

# EFL Students' Perceptions of Interactive Lesson Slides in Online lessons: A Study in the Saudi Context

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## Abstract

The unexpected shift to online education necessitates further exploration of online learning tools for online teaching and learning. Accordingly, the present study aims to explore EFL students' perceptions of interactive lesson slides in online lessons; this study is part of a larger research project focused on exploring the use of interactive lesson slides in online classrooms. To explore students' perceptions, an online survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey. The study's participants consisted of 30 EFL students (N=30). Quantitative data was gathered via the online survey. The research's findings indicate that the students had positive perceptions about the use of interactive lesson slides in online lessons. As a result, the current study highly recommends implementing interactive lesson slides in an online learning environment.

**Keywords:** EFL students, interactive lesson slides, students' perceptions, online learning

## 1. Introduction

The widespread use of online education requires exploring online tools to aid students' learning. As of 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures impacted approximately 1.5 billion students in 165 countries (UNESCO, 2021). Consequently, online learning has been deployed by governments around the world. The rapid switch to an online learning setting was a response aimed at preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In Saudi Arabia, universities were able to adapt swiftly to the online learning environment as online communication and learning tools had been incorporated before the COVID-19 pandemic began (Alsamiri, 2021). Nonetheless, Saudi students faced several challenges in online learning (Al-Nofaie, 2020). Moreover, the quality of content delivery was a primary challenge during the pandemic (Akour et al., 2020). In 2020, the OECD-Harvard Graduate School for Education developed a checklist to maintain education continuity; one of the most important recommendations was to create an effective delivery system for online learning. However, supporting students and maintaining student learning continuity is challenging (Mann et al., 2021).

When attending classes distantly, students typically need a supportive system during the online learning process. Specifically, English as a foreign language (EFL) students face difficulties in terms of motivation in an online learning setting (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021). Hence, the present study aims to explore EFL students' perceptions of interactive lesson slides, an online learning tool, during an online lesson in the Saudi EFL context.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Online Learning

Online learning refers to "a form of distance education mediated by technological tools where students are geographically separated from the instructor and the main institution" (Hartnett, 2016, p. 7). This definition describes the current situation in most educational institutes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, an online learning setting requires promoting students' motivation to support the distant environment situation and facilitate the language learning progress (Hartnett, 2016).

During the pandemic, Meşe and Sevilen (2021) conducted a seven-week qualitative case study that examined students' views of online teaching and its effect on their motivation; the study concluded that online education has a negative impact on students' motivation. Coman et al. (2020), in another recent study, found that some students described their online learning as a negative experience, as some teachers did not use adequate encouraging strategies in online classrooms. Such results indicate that significant issues with the current online practices are

affecting students' learning motivation. However, in a recent systematic literature review on trends in educational research, Valverde-Berrocoso et al. (2020) found that students in online learning could be motivated by emphasizing their effort and abilities.

In an exploratory study, Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) found that emotional presence is highly visible in an online context and impacts students' learning process. This finding highlights the importance of providing a safe and positive instructional environment for students. In addition, the design of the learning environment should be based on factors that attract students' attention depending on the students' unique characteristics (Özhan & Kocadere, 2020). Özhan and Kocadere (2020) highlighted the benefit of providing clear steps for each student's role in accomplishing tasks.

### 2.2 Online Learning Tools

Online tools, in the present study, refers to websites and applications that enable synchronous communication, which involves instant and real-time interaction during a specified period (Lim, 2017). For example, Blackboard Collaborate, which is a Learning Management System (LMS), can provide a synchronous teaching and learning environment for conducting an online class (Alsamiri, 2021). To determine the effects of online tools on students' achievement, Wichadee and Pattanapichet (2018) examined the use of Kahoot on EFL students' performance; they concluded that using this online tool significantly improved students' performance. In addition, online tools can generate an interactive classroom environment (Hung & Young, 2015; Müller et al., 2018). In one experimental study by Hung and Young (2015), the findings indicated that online tools with gamification features lead students to connect and interact with each other (Hung & Young, 2015). Such game features offer a motivational boost by prompting students to complete the game activity (Yacob & Yunus, 2019).

In exploring students' perceptions on the use of online tools, Bakhtyari and Kassim (2014) found that students generally agreed that online tools affect the learning process positively. However, despite the advantages of online tools, some students felt that discussions via online tools do not allow for the same authenticity as face-to-face communication (Decker & Beltran, 2016). Indeed, some online tools offer limited features for students to choose from, and this limitation affects students' responses. Kohnke and Jarvis (2020) suggested using online learning tools such as Mentimeter to increase students' participation during online classes. Such online tools may support students' online learning by including features that fill the gap left by the absence of physical interaction in a classroom environment. Hence, to enhance the quality of learning activities, teachers should consider adopting online learning tools according to the classroom requirements. (Avila & Genio, 2020).

### 2.3 Interactive Lesson Slides

The interactive lesson slides tool is incorporated in several websites and applications, which can be found in some online educational platforms such as, Kahoot. Interactive lesson slides in the current research are slides that are connected to students' devices during the teaching lesson. In this manner, students' devices are connected with the lesson's slides, which allows them to interact with the presented lesson (Gokbulut, 2020). While using Kahoot, for example, students link their devices with the teaching slides via a generated code. Interactive lessons can be created by importing ready-made slides designed with several presentation programs, such as PowerPoint, or by uploading a PDF file while including questions between the teaching slides (Kahoot, 2021). Commonly, connecting students' devices to the interactive lesson slides was presented as a Student Response System (SRS), where students choose an answer from several options using their devices (Wong, 2016). Although SRS has been suggested as an effective strategy in enhancing students' participation (Heaslip, Donovan, & Cullen, 2014), interactive lesson slides focus on connecting students' devices to the teaching slides during the lesson. The interactive lesson slides include the lesson's practice that is uploaded to the slide without distracting students with external tools or secondary applications (Kahoot, 2021). In addition, the slides are presented in a way that is not based on a game-based system. A recent study has highlighted the benefits of using interactive lesson slides in online lessons (Gokbulut, 2020). Gokbulut (2020) considered the use of online tools with interactive features in presenting the slides as a factor that reflects on the quality of the learning environment. For example, the interactive lesson slides system allows users to be anonymous, which reduces anxiety among reluctant students and motivates them to engage with the lesson. Similarly, Kuritza et al. (2020) explored interactive presentations using Mentimeter to prepare medical students for the exams and concluded with positive results in improving students' learning practice. For example, some students reported that using interactive presentation slides was supportive by presenting the whole content in one place (Kuritza et al., 2020).

With the current increase in the use of online learning tools, there is a need to explore students' perceptions of interactive lesson slides. Even in a post-pandemic situation, future educational practices may benefit from adopting a

combination of both offline and online teaching strategies (Saboowala & Mishra, 2021). In short, better understanding online tools can support both current and future learning settings. Little is known about interactive lesson slides in the online learning environment. Hence, the present study aims to explore interactive lesson slides as an educational tool in an online setting. This study is part of a larger research project that examines the use of interactive lesson slides in online classrooms. Specifically, the present study attempts to focus on EFL students' perceptions of interactive lesson slides in online classrooms in the Saudi EFL context. The present study aims to answer the following research question:

RQ: What are the EFL students' perceptions of interactive lesson slides in online classrooms in the Saudi EFL context?

### 3. Method

To explore students' perceptions, an online survey was conducted. The purpose of the survey was to explore students' perceptions of using interactive lesson slides in online classrooms. Quantitative data were collected from the online survey. To analyse the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used to highlight common trends in the data (Creswell, 2012).

#### 3.1 Instruments and Procedures

In designing the survey, SurveyMonkey was used as a tool to administer the online questionnaire. The participants were Arabic native language speakers. Thus, the survey was presented in Arabic to ensure the participants' understanding of each item. The online survey shows a five-point Likert-scale items from 1(=strongly agree) to 5 (=strongly disagree). The survey was edited by two experienced EFL instructors using the SurveyMonkey's invite tool. In addition, during the data collection approval phase, the survey was revised by the head of the research unit at the university's English Language Institute (ELI). To collect the students' responses, the link of the survey was sent to students via the Blackboard chat at the end of each online class. Finally, the survey items were analysed through SurveyMonkey's charts (see Appendix 1).

#### 3.2 Participants and Context

The study was conducted at a public university in Saudi Arabia. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all courses were delivered online via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. Female students were recruited as the study's participants. A convenience sampling was chosen as a sampling technique. According to Creswell (2012), participants in a convenience sampling are chosen based on their availability. Accordingly, the participants were chosen upon their availability and suitability to the study's needs.

The link of the survey was shared on Blackboard with students from two classes with different levels, level B1 and level B2 as per the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR). In both classes, the survey was shared after a grammar lesson was presented using the interactive lesson slides via Kahoot. Although the total of students in the two classes were 66, only 30 students (N=30) participated in the survey.

#### 3.3 Ethical Considerations

The researcher has conducted certain procedures as ethical considerations. First, a data collection approval was obtained from the admin office at the university. The study procedures were explained to the participants and approved via an online form prior to the start of the study. Second, students were asked to sign a consent form via SurveyMonkey before their participation in the study and to approve their voluntary participation. The consent form ensured confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Also, the consent form clearly stated that the participants were allowed to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

### 4. Results

From the two classes, only 30 students voluntarily completed the online survey after using the interactive lesson slides in the online lesson.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's $\alpha$	
Scale	0.770

Before the survey's results were generated, the survey items were checked for reliability using the Jamovi software (Version 2.0). Jamovi is an advanced statistical software that is often used in analysing research statistics (Ahmed & Muhammad, 2021). Using Jamovi, the Cronbach's Alpha test was applied to the survey items. The Cronbach's Alpha

can indicate a scale’s reliability by measuring the consistency of survey items (Bonett & Wright, 2014). The Cronbach Alpha’s result for the survey items was a total of 0.770 (see Table 2). According to Dornyei (2007), a value above 0.60 indicates a reliable score.

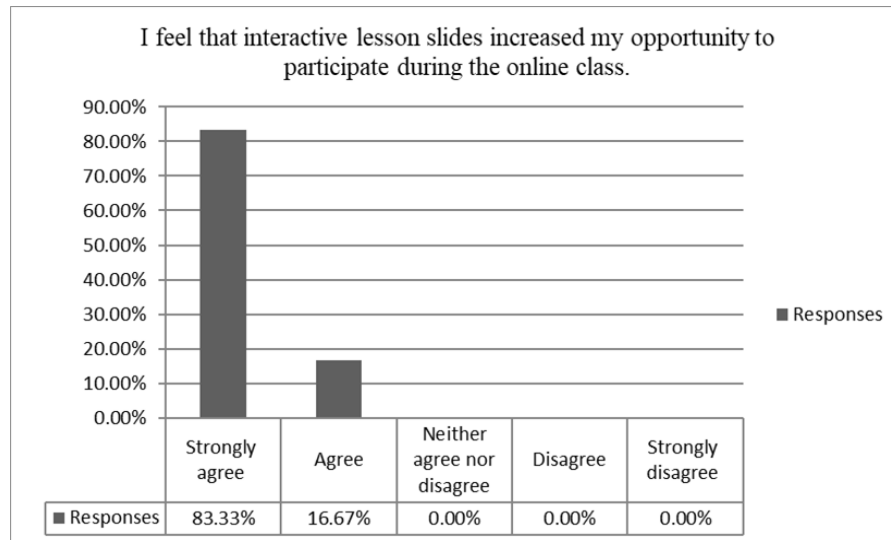


Figure 1. I feel that interactive lesson slides increased my opportunity to participate during the online class.

As shown in Figure 1, around 83% of the students strongly agreed and 17% agreed that the interactive lesson slides offered a chance for participation during the lesson. These results show that the interactive lesson slides developed students’ participation during the online lesson.

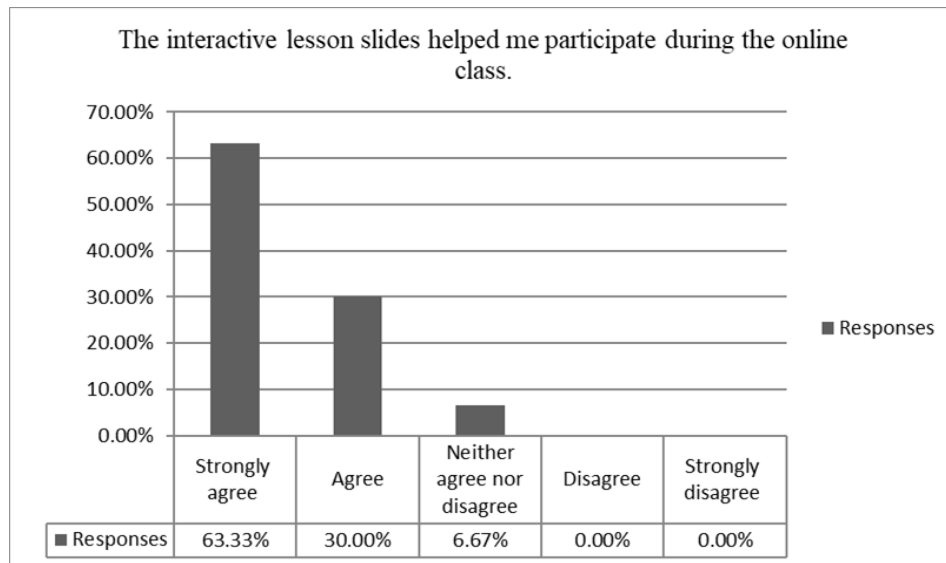


Figure 2. The interactive lesson slides helped me participate during the online class.

As shown in Figure 2, about 63% of the students strongly agreed and 30% agreed that the interactive lesson slides helped them participate during the online lesson. The students’ reports further indicate that a total of 93% of the students found that the interactive lesson slides supported their participation in some type of way; of the remaining students, 6.67% neither agreed nor disagreed.

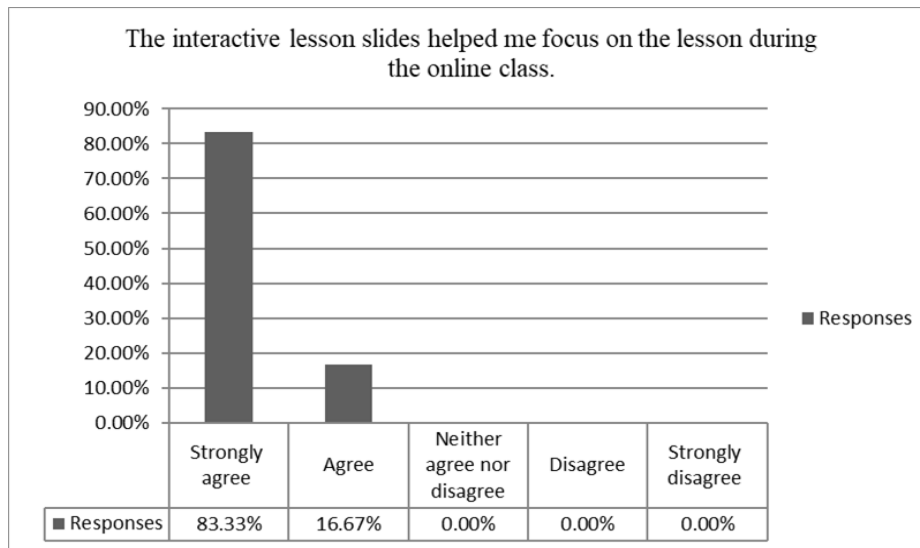


Figure 3. The interactive lesson slides helped me focus on the lesson during the online class.

In terms of attention, all the students either strongly agreed or agreed that interactive lesson slides helped them focus during the online lesson (see Figure 3). The purpose of this survey item was to further understand students’ reaction to the interactive lesson slides. Since 100% of the students indicated some level of agreement, either strongly agree or agree, the results in Figure 3 clearly show that the interactive lesson slides affected students’ attention positively.

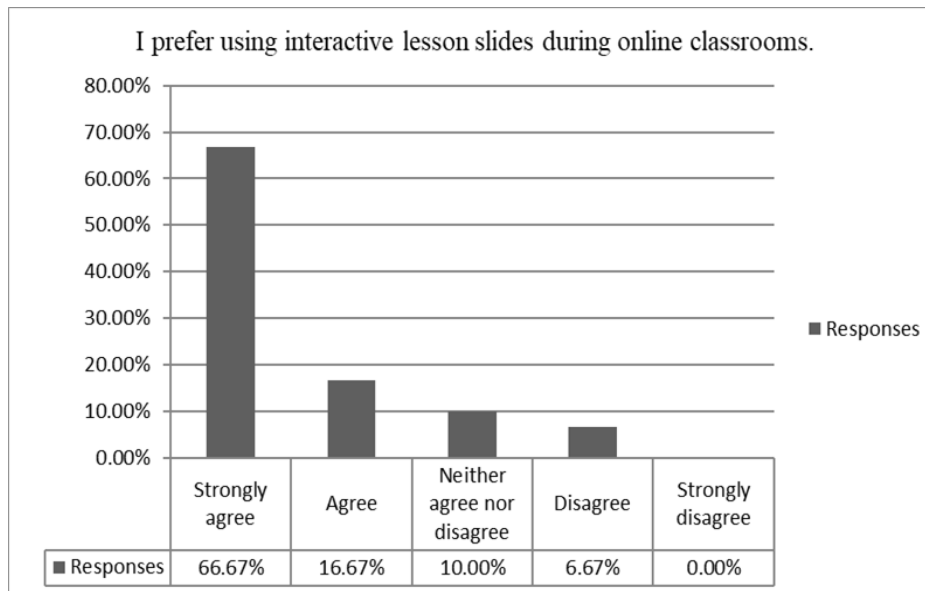


Figure 4. I prefer using interactive lesson slides during online classrooms.

As for the final item in the survey, approximately 83% of students either strongly agreed or agreed that they would prefer to use interactive lesson slides during online classes. Of the remaining students, 10% neither agreed nor disagreed, and about 7% disagreed (see Figure 4). Notably, the 7% of students who disagreed may be students who did not actually participate at all during the online class.

## 5. Discussion

The present study's discussion draws on the results in order to answer the research question: What are the EFL students' perceptions of interactive lesson slides in online classrooms in the Saudi EFL context?

Overall, the students' survey results indicate their satisfaction with the interactive lesson slides. The results show that most students had positive perceptions of the interactive lesson slides. Indeed, all students felt that the interactive lesson slides increased their opportunity to participate in online lessons. In addition, all students confirmed that the interactive lesson slides helped them focus on the lesson during online classes. Finally, all the students felt that the interactive lesson slides did affect their participation in online classrooms. These results clearly indicate that the interactive lesson slides supported the students during the online lessons. In fact, most of the students reported that they would prefer using interactive lesson slides during online classes. These results suggest that the students were satisfied with the online instructional tool.

The literature suggests that students do not usually report such high levels of satisfaction with their online learning experiences. Indeed, other studies have generally found that at least some students were dissatisfied with the instructional strategies or content delivery in the current online situation (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021; Coman et al., 2020). On the other hand, when Kuritza et al. (2020) explored the use of interactive lesson slides with medical students, the results were positive, with the interactive lesson slides having helped to improve students' online learning experience. Kuritza et al.'s results may further indicate that implementing interactive lesson slides, compared with using other online strategies during online lessons, significantly increases students' satisfaction with the class.

There are several possible explanations for these results. First, the interactive lesson slides offered a supportive system that guided students to submit their responses via their devices. Indeed, the interactive lesson slides acted as a tool that guided students throughout the lesson by displaying the requested tasks clearly. Özhan and Kocadere (2020) highlighted the benefit of providing clear steps and defining each student's role in accomplishing an online task, so that every individual student can be encouraged to complete the task due to clear instructions.

In addition, the interactive lesson slides was a suitable tool for considering students' needs in the distant learning environment. As suggested by Özhan and Kocadere (2020), the design of the learning environment should be based on factors that attract students' attention depending on students' characteristics. Connecting students' devices to the lesson's slides supported students by considering their different individual skills. For example, when some students submit a response faster in the Blackboards' chat, it might be counted as a response on the behalf of other students. However, while connecting students' devices with the teaching slides, every student has an equal opportunity to participate by submitting each response via their own device. Also, due to the nature of online classes, students tend to become the centre of attention during any act of participation, as the online platform will usually highlight their names. The interactive lesson slides, in contrast, provided a chance for participating anonymously via pseudonyms for each student. Accordingly, students felt encouraged to participate, as they could submit responses without worrying about being embarrassed. This finding further supports Gokbulut's (2020) observation that the interactive lesson slide system allows users to be anonymous, which reduces anxiety among reluctant students and encourages them to engage with the lesson.

The use of interactive lesson slides also avoids the clutter of several online tools being active during an online lesson. Generally, students in an online learning environment have to juggle several tools and websites at once. According to Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012), students may have an emotional reaction when dealing with multiple tools that require technological skills, and that emotional reaction may distract students from the learning experience. The interactive lesson slides, in contrast, allow students to connect with the slides throughout the lesson without external links that would require logging into different websites or applications. As a result, the interactive lesson slides support students with different levels of technological skills. Hence, the interactive lesson slides can deliver a positive instructional online learning environment for all students.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study has examined EFL students' perceptions of interactive lesson slides in an online learning environment in the Saudi EFL context. The study found that the students perceived the interactive lesson slides as a positive a tool in their online classroom setting. This conclusion has an important implication for considering how to implement interactive lesson slides in online teaching and learning; specifically, the study's findings suggest that teachers should implement interactive lesson slides by connecting students' devices to the slides throughout the online lesson. Many online platforms, such as Kahoot and Mentimeter, allow for this connection to students' devices. Such platforms generate a code to allow students to connect their own devices with the presented lesson's slides. In

this manner, students can respond to the activities while staying focused on the presented lesson. The limited number of studies on interactive lesson slides means few supportive arguments are available in the literature. More research is needed to better understand the impact of interactive lesson slides. Observational studies are therefore recommended to further explore the use of interactive lesson slides in online classrooms.

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**Appendix**

**Students' Survey**

NO.	Item	Scale				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I feel that interactive lesson slides increased my opportunity to participate during the online class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	The interactive lesson slides helped me participate during the online class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	The interactive lesson slides helped me focus on the lesson during the online class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4	I prefer using interactive lesson slides during online classrooms.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

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