).

Breakout rooms, in contrast, were utilised extensively to facilitate independent learning, create an active environment, build rapport between students, or participate more freely. Similarly, some teachers in Moorhouse et al.'s (2021) ER-ELT study reported that it is essential to use breakout rooms and give learners sufficient time and space to interact comfortably and build rapport.

Regarding the frequency of text-chat use, while most teachers stated that they always or often used it 'to offer written clarifications' or 'to overcome audio breakdowns', teachers who were interviewed pointed out that they rarely used it in SOLs unless they needed to check on students, add links, or overcome audio problems. Likewise, Dey-Plissonneau (2019) observed that text-chat "was the most frequently enacted traceable affordance that supplemented the oral mode with written clarification" or used "to overcome the frequent audio breakdowns" (pp.161-162). Similarly, one trainee teacher in Develotte et al.'s (2010) study said that she used text-chat "very little, except when" she "was encountering sound difficulties" (p. 308).

The lowest used functionality of VCS was the moving images of the participants available through webcams. This was not surprising because it is not a requirement in Saudi Arabia to turn on webcams "due to cultural constraints and respecting users' privacy" (Al-Samiri, 2021, p. 152). Therefore, most female teachers, and even students, in Saudi Arabia do not use their webcams in distance education for cultural reasons (Al-Nuaim, 2012). The findings in the present context were similar, yet the participants offered two additional reasons why they kept their webcams turned off.

First, teachers in this study were concerned that if only the instructor turns on their webcam, it would become a teacher-centred lesson. Other studies have reported similar results in that a lesson during ERT "can become very teacher-centred" where it feels "like 'a one-sided experience' or 'monologue'" (Moorhouse et al., 2021, p.10) or like "talking to yourself" (Castelli & Sarvary, 2021, p. 3567). However, one of the

participants (T2), who always kept her webcam turned on, disagreed. Although she described her experience as working in a black hole since none of her students had their webcams turned on, she emphasised that through turning her webcam on and using gestures, she was able to make learners interact with each other and be more interested in the lesson. Therefore, the real cause of the VCS platform becoming a teacher-centred platform, or a monologue, is perhaps due to teachers' pedagogical actions or style rather than keeping their webcams on.

Second, some teachers thought that learners might get distracted by their visual features or private backgrounds. This notion was acknowledged by Guichon and Cohen (2014) who explored the importance of webcams in L2 interaction in online learning and stated that:

> being able to see the image of the interlocutor and oneself during [a] video-conferencing interaction may in fact be distracting for some learners who, as a consequence, will be less focused on the verbal components of the teacher's message, thus hindering understanding to some extent (p. 349).

Other literature in the area recommends that the webcam has its "biggest impact at the rapport-building stage when interlocutors are new to each other" (Kozar, 2016, p. 787) and teachers can turn off their webcams after this stage because the visual mode is "an 'energy-intensive' mode" (Kozar, 2016, p. 684). This is because webcams provide additional amount and volume of social information (auditory and visual) thereby increasing the cognitive load on interlocutors (Hinds, 1999). This increased cognitive load might lower the quality of teaching when educators try to monitor learners' webcam images and themselves rather than focusing on the pedagogical elements.

In contrast, utilising webcams increases students' understanding (Yamada & Akahori, 2007), creates more depth in verbal exchanges (O'Dowd, 2006), and "plays a major part in the socio-affective dimension of pedagogical communication" by developing interpersonal relationships and maintaining social presence (Develotte et al., 2010, p. 309). Moreover, the presence of teachers' own image through webcams might be beneficial in monitoring and modifying their own actions. When participants see their own webcam image, it increases self-awareness of actions and activates meta-cognitive behaviour (Yamada & Akahori, 2009) which could develop teachers' semio-pedagogical competence to foster learning by appropriate use of semiotic resources (Cohen, 2015).

As regards our second research question, we found that when teachers use the above affordances appropriately, they could boost the possibilities of interaction in different modes, such as written, oral, whole class, or small groups communication, which in return guide and assist learning in SOLs (Moorhouse et al., 2021). However, when investigating teachers' perceptions about the extent to which they were able to create L2 learning opportunities in SOLs compared to F2FLs, teachers were more positive about creating such opportunities in F2FLs, particularly in relation to their ability to use their gestures to convey what they wanted to say. For example, teachers

stated that it was possible to check students' comprehension in SOLs, but it was very difficult to tell if some students were following or not because the visual cues from them were missing when learners turned off their webcams. Teachers also stated that it was possible to co-construct (negotiate) meaning in SOLs with other students via text-chat, audio, introductory activities, visual aids, or eliciting answers slowly. Although teachers were largely confident about their ability to promote classroom interaction, future studies can explore learner perspectives as well because only few learners in Alvi et al.'s (2021) ER-ELT study "agreed that teachers make them participate in the interpretation and meaning-making process" online (p. 345). There appears to be a discrepancy between teacher and learner perceptions as regards classroom interaction in SOLs.

Some teachers implied that they could interact with students efficiently without gestures in SOLs since gestures were not as important as intonation and voice. Voice or audio are indeed necessary to "compensate for the lack of non-verbal language," where "speakers have to rely predominantly on verbal input" (Barley, 2021, p. 102) as an alternative. Yet one teacher pointed out that gestures are very important for students to interact and participate more. While previous studies have acknowledged the role of gestures in supporting empathic and interactional functions as well as in enhancing L2 learning potentials (Develotte et al., 2010; Walsh, 2013), in the VCS contexts, they need to be visible and sustained long enough in the webcam frame for effective use (Guichon & Wigham, 2015). The teachers' perceptions as regards the role of their gestures visible through their webcam image in this study could be due to their inexperience in using the VCS webcam feature effectively in their lessons. While more experienced teachers were able to utilise the webcam and their gestures in meaning-making more, we did not observe any relationships between their webcam and gesture use and their VCS experience in general. This highlights the need to improve teachers' pedagogical VCS experiences.

Finally, the third question explored teachers' perceptions towards the challenges in facilitating classroom interaction in SOLs and their suggestions to overcome them. The findings indicated that most teachers agreed that interaction is hindered 'when teachers lack technological skills to use the platform effectively in online classes' or 'when students are unfamiliar with the tools of the platform'. Digital illiteracy can be one reason why low or lack of interaction is observed in SOLs (Alvi et al., 2021; Hazaea et al., 2021). Teachers in this study suggested that lack of technological skills can be overcome by workshops for teachers and learners on tool use. Likewise, other ER-ELT studies suggested the need to offer teachers intensive orientation sessions to engage learners in active learning (Rahman, 2020; Alvi et al., 2021; Hashmi et al., 2021), develop their computer literacy and efficient online communication (Alvi et al., 2021), and improve their technological competencies (Moorhouse et al., 2021).

Second, most teachers agreed that interaction is hindered when teachers lack pedagogical skills or knowledge in online teaching. To overcome these challenges, some teachers suggested that they should receive further teacher training, attend small-

groups sessions, or watch videos of model educators. Developing online classroom management and interactional competencies (Moorhouse et al., 2021) might also be beneficial.

In terms of the challenges related to webcam use, teacher perspectives were inconsistent. While some teachers reported no impact of the webcam on classroom interaction, others agreed that interaction was hindered 'when students' webcams are turned off'. Yet others thought that participation dropped in SOLs compared to F2FLs since the webcam images put students on the spot. Likewise, Gao and Zhang (2020) reported that some students became more active and confident compared to F2FLs when they turned off their webcam. This might be because remaining anonymous could be perceived as liberating by some students who feel less nervous and concerned about making errors "and are more willing to take risks" (Barley, 2021, p. 108). Overall, the teachers felt both teacher and student webcam images had to be visible to achieve positive impact.

Most teachers were also indecisive when it came to suggestions for the use of webcams. Some teachers recommended that turning on webcams should be a requirement. Likewise, Hazaea et al. (2021) suggested to address camera usage and reinforce it, if possible, to allow for a more efficient interaction. However, other teachers stated that making it a requirement is not practical nor possible due to religious reasons or the social norms in Saudi Arabia. It is important to be mindful of equity/equality, diversity of individuals, and inclusion (EDI) when dealing with camera use (Castelli & Sarvary, 2021). Some individuals who live in countryside areas might have unstable internet (Alvi et al., 2021) and experience audio/video lag if they were forced to turn on their webcams. Thus, teachers need to develop "communicative and interactive teaching methodologies that engage the students and motivate them to learn" (Alvi et al., 2021, p. 350) in contexts where it is not possible to use the webcam image.

Conclusion

This study presents three key insights about L2 classroom interaction in SOLs in the ER-ELT, particularly at higher education in Saudi Arabia, which can be of value to institutions and teachers who employ SOLs in their EFL teaching in similar contexts. First, findings indicated that screensharing, breakout rooms, and text-chat were the most used VCS affordances to facilitate L2 interaction. In contrast, the webcam image was the lowest used VCS affordance because of the social norms in Saudi Arabia, the distractions that might be caused by the speaker's features or backgrounds, or the undesirability to turn an online class into a teacher-centred lesson if only teachers turned on their webcams. Since it is not practical nor possible to force individuals in a sensitive context to turn on their webcams, more research is required to investigate whether and how classroom interaction can be maintained when webcams are turned off.

Second, teachers believed that within the ER-ELT context they were able to create several learning opportunities in SOLs, but not as well or on the same level as

F2FLs. Future studies investigating naturally occurring classroom interaction in ER-ELT contexts can further shed light on the interactional differences between SOLs and F2FLs.

Third, among several challenges that were perceived to hinder classroom interaction in SOLs, the main obstacles were teachers' lack of or deficiency in digital illiteracy and online pedagogical competencies and knowledge. Teacher training through workshops and model recordings of effective classroom practice to improve teachers' skills and competencies in creating L2 learning opportunities in SOLs is key to successful learning outcomes in VCS platforms. Although this study provided solutions to the main challenges, more research is required to see whether these suggestions are beneficial or applicable.

These new understandings may improve SOLs not only in Saudi Arabia, but in other contexts as well. Results also yield significant pedagogical implications. First, based on the findings, facilitating L2 classroom interaction via VCS appears to be feasible. Thus, higher education instructors' experience with SOLs during ERT may lead to longer-term impact on technology enhanced learning: more institutions – whose primary medium of teaching is F2F – are likely to adopt blended learning approaches (Satar & Akcan, 2014) and incorporate SOLs as part of their course structure. Second, in doing so, teachers need to be mindful of issues around EDI especially when including camera use, particularly in contexts where webcam is not available or discouraged due to socio-political norms, concerns for online safety, or technological limitations, such as lack of equipment or reliable Internet connection. Third, now that teachers developed some techno-pedagogical knowledge, they should continue to engage in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the area to keep abreast of new technological developments. Such training in relation to SOLs can specifically focus on teachers' online competencies to overcome limitations imposed by lack of learners' moving images via the webcam, including online classroom management, online classroom interactional competence (Moorhouse et al., 2021), skills in supporting social presence (Satar, 2015; 2020), and technological competencies.

Finally, one limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size. Future studies can replicate this research to understand teacher perceptions on classroom interaction via VCS in a variety of contexts across the globe.

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COVID-19 Sürecinde Acil Uzaktan Eğitim: Suudi Arabistan Öğretim Üyelerinin Eşzamanlı Çevirimiçi Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Derslerinde Sınıfiçi Etkileşim Hakkındaki Görüşleri

Öz

COVID-19 pandemisi nedeniyle yabancı dil eğitiminde yüz-yüze derslerden videokonferans sistemleri (VKS) üzerinden eşzamanlı çevirimiçi derslere (EÇD) hızlı bir geçiş gerçekleşti. Bu çalışma, öğretim üyelerinin sınıfiçi etkileşim açısından VKS'nin sunduğu olanaklar, bu ortamlarda öğrenme fırsatları yaratabilme becelerileri ve karşılaştıkları güçlükler ile bu güçlüklerin üzerinde gelinmesi hakkındaki görüşlerini incelemektedir. Karma araştırma yöntemi kullanılan bu çalışmaya Suudi Aarabistan'daki bir üniversitede çalışan ve Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce öğretmekte olan 20 öğretim üyesi katılmıştır. Tüm katılımcılar geliştirilen anketi yanıtlamış, beş öğretim üyesi ile de yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre etkileşimi desteklemek için en az kullanılan VKS olanağı kameradır. Öğretim üyeleri EÇD'lerde yüz-yüze eğitimde olduğu kadar olmasa da öğrenme fırsatları yaratabildiklerini düşünmektedir. EÇD'lerde etkileşimi engelleyen temel sebepler arasında yetersiz teknolojik ve pedagojik bilgi ve beceriler yer almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Acil Uzaktan Eğitim, Sınıfiçi Etkileşim, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce, Eşzamanlı Çevirimiçi Dersler

Appendices

Appendix 1

The Semi-Structured Interview

Sections	Interview's questions	Adapted from
	1- Tell me briefly about your experience with teaching English via videoconferencing systems?	
Section one	2- How often do you use the affordances of videoconferencing systems to facilitate L2 classroom interaction? *Give examples*.	(Dey-Plissonneau, 2019; Barley, 2021; Moorhouse *et al.*, 2021).
Section two	3- How do you encourage students to participate in online lessons? 5- How do you invite students to interact with each other in groups in online lessons?	(Zolghadri *et al.*, 2019).
	4- How do you manage students' turns in the class discussions in online lessons? 6- How do you work together with students to co-construct (negotiate) meaning in interaction in online lessons? 7- How do you check students' comprehension in online lessons? 8- How do you give feedback in online lessons? 9- How do you intervene, when needed, to provide language support in interaction in online lessons? 10- How do you offer opportunities for students to express themselves in online lessons?	(Walsh, 2013; Walsh and Sert, 2019).
	11- Do you open your webcam in online lessons? ***If no***, why? Are you able to interact with learners efficiently without gestures and how? ***If yes***, are you able to use gestures? Are using gestures important? Why/Why not?	(Zolghadri *et al.*, 2019; Barley, 2021).
Section three	12- Are there any challenges that might hinder classroom interaction in English synchronous online lessons? ***If yes:*** What are the challenges? Why do they arise? How might they be overcome? 13- **Why do the following challenges arise and how might they be overcome?** Technological issues or limitations, internet connection issues, students' webcams are turned off, students respond only on text-chat, teachers' lack of technological skills, teachers' lack skills to manage the online environment, the communication through both speech and writing is possible,	(Moorhouse *et al.*, 2021).
	technological issues or limitations (as in, audio echoes),	(Khafaga, 2021).
	students' unfamiliarity with the tools of the platform,	(Alvi *et al.*, 2021).
	or teachers' lack of knowledge on how to use videoconferencing systems to encourage learner-learner interaction/learner-teacher interaction.	

Appendix 2

The Codes and Which Research Question and Section They Relate To

RQs and Sections	Codes	Organising Themes	Global Theme
Codes relate to RQ1 and the items in *section one* in Table 3 and in Appendix 1.	Breakout rooms, breakout groups, group work, and small groups.	Breakout rooms	VCS Affordances
	Screen share, sharing, visual aids, and project.	Screensharing	
	Text-chat, texting, chatting, send messages, add, write, and link.	Text-chat	
	Webcam, camera, turn on/off, privacy, and Saudi norms.	Webcam	
Codes relate to RQ2 and *section two* in Table 4 and in Appendix 1.	Participate, and encourage.	Encouraging participation	Learning Opportunities (Teachers' Control of the Interaction)
	Invite, interact, discuss, and discussions.	Inviting learners to interact/ discuss	
	Express, self-expression, personal experiences, and reflection.	Self-expression	
	Turns, manage, turn-taking, control, pick, and take turns.	Managing turns	
	Check, comprehension, understand, and following.	Checking comprehension	Learning Opportunities (Speech Modification Techniques)
	Negotiate, meaning, and co-construct.	Co-constructing (negotiating) meaning	
	Gestures, props, face expressions, and body language.	Using gestures	
Codes relate to RQ3 and *section three* in Table 7 and in Appendix 1.	Webcam, camera, turn on/off, and Saudi context.	Issues related to webcams	Challenges
	Responding on text-chat, speaking, mute/unmute, and unfamiliarity with tools.	Issues related to students	
	Lack of technological skills, workshops, lack of knowledge to manage SOLs, and lack of knowledge to encourage interaction.	Issues related to teachers	