

EFL Students' Perceptions of E-learning Tools' Effects on Students' Engagement in English Speaking Skill Online Classes

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore Vietnamese students' perceptions of the effects of e-learning tools on student engagement in English-speaking skills online classes. With a survey design and a mixed-method approach, the study investigated 100 participants, including sophomores and juniors, at the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University of Ho Chi Minh City. Descriptive statistics and qualitative data gleaned from a questionnaire and 10 semi-structured interviews were analyzed using SPSS and thematic analysis. Findings show e-learning tools enhance student engagement by facilitating speaking discussion, evoking comfort, and contributing to students' investment in the tasks. On the contrary, e-learning tools hinder student engagement by causing boredom, stress, and distraction. The study results suggest pedagogical implications for teachers in the design of more engaging English-speaking online lessons. Further, faculty and school leaders can consider the research findings when revising and updating their curriculum to meet the increasing demands of online learning and teaching, with learners' engagement as the centrality. Future research can delve more into inferential statistics on the effects of online classes on students' engagement in English speaking, listening, reading, or writing skills.

Keywords: e-learning tools, online classes, speaking skills, student engagement

Introduction

There has been large-scale implementation of e-learning tools in online English classrooms worldwide. Chhabra (2012) claims that many colleges and universities have integrated tools such as YouTube, Skype, blogs, and smart boards into English courses to improve students' in-class performance and engagement. Moreover, technology applications have also come into play in the Vietnamese education industry. Following Decree 1215/2013/QĐ-BGDĐT, the Ministry of Education and Training enacted an action program, one of the core missions of which is to update teaching contents and pedagogical methodologies. This core mission aims to increase the use of information technology in academic subjects at schools and universities, for example, English. Accordingly, Nguyen (2016) emphasizes the importance of English teachers integrating technology into teaching, as well as learners knowing how to exploit and apply information technology to their learning. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the end of

2019 marked the transition to online learning at most universities around the world, and Vietnamese universities were not an exception. A global survey report from the International Association of Universities (IAU) reveals that in May 2020, 98% of the universities and higher education institutions from 109 countries were heavily affected by COVID-19, and 67% of them employed online platforms for their schooling. Besides, during the first few months of 2020, universities in Vietnam were also in transition from conventional schooling to virtual classrooms, which implemented a variety of online platforms to ensure students' consistent learning experiences (Hoang & Tran, 2022).

Regueras et al. (2009) point out e-learning tools applications over the past few years as an example of active learning methodologies in the classroom. Undoubtedly, the utilization of the tools has numerous effects on student engagement in online English classes. Two main strands of research on e-learning tools have been identified through comprehensive analysis. The first strand involves the applicability of e-learning tools in teaching English. For example, the study of Nguyen and Le (2012) demonstrates the effectiveness of Moodle for English writing courses, with students and teachers valuing its use. Ngo (2018) evaluates how the Internet impacts English as a Second Language (ESL) speaking skills, while the studies by Dao (2018) and Pham (2019) report students' feedback on implementing information technology in learning and teaching English. Additionally, Nguyen (2021) investigates students' engagement through specific classroom technology use. Further, Truong and Le (2022) examine students' perceptions of the YouTube platform in boosting English speaking skills. The other strand of research focuses on students' learning experiences in classes equipped with e-learning tools. For example, Hamouda's study (2020) explores students' experiences using the Blackboard Collaborate software program, a Learning Management System (LMS) component. Meanwhile, Huang (2021) examines students' learning experiences in a remote English-speaking class at a Canadian university during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Halimatusyadiyah's study (2022) looks into students' perceptions of engaging their speaking skills using the Google Meet platform. Research conducted at a Vietnamese university with the integration of the Zoom platform by Ngo (2021) reveals non-English majors' perspectives on how e-learning tools can affect their engagement in learning English. Finally, Van et al. (2021) examine students' opinions on the effectiveness of employing technology in studying English.

In summary, previous studies highlight two main research gaps that foreground our research. Firstly, there exists a lack of further insights into types of engagement in online learning environments and their efficiency to students, despite an increase in the implementation of e-learning tools into language teaching, as Cheung (2021) puts it. Likewise, while the online learning environment is a common research goal, specific language skill classes have yet to be focused on. Al Hosni (2014) claims that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners still struggle with their speaking performance despite having extensive knowledge of the English language. Secondly, little is known about the integration of advanced technologies into online English-speaking skills courses, especially in the Vietnamese teaching and learning context. Thach (2020) states that in Vietnam, though the integration of advanced technologies into teaching English has occurred in a few online speaking skill courses, it has not received considerable attention. Considering these factors, this current study examines how integrating e-learning tools affects students' engagement in online English-speaking classes in Vietnam. The research question frames the study: *What are EFL students' perceptions about the effects of e-learning tools on students' engagement in online English speaking skill classes?*

Literature Review

This section deals with synthesizing definitions of e-learning tools and student engagement and reviewing previous related studies. This establishes the foundation for the formulation of the conceptual framework of the study as well as for the discussion of the study findings in Section 4.

E-learning tools

Kigundu (2014) defines e-learning tools as any software or computer programs, ranging from sophisticated online video games to basic applications such as Microsoft PowerPoint and Microsoft Word. Meanwhile, Chugh (2010) defines e-learning tools as tools that facilitate learning through Information and Communications Technology (ICT), the Internet, and the World Wide Web. Besides, Border et al. (2006) classify e-learning tools into four categories: (1) learning management system (e.g., Google Classroom, Schoology, and LMS-HCMUSSH), (2) synchronous collaboration applications (e.g., Google Meet and Zoom), (3) all other computer tools/applications including asynchronous communication applications) (e.g., videos, blogs, and Gmail), and (4) simulated games and software (e.g., Kahoot and Quizizz). Unlike Border et al. (2006), Chugh (2010) provides two broad categories of e-learning tools: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous e-learning tools (e.g., Google Meet and Zoom) create an environment where all the students must be connected simultaneously to communicate. In contrast, asynchronous tools (e.g., Gmail and BBC Podcast) do not require them to be connected simultaneously. Furthermore, according to Son (2011), e-learning tools are composed of 12 categories based on their different functions, including (1) learning/content management system, e.g., LMS and Elearning, (2) communication, e.g., Gmail and Skype, (3) live and virtual worlds, e.g., OpenSimulator and ActiveWorlds, (4) social networking and bookmarking, e.g., Messenger and Facebook, (5) blogs and wikis, e.g., WordPress.com and Wikispaces, (6) presentation, e.g., Prezi and Google Slides, (7) resource sharing tools, e.g., Google Docs and Slideshare, (8) website creation, e.g., Google Sites and Jimdo, (9) web exercise creation, e.g., ContentGenerator and ESL Video, (10) web search engines, e.g., Google, Firefox, and Bing, (11) dictionaries and concordancers, e.g., Oxford Learners' Dictionaries and Cambridge English Dictionary, and (12) utilities, e.g., Mindmeister, CalculateMe, and Doodle.

In this study, the definitions provided by Kigundu (2014), Chugh (2010), and the categorization by Son (2011) and Border et al. (2006) were adopted because they best characterize the nature and features of e-learning tools in the current research context. Accordingly, in this study, *e-learning tools refer to any essential computer software or programs that can aid online teaching and learning*. E-learning tools are divided into four main types, namely (1) *learning management systems (LMS)*: applications that administer, archive, and deliver online lessons, such as Google Classroom or Schoology (adopted from Border et al., 2006), (2) *synchronous e-learning tools*: tools that facilitate simultaneous communication in online classrooms, such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom, and synchronous collaboration tools like Google Docs or Jamboard by Google Meet (adopted from Border et al., 2006; Chugh, 2010), (3) *asynchronous e-learning tools*: tools that do not require students to be connected simultaneously to communicate in class, for example, BBC Podcast, ESL Podcast, Facebook groups (adopted from Border et al., 2006; Chugh, 2010), and (4) *searching tools*: tools that allow students to search information, knowledge and vocabulary, including Google, Firefox, and online dictionaries such as Oxford Learners' Dictionaries and Cambridge English Dictionary (adopted from Son, 2011).

Student Engagement

Student engagement plays a vital role in education in online classes (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). The term “student engagement” is described by Lamborn, Newmann, and Wehlage (1992) as the student’s investment of mind and effort to learn, understand, or master knowledge or skills. The engagement requires the student’s focus and attempt to acquire knowledge. To measure student engagement, Lamborn et al. (1992) use indirect indicators, including students' amount of participation such as attendance, tasks finished, time spent on academic work, level of students' attention, interest, and care shown in task completion. However, these indicators can sometimes be seen as students' willingness to follow class rules instead of the actual investment in study, comprehension, or mastery of knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, Moore (1989) divides student engagement into three types: *learner-to-learner engagement*, *learner-to-instructor engagement*, and *learner-to-content engagement*. *Learner-to-learner engagement* refers to the interaction among class or group members when the students participate in group work. This type of engagement can be in the form of synchronous means, such as video conferencing or chatting, as well as asynchronous means, such as discussion boards or e-mails (Banna et al., 2015). *Learner-to-instructor engagement* describes the interaction between the instructor and students in classes. This type of engagement in online classes can appear by means of synchronous communication, such as video-based meetings or message services, and asynchronous communication, such as online forums or e-mails. In this process, the instructor attempts to arouse students’ interest in the lessons or maintain it, thereby encouraging students to study and be self-motivated (Revere & Kovach, 2011; Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). Finally, *learner-to-content engagement* is defined as the interaction between the students and the information provided, which leads to changes in students' understanding and perspective. This process includes reading informational texts, using study guide books, watching instructional videos, interacting with multimedia on the computer, searching for information, and completing tasks and projects (Abrami et al., 2011).

In addition, student engagement is defined by Bomia et al. (1997) as the willingness, needs, desire, and motivation when they participate in the learning process. Moreover, Gunuc and Kuzu (2014) describe student engagement as the quality and quantity of students' psychological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to the learning process as well as to in-class/out-of-class academic and social activities to achieve successful learning outcomes. Cognitive engagement includes investment in learning, value given to learning, learning goals, self-regulation, and planning (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2014). Emotional engagement involves students' responses to the teacher, peers, course content, and the class, including attitudes, interests, and values (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Gunuc & Kuzu, 2014). Behavioral engagement includes students' academic participation, efforts, class attendance, and class participation (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2014).

The definition of student engagement by Gunuc and Kuzu (2014), which is the most comprehensive and overarching one, was therefore adopted. Therefore, in this study, *student engagement refers to the quality and quantity of students’ behavioral, emotional, and cognitive reactions to the learning process and in-class/out-of-class academic and social activities to achieve successful learning goals*. In an online class of English speaking skills, behavioral engagement consists of students' class participation in class activities. Emotional engagement mentions student's feelings in online classes and in the learning process, such as interest, tension, and boredom. Cognitive engagement includes students' investment in speaking practice, goals, and clear plans in the course of their learning process. The working definitions of e-learning tools and student engagement are constitutive of the study's conceptual

framework. Prior research has also shown relevant findings in relation to the current research topic.

Previous studies

Ten articles, with six conducted in international contexts and four in the Vietnamese context, were selected for review. The review inclusion criteria consist of (1) university student participants, (2) English speaking skill online classes/courses, (3) the use of e-learning tools in the class, and (4) the effects of e-learning tools on students' engagement.

First, Hussein's (2016) study explores how Blackboard, a Learning Management System (LMS), enhances the English listening and speaking skills of 37 female English-majored students at the University of Hail, Saudi Arabia. The findings reveal advantages such as easy access to audio-visual material, improved communication and language skills, and challenges consisting of unfamiliarity with the system and submitting assignments. Similarly, Hamouda (2020) studied the impact of the Blackboard Collaborate software on 70 Saudi EFL students' attitudes towards and experiences of using this tool as an LMS. The results show that LMS positively influences students' enjoyment and enthusiasm, reduces stress and fear in speaking English, increases motivation in completing assignments on time, and gives good access to learning materials. In addition, Shukri et al. (2020) examined the views of 250 student participants from Universiti Kuala Lumpur Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology on synchronous learning via information and communications technology (ICT) tools for English education. The results indicate the benefits of online learning, such as generating students' interest despite challenges in concentration. Furthermore, Huang (2021) conducted a case study of ESL students' remote speaking class learning experiences at a Canadian University during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings show that students expect more collaborative and interactive discussions on online platforms to encourage communication. The participants also raised concerns about low self-regulation in the virtual learning environment.

Meanwhile, Halimatusyadiyah (2022) investigated the perceptions of student participants from Ciamis, Indonesia, of speaking skills using Google Meet as a synchronous and asynchronous learning tool. The findings suggest that Google Meet provides students with more English-speaking opportunities and increases students' confidence to speak English and speaking practice time without the teacher's help. Despite these benefits, some concerns about making mistakes were also raised by the participants. Last but not least, Fauzi (2022) explored 127 students' perceptions of online learning for ESL speaking activities at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia, with the support of synchronous and asynchronous tools such as Google Meet, Google Classrooms, Zoom, and WhatsApp. The results show positive perceptions in terms of convenience and practicality of the tools during the COVID-19 pandemic and negative ones, including pressure to complete speaking tasks and lack of confidence to speak.

Research conducted in Viet Nam has shown similar findings. Dao (2018) surveyed 60 students in English courses at Hanoi Law University on the implementation of e-learning tools in creating an engaging English classroom. The findings suggest that all the participants agreed on the usefulness of technology in English classes, and 87% of the participants used e-learning tools regularly, using online dictionaries or web browsers to participate more in class activities and feeling excited about using Kahoot in class. In a different vein, Ngo (2018) published a review paper on 31 studies investigating the use of web-based technology to improve learners' speaking performance. The results indicate that when utilized with communication tools and learning management, web-based language learning plays a vital role in student engagement in terms of the student's anxiety and motivation. Additionally, the study by Nguyen (2021) examines the roles of e-learning tools in promoting collaboration among English as a Foreign

Language (EFL) students at university. The results indicate that there is a frequent use of technologies in teaching-learning activities, and e-learning tools are useful for creating a collective learning network, thus also boosting learners' confidence. Besides, Vo (2021) investigated the use of Google Classroom (GC) in an authentic teaching environment for 30 students in the Foreign Language Department at Phu Yen University. The findings suggest that GC helps create a collaborative learning environment where the teacher and their students can freely discuss the lessons and the schedule and promote students' learning autonomy.

In general, although the 10 previous studies above have given insights into students' perceptions of the diverse effects of e-learning tools on student engagement, they reveal two main gaps. First, most studies do not focus specifically on English-speaking online classes. Second, most studies were conducted on relatively small samples. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge such gaps by focusing on the specific online classes of English speaking skills and increasing the sample size in order to thoroughly investigate different aspects of students' perceptions about the effects of e-learning tools on student engagement in online classes of English speaking skills.

Research Methodology

Participants & research setting

With the convenience sampling method, which facilitates the data access for the researchers, the chosen participants of the study are 300 second-year and third-year students of the high-quality program of the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City. At the time the research was conducted, the Faculty was implementing online learning owing to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Therefore, all these participants had relevant online learning experiences. Moreover, their courses are related to speaking skills, namely Listening-Speaking B1, Listening-Speaking B2, Advanced Listening-Speaking C1, and Language Proficiency. After the questionnaire was delivered to those 300 participants, only 100 responses were returned for data collection and analysis.

Study design

The research took the form of a survey and utilized the mixed method, comprising both quantitative and qualitative methods. Surveys are systems for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (Fink, 2003). The reasons for the selection of the survey design in this study are two-fold. First, the survey is a practical and convenient means of gathering data from a large sample size. Second, using survey research means being able to use polls, questionnaires, open-ended questions, and multiple-choice questions. With these various means, it is easier for the researchers to compare results from the participants, make generalizations, analyze the data, and gain more insights into the participants' points of view. Specifically, the questionnaire was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, and the interviews were used to obtain qualitative data.

Data collection methods

Two main methods of data collection were designed in this study. The first method is a questionnaire (via Google Forms) that centers around four types of e-learning tools and three types of student engagement. The questionnaire includes two main sections, encompassing the participants' background information (5 questions) and their perceptions about the effects of e-learning tools on their engagement respectively. The second section, whose responses are

recorded based on Likert-scale statements, consists of three sub-sections covering the benefits of the e-learning tools (9 statements), the drawbacks of the e-learning tools (8 statements), and alternative ways to utilize e-learning tools (8 statements) effectively. These statements derive from the findings of previous studies and from the researchers' pilot interviews. An open-ended question is added to each section to obtain other opinions or ideas from the participants. After data from the questionnaire were collected, 10 semi-structured interviews, whose data reached a saturation point, were carried out on the participants' voluntary basis to gain the participants' deeper insights into their thoughts about the effects of e-learning tools on their engagement during English-speaking skill online classes based on their responses to the questionnaire. That is the reason why semi-structured interviews were selected in this study.

Data analysis methods

Descriptive analysis was employed to analyze the quantitative data from the questionnaire with the application of SPSS, while thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. The procedure for data collection and analysis is summarized and described in Table 1.

Table 1

Procedure for data collection and analysis

Data collection	1. Review the previous studies and pilot interviews to design the questionnaire
	2. Distribute the questionnaire, collect the questionnaire's responses to formulate the interview questions and conduct semi-structured interviews
Data analysis	Use descriptive analysis to analyze the quantitative data and thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data for interpretation and discussion.

Results and Discussion

After the data were collected, they were analyzed concerning two main parts, namely the participants' background information and their perceptions about the effects of e-learning tools on student engagement in online classes of English speaking skills.

Background information

Based on the responses from the questionnaire, 67% of the participants were female and 33% male. In addition, 57% of the participants were currently sophomores and 43% juniors. Table 2 summarizes the percentages of participants taking online English-speaking-related courses. Specifically, 78% and 77% of the participants took Listening-Speaking B2 and Advanced Listening-Speaking C1, respectively; 35% took Listening-Speaking B1, 71% took Language Proficiency, 2% took all those courses offline, and 2% took other courses not covered in the scope of the study.

Table 2

The online English speaking-related courses that the participants attended

Courses	Count/Percentage (%)
Listening - Speaking B1	35
Listening - Speaking B2	78
Advanced Listening - Speaking C1	77
Language Proficiency	71
We do offline classes for all those	1
All are offline classes	1
Intercultural Communication, Introduction to Linguistics, Business English	1
Intercultural Communication, Introduction to Translation, Introduction to Linguistics, English for Tourism, Business English	1

Table 3 presents the percentages of the types of e-learning tools utilized in the above English-speaking online courses. Specifically, 90% of the participants selected LMS in their classrooms, 78% selected synchronous e-learning tools, 77% asynchronous e-learning tools, and 71% searching tools

Table 3

Types of e-learning tools used in the above online English-speaking courses

Types of e-learning tools	Count/Percentage (%)
Learning management system - LMS (e.g., Google Classroom, EF Learning, and Schoology)	90
Synchronous e-learning tools (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Docs)	78
Asynchronous e-learning tools (e.g., Gmail and Facebook groups)	77
Searching tools (e.g., Google, Firefox, and online dictionaries)	71

Overall, more female than male participants and more sophomores than juniors took part in the survey. A high percentage of participants attended online English-speaking courses ranging from Listening-Speaking B2, Advanced Listening-Speaking C1, and Language Proficiency to Listening-Speaking B1 in order of the prevalence of the courses.

Participants' perceptions about the effects of e-learning tools on their engagement

From students' perspectives, the implementation of e-learning tools in online English-speaking courses has two main effects on students' engagement. They both enhance and hinder student engagement regarding their cognition, emotions, and behaviors.

Ways e-learning tools enhance student engagement

Descriptive statistics of how e-learning tools positively affect student engagement are presented in Table 4. Behavioral engagement refers to students' class participation in class activities (Items 1 to 4). Emotional engagement is shown through students' interest (Items 5-6). Cognitive engagement involves students' clear plans, investments, and goals (Items 7 to 9). Besides, students' responses were recorded, using the scales of 1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly agree. The percentage, mean, and mode for each Item were calculated to show the response frequency, central tendency, and the most selected response, respectively, among the participants.

Table 4

Factors that enhance student engagement

		1- Strongly disagree	2- Disagree	3- Neutral	4- Agree	5- Strongly agree
1. I can discuss speaking ideas easily with my teacher(s) and classmate(s) by using Google Docs, Google Meet, Zoom, etc.	Count / %	1	12	37	36	14
	Mode	3				
	Mean	3.50				
2. I search for speaking materials and vocabulary quickly by using searching tools (Google Chrome, Firefox, etc.) and online dictionaries (Cambridge, Oxford, etc.).	Count / %	1	2	10	44	43
	Mode	4				
	Mean	4.26				
3. I can easily give feedback on LMS when discussing speaking topics with my classmates.	Count / %	11	40	29	16	4
	Mode	2				
	Mean	2.62				
4. I can easily share pictures, videos, links, etc., to illustrate, explain and justify my opinions through synchronous tools	Count / %	1	8	18	46	27
	Mode	4				

(Google Meet, Zoom, etc.) or asynchronous tools (Google Docs, Facebook Messenger, etc.) or LMS (Google Classroom, etc.).	Mean	3.90				
5. I feel comfortable when practicing speaking in class (using Google Meet, Zoom, Messenger, etc., for discussion or online dictionaries when encountering new words).	Count / %	3	14	33	36	14
	Mode	4				
	Mean	3.44				
6. I feel excited when watching videos on LMS provided by teachers or videos on YouTube of candidates performing a speaking task (Cambridge, IELTS, etc.).	Count / %	11	20	35	25	9
	Mode	3				
	Mean	3.01				
7. I put a lot of effort and time into speaking practice with teachers and friends (thanks to using Google Meet, Zoom, etc., for an online discussion and using Google Search, Firefox, etc., for finding ideas).	Count / %	6	20	43	26	5
	Mode	3				
	Mean	3.04				
8. I am well-prepared with ideas and mistakes correction for my speaking (by getting support/ideas from teachers and friends on Google Meet, Zoom, Facebook groups, Google Classroom, etc. and using Google search, Firefox, etc. for ideas).	Count / %	6	12	32	37	13
	Mode	4				
	Mean	3.39				
9. I can track deadlines for my speaking assignments easily. (e.g. when the teachers post an assignment on Google Classroom, Facebook groups, etc.).	Count / %	3	4	20	45	28
	Mode	4				
	Mean	3.91				

Regarding behavioral engagement, 37% of participants held a neutral attitude to Item 1 concerning using Google Docs, Google Meet, and Zoom to discuss speaking ideas with their teachers and classmates (mode = 3). However, they generally show their agreement with this Item (mean = 3.50). Item 2 received the highest agreement rates (87%), i.e., searching tools and

online dictionaries contributed to students' searching for speaking materials (mode = 4). The statistics also display a tendency for agreement among participants (mean = 4.26). In Item 3, 40% of participants did not agree that they could easily provide feedback on LMS when discussing speaking topics with their classmates (mode = 2; mean = 2.62). Item 4 concerning data sharing for speaking tasks through LMS, synchronous and asynchronous tools showed the second highest agreement rate of 73% (mode = 4). There is also a tendency towards agreement (mean = 3.90). The tools allowed them to review the data, which was useful, convenient, and time-saving. In terms of emotional engagement, 50% of participants agreed with Item 5. However, together with Item 5, Item 6 was also highlighted as they both showed fairly sizable neutral rates (33% and 35%, respectively, modes = 4 and 3, respectively). There is a tendency towards neutral options likewise for these two Items (means = 3.44 and 3.01, respectively). For cognitive engagement, participants' response to Item 7 was neutral concerning their investment in speaking practice with their teachers and friends (43%; mode = 3; mean = 3.04). Regarding Item 8, 50% of participants agreed that searching tools and other tools such as Google Meet, Zoom, Facebook groups, Google Classroom, etc. provided them with thorough ideas preparation and mistakes correction for their speaking performance (mode = 4). However, with a fairly sizable neutral rate (32%), the tendency for agreement is not marked (mean = 3.39). Item 9 mentioned deadline tracking functions in Google Classroom and Facebook groups, which witnessed a fairly high rate of agreement (a total of 73%; mode = 4; mean = 3.91).

Data from the interview show an alignment between the interviewed participants' opinions and their responses to the given items in the questionnaire regarding the positive effects of e-learning tools on their engagement during English-speaking online classes without much further elaboration from the interviewees. Specifically, regarding emotional engagement, the interviewees agreed that online dictionaries and discussions held on video conferencing platforms created a comfortable speaking environment for all learners to join and that YouTube speaking videos or videos assigned by teachers on LMS succeeded in drawing learners' attention. In addition, as to cognitive engagement, all the interviewed participants considered Google Classroom useful since the platform is connected through users' email, thus reminding them of upcoming deadlines.

Discussion 1

The results of this study suggest students' perceptions of the positive effects of e-learning tools on student engagement in English-speaking online classes. Regarding behavioral engagement, through the high percentage and the mode, searching tools facilitated student participation in class the most. With easy access, searching tools created a favorable environment for students to find materials supporting their speaking performance. It echoed the findings of Hamouda (2020) that LMS was reported to give good access to learning materials. Regarding emotional engagement, most students expressed interest when using searching and synchronous tools to engage in speaking activities. Particularly, they felt comfortable practicing speaking since they could use Google Meet, Zoom, Messenger, etc., for discussion or online dictionaries when encountering new words. The study of Hamouda (2020) shared some similarities as the results showed that LMS positively influenced students' enjoyment and enthusiasm, reduced stress and fear in speaking English, and increased motivation in completing assignments on time. However, most participants held a neutral viewpoint when being asked about the tasks on YouTube. In contrast to the neutral attitude of the participants of the current study towards YouTube, Dao's study (2018) showed a positive attitude, as 20 students of the course all felt satisfied with the in-class activities. Regarding cognitive engagement, most students had the

same viewpoint that learning management systems (typically Google Classroom) and asynchronous tools (typically Facebook) helped them to have clear plans for their speaking tasks. This result aligned with the study by Vo (2021), as Google Classroom was proven to encourage students' learning autonomy, thus facilitating their learning and fostering cognitive engagement.

Ways e-learning tools hinder student engagement

Apart from positive effects, the study results show negative effects of e-learning tools on student engagement, which are displayed in Table 5. Negative behavioral engagement is demonstrated through students' difficulties in participating in class activities (Items 1 to 3). Negative emotional engagement is demonstrated through students' boredom and tension (Items 4-5). Negative cognitive engagement is reflected in the absence or small amount of students' investment in their studies or that they do not have clear plans or goals for class activities (Items 6 to 8). Besides, students' responses were recorded, using the scales of 1-Strongly agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree, and 5-Strongly disagree. The percentage, mean, and mode for each Item were calculated to show the response frequency, central tendency, and the most selected response, respectively, among the participants.

Table 5

Factors that hinder student engagement

		5- Strongly disagree	4- Disagree	3- Neutral	2- Agree	1- Strongly agree
1. I feel demotivated because the voice disconnection or image lag from video conferencing apps (Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.) prevents me from participating in the discussion.	Count / %	0	3	28	48	21
	Mode	2				
	Mean	2.13				
2. I may get distracted and have difficulties with my speaking performance because of the echo sounds or background noise in Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.	Count / %	0	6	23	46	25
	Mode	2				
	Mean	2.10				
3. I find it slow to receive my classmates' feedback on LMS.	Count / %	3	12	38	32	15
	Mode	3				
	Mean	2.56				
4. Raising my voice in a large group of video conferencing (such as Google Meet, Zoom, etc.) makes me feel stressed.	Count / %	3	19	27	34	17
	Mode	2				

	Mean	2.57				
5. Watching the same videos of others performing a speaking task (Cambridge, IELTS, etc.) via YouTube makes me feel bored.	Count / %	5	16	48	18	13
	Mode	3				
	Mean	2.82				
6. As I practice speaking, I use Google to search for information irrelevant to speaking practice (like news of my idols or personal concerns) or spend some time checking Facebook, Messenger, Zalo, etc., because there may be updated news/notifications on them.	Count / %	2	6	31	39	22
	Mode	2				
	Mean	2.27				
7. I have problems preparing for my speaking because of a huge amount of information or some inaccurate information on Google searches.	Count / %	3	22	39	24	12
	Mode	3				
	Mean	2.80				
8. I may submit my speaking assignments late. (Google Classroom only reminds the deadline 1 day before; Facebook Groups cannot remind the deadlines).	Count / %	14	31	30	18	7
	Mode	4				
	Mean	3.27				

Regarding behavioral engagement, 71% of the participants agreed with Item 2 that the echo sounds or background noise in Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc., distracted them in their speaking performance (mode = 2). The statistics also revealed a tendency for agreement with this Item (mean = 2.10). Besides, item 1, emphasizing demotivation due to voice disconnection or image lag from video conferencing apps, was agreed upon by 69% of the respondents (mode = 2; mean = 2.13). In addition, 47% of the respondents agreed with Item 3 concerning the slowness of receiving classmates' feedback on LMS (mode = 3). However, they tended to stay neutral (mean = 2.56). For emotional engagement, a little more than half of the participants, 51%, were in agreement on Item 4 that they felt stressed when raising their voice in a large group of video conferencing (such as Google Meet, Zoom, etc.) (mode = 2; mean = 2.57). Meanwhile, a small number of respondents, 31%, agreed with Item 5 regarding the boredom when they had to watch the same videos of others performing a speaking task (Cambridge, IELTS, etc.) via YouTube. Further, 48% of participants also responded with "Neutral" towards Item 5 (mode = 3). The tendency for this Item was placed on the neutral option (mean = 2.82). Regarding cognitive engagement, most participants agreed with Item 6 (61%) that Google search or social media were so tempting that they could not invest their effort in practicing speaking but instead spent time using those tools (mode = 2; mean = 2.27). Besides, a few

participants (25%) agreed with Item 8 regarding assignments' late submission, while 45% of the respondents expressed their disagreement (mode = 4), and the tendency for disagreement stayed pretty high (mean = 3.27). In addition, many participants, 39%, chose the "Neutral" option for Item 7, revolving around problems when they prepare for speaking performances because of a huge amount of information or some inaccurate information on Google search (mode = 3; mean = 2.80).

The reasons for the participants' choices were elaborated in the interviews. In terms of behavioral engagement, interviewed participants (IPs) 3, 5, and 6 found background noise distracting because *"it could make me forget what I was going to say."* Sometimes, they could not follow the class, but background noise appeared and made them feel more irritated and demotivated. Further, 69% of the participants agreed with Item 1, saying that they all felt demotivated to participate in discussions because of voice disconnection or image lag from video conferencing apps. IP 3 said, *"When technical problems such as voice disconnection or image lag occurred, I would easily get in low spirits and be demotivated and just want to turn off the laptop."* IPs 7 and 8 also shared the same views that they became demotivated when voice disconnection or image lag happened. Moreover, these disturbances also caused students to forget what the teacher had just said since they could not pay attention to the key information, which also discouraged them from participating in the class activities. Moreover, to further explain the choice for Item 3, IP 7 said, *"LMS is not a friendly-user website. It may prove possible to post feedback on LMS; however, I think it was rather time-consuming to discuss it."* In terms of emotional engagement, interviewees explained their choices for Item 5, and they expressed that the format of these videos is similar to one another. They just wanted to know the format and requirements for practicing speaking for IELTS. Hence, in particular, IPs 5 and 7 assumed: *"...watching one or two videos is enough; too many videos may be time-consuming and boring."* Besides, to explain the relatively high percentage of Neutral options for Item 5, participants mentioned that they thought there could be different situations. If the videos were *"interesting and meaningful with useful vocabulary, intonation, or speaking style that I could learn from"* (IP 3), they could spend time watching them. However, if the videos had *"boring or repetitive content and format,"* there was no need to watch them again and again (IPs 7, 8, and 9). Besides, IP 1 shared, *"Watching those videos again would be dull and boring because they had watched them during their practice for IELTS in the past."* Yet, if they were for class activities, students would pay more attention to them. Regarding cognitive engagement, many participants disagreed with Item 8, claiming that each person must be responsible for submitting the tasks on time. Google Classroom had reminded them, but if they did not *"prioritize submitting assignments,"* they would *"never submit the tasks on time"* (IPs 1 and 3). Furthermore, Item 7 received a high percentage of Neutral options, and it was clarified that interviewees thought searching tools still proved convenient regardless of problems they may have (IPs 4 and 8).

Discussion 2

The results suggest that from the participants' perspectives, various factors related to the implementation of e-learning tools in online English-speaking classes hinder students' engagement. Regarding behavioral engagement, echo sounds, or background noise from synchronous e-learning tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc., were thought to hinder student participation the most. Little is known about this in previous studies. In terms of emotional engagement, students experienced stress and tension when they had to raise their voices through synchronous tools such as Google Meet, Zoom, etc. This result aligned with the

study findings by Fauzi (2022) in relation to the pressure students experienced to perform online speaking tasks. The study participants also experienced boredom when they were asked to watch videos with repetitive content and format on asynchronous tools such as YouTube, which seems to be scarcely discussed in prior research. Concerning cognitive engagement, the participants admitted that asynchronous tools such as Facebook, Messenger, and searching tools distracted them from practicing speaking. This result corroborates the findings by Shukri et al. (2020) regarding the challenges students face in concentrating on and comprehending online lectures. It also echoed the findings by Huang (2021) related to students' expressed concerns about their low self-regulation in the virtual learning environment. On the other hand, the study results suggest a relatively high disagreement on learning management systems (typically Google Classroom) and asynchronous tools (typically Facebook) as attributed to students' late submission of school tasks, contrary to the findings about assignment submission challenges as put forward by Hussein (2016).

All in all, although the current study results are generally supported by previous studies on EFL students' perceptions about the effects of e-learning tools on their engagement during English-speaking online classes, very few prior studies provided a conceptual framework encompassing the two main concepts of e-learning tools and student engagement and specifically focused on the Speaking skill online classes. Therefore, this current study contributes to bridging such gaps and laying the groundwork for further and future research in the field.

Conclusion

Summary

To address the research question, *What are EFL students' perceptions about e-learning tools' effects on students' engagement in English speaking skill online classes?*, based on the conceptual framework, consisting of the working definitions of e-learning tools and student engagement presented in Section 2, two main conclusions have been reached. First, from the EFL students' perspectives, e-learning tools enhance three types of student engagement. In terms of behavioral engagement, these tools facilitate students' materials and vocabulary searching, illustration sharing, speaking ideas discussion, and feedback provision. Regarding emotional engagement, the tools effectively evoke students' feelings of comfort, which is much higher than the feeling of excitement. Regarding cognitive engagement, these tools enhance students' effort and time investment, speaking preparation and mistake correction, and deadline tracking. Second, the four types of e-learning tools brought about eight main negative effects on student engagement. The tools create demotivation, distraction, and slow feedback in connection with behavior. Moreover, regarding emotions, they substantially cause students more stress than boredom when speaking English in online lessons. In relation to cognition, the tools cause students more problems with distraction than with their speaking preparation and late assignment submission.

Research significance and implications

Overall, this study has made significant contributions, both theoretical and practical, to the field of online English teaching and learning, particularly in the Vietnamese context. Theoretically, this study has shed light on EFL students' perceptions of the effects of e-learning tools on students' engagement in English-speaking online courses. The study also directs its practical contributions toward three main stakeholders: students, teachers, faculty, and school leaders. Research results offer students a multidimensional perspective of how e-learning tools affect their engagement in an online English-speaking class, which provides teachers with insights

into pedagogical implications in designing more engaging lessons, especially online speaking ones. Further, faculty and school leaders can consider the current study findings regarding their future revision or update of the curriculum to meet the increasing demands of online teaching and learning with learners' engagement as the centrality.

Study limitations and suggestions for future research

The study has one main limitation. Due to the time constraint, the sample size is not as large as expected. However, the quantitative and qualitative data gleaned from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews adequately addressed the research question. Future research can delve more into the effects of online English-speaking courses on students' engagement through inferential statistics or investigate how students' engagement can be influenced in online English classes focusing on other skills such as listening, reading, or writing.

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