

EFL learning through ICT: 10th graders' perceptions during the COVID-19 lockdown in Colombia

Aprendizaje del inglés mediante TIC: Percepciones de estudiantes de 10° durante el confinamiento por COVID-19 en Colombia

Aprendizagem de inglês como língua estrangeira através das TIC: percepções dos alunos do 10.º ano durante o confinamento devido à COVID-19 na Colômbia

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Jeniffer Xiomara Barrios Sánchez

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0981-2826>

Laureth Lisneidy López Vargas

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2888-068X>

Paola Julie Aguilar-Cruz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8386-9104>

Abstract

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed education, making online learning and the use of ICT tools essential for academic continuity. **Objective:** This study explores tenth-grade students' perceptions of their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning process mediated by ICT tools during lockdown, identifying both challenges and benefits. **Methodology:** The study employed a mixed-methods design with a descriptive scope, collecting data through a survey and semi-structured interviews to integrate quantitative results with qualitative perceptions. **Results:** Findings indicate that, although students recognized the importance of learning English, they faced difficulties in developing communication skills due to limited interaction. Motivation and confidence in speaking English varied, and many struggled to participate actively. The role of teachers and digital tools was perceived as supportive but also limiting, depending on the availability of resources and structured guidance. Technical issues, such as internet disruptions, also affected participation. **Conclusions:** ICT tools were essential for maintaining English language teaching during the pandemic, but they failed to fully replicate the dynamic interactions of the classroom.

Keywords: EFL learning; COVID-19; Engagement; Online education; Remote education; ICT tools; Student perceptions.

Resumen

Introducción: La pandemia de COVID-19 transformó significativamente la educación, haciendo que el aprendizaje en línea y el uso de herramientas TIC fueran esenciales para la continuidad académica. **Objetivo:** Este estudio explora las percepciones de los estudiantes de décimo grado sobre su proceso de aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) mediado por herramientas TIC durante el confinamiento, identificando tanto desafíos como beneficios. **Metodología:** El estudio empleó un diseño de métodos mixtos con un alcance descriptivo, recopilando datos mediante una encuesta y entrevistas semiestructuradas para integrar los resultados cuantitativos con las percepciones cualitativas. **Resultados:** Los hallazgos indican que, aunque los estudiantes reconocieron la importancia de aprender inglés, enfrentaron dificultades para desarrollar habilidades comunicativas debido a la limitada interacción. La motivación y la confianza para hablar inglés variaron, y muchos tuvieron dificultades para participar activamente. El papel de los docentes y las herramientas digitales fue percibido como un apoyo, pero también como una limitación, dependiendo de la disponibilidad de recursos y la orientación estructurada. Problemas técnicos, como interrupciones de internet, también afectaron la participación. **Conclusiones:** las herramientas TIC fueron fundamentales para mantener la enseñanza del inglés durante la pandemia, pero no lograron replicar completamente las interacciones dinámicas del aula. Se sugiere que futuras investigaciones se centren en integrar estrategias más interactivas y personalizadas para mejorar el aprendizaje del idioma en línea.

Palabras clave: Aprendizaje de EFL; COVID-19; Compromiso; Educación en línea; Educación remota; Herramientas TIC; Percepciones de estudiantes.

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Resumo

Introdução: A pandemia da COVID-19 transformou significativamente a educação, tornando o ensino online e o uso de ferramentas TIC essenciais para a continuidade acadêmica. **Objetivo:** Este estudo explora as percepções dos alunos do 10º ano sobre seu processo de aprendizagem do inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) mediado por ferramentas TIC durante o confinamento, identificando tanto desafios quanto benefícios. **Metodologia:** O estudo empregou um desenho de métodos mistos com um alcance descritivo, coletando dados por meio de uma pesquisa e entrevistas semiestruturadas para integrar os resultados quantitativos com as percepções qualitativas. **Resultados:** Os resultados indicam que, embora os alunos tenham reconhecido a importância de aprender inglês, enfrentaram dificuldades para desenvolver habilidades comunicativas devido à interação limitada. A motivação e a confiança para falar inglês variaram, e muitos tiveram dificuldades para participar ativamente. O papel dos professores e das ferramentas digitais foi percebido como um apoio, mas também como uma limitação, dependendo da disponibilidade de recursos e da orientação estruturada. Problemas técnicos, como interrupções na internet, também afetaram a participação. **Conclusões:** as ferramentas TIC foram fundamentais para manter o ensino de inglês durante a pandemia, mas não conseguiram replicar completamente as interações dinâmicas da sala de aula.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem de EFL; COVID-19; Comprometimento; Educação online; Educação remota; Ferramentas TIC; Percepções dos alunos.



1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into education became particularly significant in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The global health crisis forced educational institutions to transition from traditional face-to-face instruction to virtual learning, making ICT essential for ensuring continuity in education (Apriani et al., 2022). In this context, ICT tools were used to deliver lesson plans, implement teaching methodologies, structure learning processes, and assess student progress. Several studies (Amorim et al., 2021; Fukuda et al., 2024) have highlighted the importance of ICT in enhancing foreign language acquisition by integrating technological resources into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction.

As teachers during the COVID-19 lockdown, we directly experienced the challenges and opportunities that arose from the shift to virtual education. In Colombia, this transition was particularly complex due to socio-economic disparities and unequal access to technology, which significantly influenced students' learning experiences (Iregui-Parra et al., 2024). Although ICT tools facilitated the continuation of EFL instruction, they also posed limitations, especially regarding social interaction, which is an essential component of language acquisition (Li et al., 2019). The abrupt adaptation to online learning created diverse learning conditions, with students facing varying levels of accessibility, engagement, and motivation (Aguilar-Cruz & Medina, 2021).

Our study aimed to explore 10th graders' perceptions of their EFL learning process mediated through ICT tools during the COVID-19 lockdown at Juan Bautista Migani School, a state-funded school in Florencia, Caquetá, Colombia. Previous research (Ariyanti, 2020) has underscored the importance of investigating students' perceptions, readiness, and strategies in online learning during crisis situations. Motivated by this perspective, we sought to understand how 10th graders managed the use of ICT in their English classes during the 2020–2021 lockdown and how this experience shaped their learning process. To address the problem, this study was guided by the following research question: What are 10th graders' perceptions of their EFL learning process mediated through ICT tools during the COVID-19 lockdown?

This article is structured as follows: The next section reviews relevant literature on EFL learning and ICT, followed by a description of the methodology used in this study. The results section presents students' perceptions of ICT-mediated EFL learning, and the discussion section analyses these findings in relation to existing studies. Finally, the conclusion highlights key insights and implications for the integration of ICT in EFL education.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section reviews the main constructs that help to tackle this research: EFL learning and ICT tools.

Conceptualizing English as a Foreign Language

EFL learning involves non-native speakers acquiring English for effective communication in various social contexts (Tomlinson, 2005). It focuses on developing speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills, with instructional methods tailored to learners' strengths (Bozorgian, 2012; Chen et al., 2010). Strong comprehension skills are essential for overall proficiency and real-life communication. Additionally, cultural knowledge enhances intercultural competence, improving communication across linguis-



tic and cultural differences (Zhang & Wu, 2023).

The teaching and learning of EFL in Colombia have been shaped by several government initiatives, such as the National Program of Bilingualism (2004–2019), Colombia Very Well (2015–2025), and Bilingual Colombia (2014–2018), aiming to improve English proficiency nationwide (Correa & González, 2016). Despite these efforts, challenges persist, particularly in public primary schools, due to unresolved professional and work-related issues that hinder effective policy implementation (Correa & González, 2016). These programs aim to enhance language skills and promote bilingualism across different educational levels.

To conclude, while several governmental initiatives in Colombia aim to enhance English proficiency, the implementation of EFL policies still faces critical challenges, particularly in public education. The promotion of English learning is often influenced by neoliberal perspectives, which shape language policies and practices at all educational levels (Rubio-Cancino & Martínez-Bohórquez, 2023). Therefore, EFL learning is a multifaceted process that goes beyond language acquisition, encompassing cultural understanding, policy implementation, and instructional methodologies.

Information and Communication Technology tools

ICT tools include resources like software, networks, and media that allow the processing and sharing of information such as text, video, and images. As stated in Article 6 of Law 1341 of 2009 (Ministry of ICT, n.d.), these technologies support communication and information management, playing a key role in education by promoting interaction and digital literacy. ICT has improved how learning is delivered and accessed. Huang et al. (2019) note that ICT enables online courses, interactive platforms, and personalized learning, helping to create more dynamic and flexible educational environments.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, ICT was essential for maintaining daily life, especially in education. The crisis accelerated digital tool adoption, prompting schools and universities to move to virtual platforms like Google Classroom and WhatsApp to ensure learning continuity (Lezama et al., 2023; Raynal & Light, 2021). This transition also exposed challenges such as unequal access, poor connectivity, and the need for teacher training (Akram et al., 2021). Despite these issues, ICT-based learning offered benefits like time and cost efficiency, better tech use, skill development, ongoing access to materials, and increased family involvement (Mashhadi et al., 2022).

In Colombia, ICT has become central to transforming higher education by influencing teaching methods and improving learning outcomes, though its success depends on how well students and teachers adapt to these technologies (Poveda-Pineda & Cifuentes-Medina, 2020). In secondary education, access to ICT like computers and the internet is linked to better performance in subjects such as mathematics, but its effect on reading is less clear (Marulanda et al., 2014). Despite this, disparities remain in the effective use of ICT for learning (Rodríguez & Gamboa, 2024), and a significant digital divide continues to limit universal access, especially in rural and underserved regions, which affects education quality (Hernández et al., 2018).

The constructs discussed above form the theoretical foundation for our research, highlighting the importance of integrating ICT tools to facilitate more accessible EFL learning during crises like COVID-19. Therefore, understanding 10th graders' perceptions is essential to describing the impact of these tools on their learning experience and identifying existing gaps that must be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of online education.



3. METHODOLOGY

This study followed a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2012), integrating both qualitative and quantitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of 10th graders' perceptions of the use of ICT in their EFL learning process during the COVID-19 lockdown. The research was designed as an exploratory case study, aiming to explore 10th graders' perceptions on the implementation of ICT in the EFL learning processes developed during the COVID-19 lockdown. Hence, this section outlines the participants, data collection techniques, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations addressed throughout the research process.

Setting and participants

This research was conducted with 26 students from Juan Bautista Migani School in the 10th grade, aged between 14 and 17 years old. These students were selected for having studied in grades 6th or 7th during the COVID-19 lockdown, which gave them a deeper awareness of the events experienced during that period. Since they were in secondary school, they were exposed to English classes more frequently and had to use ICT tools for their learning process. The participation of the students in the data collection phases, including the completion of a survey and participation in an interview session, was essential for gathering the necessary information for this research. The following table describes the participants enrolled in the study:

Table 1

Basic information about the participants.

Basic information	Options	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	14	53.8%
	Male	12	46.2%
Age	Less than 14 years old	1	3.8%
	15 to 16 years old	15	57.7%
	17 to 18 years old	10	38.4%

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments used in this research were a closed-ended survey and a semi-structured interview. These instruments aimed to explore 10th graders' perceptions of the use of ICT in their EFL learning process during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 and 2021.

Survey. Survey instruments, also known as questionnaires (Creswell, 2012), are used to collect data on demographics, personal histories, knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes of respondents. According to Creswell (2012), questionnaires can include closed-ended questions, allowing researchers to collect quantifiable data. The survey consisted of Likert-scale statements (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) addressing three categories:

- Students' perceptions of English learning (10 items).
- Teacher's role (4 items).
- Use of ICT tools (11 items), including usability, interaction, and resource effectiveness.



Following Creswell (2012), the survey was structured to gather quantifiable data on students' attitudes, behaviors, and experiences.

Semi-Structured Interview. According to Creswell (2012), a qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers for further analysis. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights into students' perceptions of ICT use in their EFL learning process during the COVID-19 lockdown. The interviews allowed participants to express their experiences, challenges, and opinions regarding virtual English classes. The responses were recorded, transcribed, translated and organized for analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how ICT influenced their language learning.

Instruments Validation

To ensure validity and reliability, both instruments underwent an expert review process. Two university researchers with expertise in EFL pedagogy and educational technology evaluated the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the items in the survey and the questions for the interviews. Minor adjustments were made to wording and sequencing before administration. In addition to this review process, a pilot test with three students was conducted to confirm comprehension and timing. After the piloting process, the survey was improved. Regarding the questions proposed for the semi-structured interview, they had minor changes as suggested by the reviewers.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis in this study followed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative techniques. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes within students' responses from the semi-structured interviews. The recorded interviews were coded to categorize students' responses. Emerging themes included students' engagement with digital tools, challenges in virtual learning, and the perceived effectiveness of teacher support through ICT.

For the quantitative data, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted based on the survey results. The data were organized into frequency and percentage distributions. The survey responses provided insights into students' self-perceived progress in language learning, engagement levels, and teacher support during virtual classes. These statistical findings complement the qualitative analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences with ICT-mediated EFL learning.

Ethical considerations

To ensure ethical compliance, students and their parents signed informed consent forms confirming voluntary participation and confidentiality. Permission was also obtained from school administrators to conduct the research. All data was treated confidentially, keeping participants anonymous and using responses exclusively for research purposes.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the study's findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The qualitative thematic analysis explores students' perceptions of their English learning during the COVID-19



lockdown, focusing on ICT tools and teacher support. The quantitative descriptive statistics show students' agreement levels with various aspects of their learning, such as engagement, progress, and teaching strategies. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive view of students' experiences with ICT in their EFL learning during the lockdown.

Qualitative results

Table 2 analyzes students' experiences with online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, focusing on themes such as general learning, device use, technical issues, motivation, and the role of ICT in communication. It also includes students' opinions on their English teachers' virtual teaching methods. Supported by student quotes, the table highlights both challenges and benefits of remote education, offering insights into its effects on academic performance, engagement, and learning overall.

Table 2

Students' perceptions of online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Theme	Number of participants	Description	Example quotes
General Learning Experiences	7	Students' reflections on how they perceived their learning process during online education.	I think I learned a lot during the lockdown. (S2) There were hardly any classes, and we mainly had to complete and submit assignments. (S7). I learned more things, but at the same time, I lost some aspects that I would have understood better with technology. (S3)
Devices Used for Online Learning	5	The technological devices students used most frequently for online classes.	I attended most of my classes on my computer, but I also used my phone. (S14). Sometimes, I used my parents' phone or a computer. (S22) I used a laptop most frequently during virtual classes. (S4)
Technical difficulties	8	Challenges related to technology, internet access, and system failures.	I often had problems with my internet. When it rained, I lost my connection, and sometimes the power went out. (S4). There were always audio and microphone issues during English classes. (S12) In general, there were frequent internet and power
Comfort and Challenges in Adapting to Online Learning	9	How students felt about using technology for learning and the challenges they faced.	Yes, because I was already familiar with these platforms, so it was easy for me. (S23). I didn't feel safe because I was always afraid my internet would disconnect during class or that there would be a power outage. (S11)
Engagement and Motivation	12	Factors that influenced student motivation and engagement in online learning.	My motivation was to not fall behind and to keep progressing every day. (S18). Honestly, I had no motivation. I didn't like the idea of just looking at a screen all day. (S6) My teachers didn't really motivate me. (S17)
Perceptions of Learning through ICT	7	Students' opinions on whether digital tools helped or hindered their learning.	Yes, because online classes and the internet made learning easier. (S20). At first, I didn't count much on technological tools, but over time, I saw their benefits. (S1)
Digital platforms	5	The most commonly used digital tools for learning and communication.	I used WhatsApp a lot. (S19). Teachers would send us videos on WhatsApp to support our learning. (S25)
Perceptions of ICT	3	How students used ICT tools to communicate with teachers and classmates.	Yes, I communicated with my classmates and teachers through digital platforms. (S3). I mainly used WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger to stay in touch with my classmates. (S19)
Perceptions about English teachers	7	Students' opinions on how well their English teachers adapted to online education.	The teachers explained well, and thanks to them, I learned a lot of fundamental things. (S2). Honestly, during this time, I barely understood anything in English class. Explanations were limited. (S8)

Note. This table presents students' perceptions of their online learning experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown. This table was designed by the authors.

The qualitative findings show that students' online learning experiences varied greatly depending on access to technology, engagement, and teaching quality. While some felt they learned well through virtual education, many struggled with limited interaction and a focus on assignments rather than dis-



cussions, which hindered understanding. Device availability also affected participation, as some used personal computers and others shared family devices. Technical problems like internet failures and power outages were common, disrupting lessons and causing anxiety for some students. Motivation levels differed, with some determined to succeed and others disengaged due to the passive nature of classes.

ICT tools such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Meet were essential for communication, though students agreed that digital interaction could not replace face-to-face learning. Opinions about English teachers were mixed; some appreciated clear explanations, while others felt guidance was insufficient. Overall, these findings highlight both the opportunities and limitations of remote learning, emphasizing the importance of interaction, reliable technology, and effective teaching support.

Quantitative results

The quantitative results of the study are presented in three main categories. The first category, *Students' perception of their English Learning* (Table 3), focuses on students' attitudes, confidence, and experiences in acquiring the language during the COVID-19 lockdown. The second category, *Teachers' Role* (Figure 1), examines the impact of teaching strategies, guidance, and support provided by educators. Lastly, the third category, *Use of ICT Tools* (Table 4), explores aspects such as ease of use, online interaction, and the effectiveness of digital resources in the learning process.

Table 3

Students' perceptions of their English learning process during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Items	Options	Frequency	%
I recognize the importance of learning English as a foreign language for my personal and professional development.	Strongly Agree	9	34.6
	Agree	11	42.3
	Neutral	3	11.5
	Disagree	0	0.0
	Strongly Disagree	3	11.5
I believe I experienced improvements in my English learning process as a foreign language during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	1	3.8
	Neutral	7	26.9
	Disagree	11	42.3
	Strongly Disagree	7	26.9
I believe the support provided by teachers was effective for my English learning process during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	9	34.6
	Neutral	5	19.2
	Disagree	9	34.6
	Strongly Disagree	3	11.5
I maintained steady progress in my acquisition of English language skills during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	1	3.8
	Agree	5	19.2
	Neutral	9	34.6
	Disagree	9	34.6
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7

I feel that my ability to communicate in English improved during English classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	3	11.5
	Neutral	3	11.5
	Disagree	18	69.2
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7
I perceive that my motivation to learn English remained high throughout the classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	8	30.8
	Neutral	8	30.8
	Disagree	8	30.8
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7
I believe that school support during the COVID-19 lockdown classes was effective for my English learning as a foreign language.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	7	26.9
	Neutral	7	26.9
	Disagree	10	38.5
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7
I believe that my confidence in communicating in English has increased thanks to English classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	3	11.5
	Neutral	5	19.2
	Disagree	14	53.8
	Strongly Disagree	4	15.4
I feel that online activities and resources enriched my English learning experience during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	2	7.7
	Agree	9	34.6
	Neutral	4	15.4
	Disagree	9	34.6
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7
I believe I had enough opportunities to interact with my classmates in English during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	1	3.8
	Agree	3	11.5
	Neutral	4	15.4
	Disagree	13	50.0
	Strongly Disagree	5	19.2

Note. The table presents students' responses regarding their perception of English learning during the COVID-19 lockdown. This table was designed by the authors.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that a significant proportion of students recognized the importance of learning EFL for their personal and professional development. A combined 76.9% of respondents either agreed (42.3%) or strongly agreed (34.6%) with this statement, suggesting a general awareness of the language's value. However, despite acknowledging its importance, many students reported difficulties in their learning progress during the lockdown period.

When asked about improvements in their EFL learning process, the majority expressed a negative perception. 42.3% of students disagreed, and 26.9% strongly disagreed with the idea that they experienced progress. This trend was also evident in responses about communication skills, where 69.2% of students disagreed that their ability to communicate in English improved during the lockdown.

Students' motivation and confidence in EFL learning also showed varied responses. While 30.8%



of students agreed that their motivation remained high, an equal percentage (30.8%) disagreed, and another 30.8% remained neutral. Similarly, confidence in using English appeared to be a significant challenge. More than half (53.8%) of the students disagreed that their confidence in communicating in English increased during the lockdown, while 15.4% strongly disagreed.

The data also highlight the perceived effectiveness of support provided by teachers and schools. Regarding teacher support, 34.6% of students agreed that it was effective, while 19.2% remained neutral. However, a similar proportion (34.6%) disagreed, indicating a division in students' experiences. School support received slightly lower positive responses, with 26.9% of students agreeing that it was beneficial, while 38.5% disagreed.

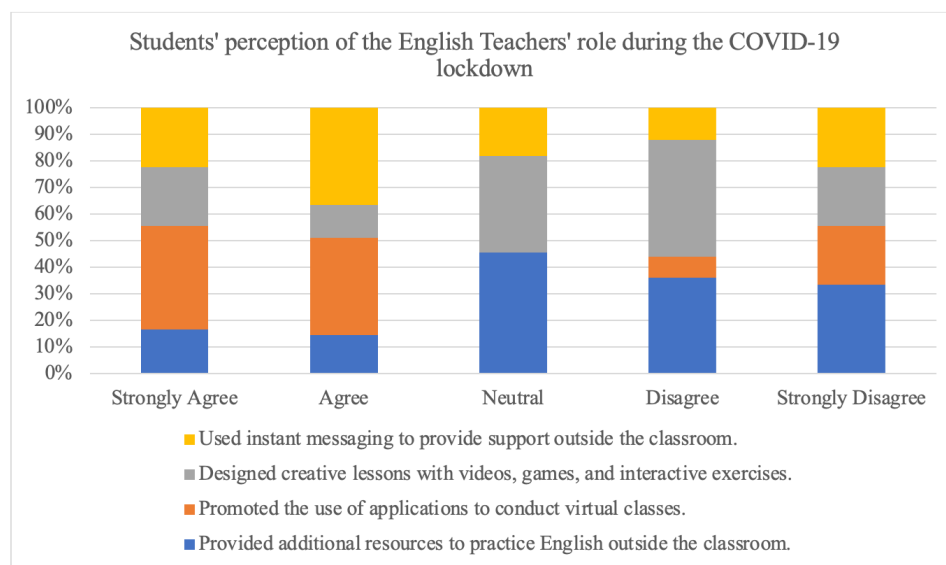
A major challenge identified in the results was the lack of opportunities for student interaction in English. Half of the respondents (50.0%) disagreed that they had sufficient opportunities to interact with classmates in English, while 19.2% strongly disagreed. In contrast, online activities and resources received a relatively balanced response. 34.6% of students agreed that these resources enriched their learning experience, while 34.6% disagreed.

Students had varied perceptions of their English teachers' role in online learning. Many agreed that teachers effectively used instant messaging for support, designed creative lessons with videos, games, and interactive exercises, and encouraged virtual class applications. However, fewer students felt that additional English practice resources outside class were helpful.

In addition, some students remained neutral about the effectiveness of creative lessons and virtual tools, indicating mixed impacts. Those who disagreed mostly criticized the use of applications and extra resources as less effective.

Figure 1

Students' perception of the English teachers' role during the COVID-19 lockdown.



Note. The figure illustrates students' responses regarding the role of their English teacher during online learning. The different colours represent different teacher actions: using instant messaging for support (yellow), designing creative lessons with videos, games, and interactive exercises (grey), promoting the use of virtual learning applications (orange), and providing additional resources for English practice outside the classroom (blue).

Overall, the results suggest that students had mixed perceptions regarding their English teachers' role in facilitating online learning during the lockdown. While many students appreciated interactive and creative teaching strategies, others found the use of virtual applications and additional resources to be less effective.

Regarding Use of ICT Tools, the results reveal mixed perceptions since while some students acknowledged the benefits of these digital tools, others faced challenges adapting to them.

Table 4

Students' perceptions of the use of ICT tools during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Items	Options	Frequency	%
I feel that the use of online collaboration applications by my English teacher, such as Google Docs or Padlet, allowed us to work effectively on group and collaborative projects during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	1	3.8
	Agree	8	30.8
	Neutral	6	23.1
	Disagree	10	38.5
	Strongly Disagree	1	3.8
I always used ICT tools to attend my online EFL classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	15	57.7
	Neutral	5	19.2
	Disagree	5	19.2
	Strongly Disagree	1	3.8
It was easy for me to adapt to the use of ICT tools for my English learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	1	3.8
	Agree	13	50.0
	Neutral	3	11.5
	Disagree	6	23.1
	Strongly Disagree	3	11.5
I felt confident using different ICT tools for my EFL learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	1	3.8
	Agree	6	23.1
	Neutral	12	46.2
	Disagree	7	26.9
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
I believe that the use of ICT tools improved my English learning experience during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	7	26.9
	Neutral	10	38.5
	Disagree	7	26.9
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7
I feel that ICT tools facilitated my access to educational resources in English classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	3	11.5
	Agree	11	42.3
	Neutral	6	23.1
	Disagree	4	15.4
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7

I believe I strengthened my ability to participate effectively in digital learning environments during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	0	0.0
	Agree	8	30.8
	Neutral	9	34.6
	Disagree	7	26.9
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7
I feel that ICT tools were effective in receiving timely and constructive feedback from my English teacher during online learning in the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	1	3.8
	Agree	12	46.2
	Neutral	6	23.1
	Disagree	6	23.1
	Strongly Disagree	1	3.8
I feel that I improved my handling of digital platforms thanks to my English classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	6	23.1
	Agree	12	46.2
	Neutral	2	7.7
	Disagree	6	23.1
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
I believe that the use of ICT tools facilitated collaboration and communication with my classmates and teachers in my EFL classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Strongly Agree	3	11.5
	Agree	10	38.5
	Neutral	4	15.4
	Disagree	8	30.8
	Strongly Disagree	1	3.8
I am confident that ICT tools remained valuable resources for my EFL learning even after the COVID-19 lockdown ended.	Strongly Agree	2	7.7
	Agree	12	46.2
	Neutral	6	23.1
	Disagree	4	15.4
	Strongly Disagree	2	7.7

Note. The table presents students' perceptions of the use of ICT tools during the COVID-19 lockdown. This table was designed by the authors.

A majority of students (57.7%) reported consistently using ICT tools to attend English classes online, indicating a widespread adoption of digital learning resources. However, only 3.8% strongly agreed that online collaboration tools like Google Docs or Padlet effectively facilitated group work, while 38.5% disagreed, suggesting that these tools may not have fully supported interactive learning experiences.

In terms of adaptability, half of the students (50%) agreed that it was easy to adjust to the use of ICT for learning English, though 23.1% found it challenging. Regarding confidence, 46.2% of students reported feeling secure using ICT tools, while 26.9% disagreed, highlighting the need for better digital literacy training.

Perceptions of ICT's effectiveness in improving learning experiences were divided: 26.9% agreed that ICT enhanced their English learning experience, while an equal percentage (26.9%) disagreed. Nonetheless, 42.3% believed that ICT tools facilitated access to educational resources, reinforcing their role in remote learning.

When evaluating participation in digital educational environments, 30.8% of students agreed that ICT strengthened their ability to engage effectively, yet 26.9% disagreed, implying that not all students

felt equally empowered in digital settings. Furthermore, while 46.2% agreed that ICT enabled timely and constructive feedback from their teachers, 23.1% did not share this view.

Additionally, 46.2% of students acknowledged an improvement in their ability to manage digital platforms due to English classes, reflecting a positive impact of ICT on digital skills. However, collaboration and communication through ICT received mixed reviews, with 38.5% agreeing that ICT facilitated teamwork, but 30.8% disagreeing.

Finally, students were divided on the long-term usefulness of ICT tools. While 46.2% believed they would continue to be valuable beyond the lockdown, 7.7% strongly disagreed, indicating uncertainty about the sustainability of digital learning practices.

5. DISCUSSION

The qualitative and quantitative findings present contrasting perspectives on students' experiences with online EFL learning during the COVID-19 lockdown. The following subsections analyze these results in relation to previous studies, highlighting key similarities and differences.

Students' Perception of English Learning

The survey revealed that most students saw EFL learning as important for personal and professional development, yet many struggled to make progress during the lockdown. Communication skills showed limited improvement, reflecting Hampel and Pleines's (2013) view that virtual environments often lack interactive dynamics that are crucial for language acquisition.

Nevertheless, motivation and confidence varied. Several students remained engaged, while others felt neutral or discouraged. Many reported no increase in speaking ability, echoing Siteneski et al. (2024), who highlight psychological barriers in remote settings, such as anxiety and lack of feedback. To this regard, Fathi and Rahimi (2024) further stress the need for consistent oral practice, which was scarce during online learning. Compared to past research, this study found lower speaking confidence, likely due to reduced real-time interaction.

Qualitative data also offered more context: some students benefited from online education, while others faced difficulties due to limited interaction and technological constraints, including shared devices. A common concern was the lack of engaging discussions, with classes focused mainly on assignments, making complex topics harder to understand. These experiences align with Huang et al. (2019), who stress the role of collaborative and engaging digital learning.

Overall, although online education ensured continuity, it introduced new challenges affecting students' engagement and confidence. To address these, Akram et al. (2021), and Krath et al. (2021), propose integrating interactive strategies like synchronous speaking, gamification, and AI-based tools to improve virtual EFL instruction.

Teachers' Role

Students expressed mixed views on their English teachers' role during online learning. Many



appreciated the use of instant messaging, interactive lessons, and virtual apps, supporting Fukuda et al. (2024), who highlight the engaging potential of digital tools. However, others found supplementary resources ineffective, echoing Huang et al. (2019), who argue that technology alone does not ensure effective learning.

Perceptions of teacher support also varied. Some of the students felt well-guided and supported by their teachers. However, others did not, which aligns with Barrot et al. (2024), who stress the importance of structured intervention, and the value of frequent feedback to sustain motivation and reduce isolation.

ICT tools such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Meet were essential but could not replace face-to-face interaction, reflecting Raynal and Lights (2021) concern about the difficulty of assessing understanding virtually. While some students benefited from clear explanations, others felt lessons lacked guidance, reinforcing Huang et al.'s (2019) point about the limits of technology in replicating in-person instruction. Overall, digital tools and interactive strategies had varied impact, suggesting, as Polakova & Ivenz (2024) recommend, the need for personalized feedback to enhance the effectiveness of online EFL learning.

These findings also raise important considerations for educational policy. On the one hand, the findings highlight the need for teacher professional development focused on feedback practices, and digital pedagogical strategies. On the other hand, national and local education authorities should develop policies aimed at strengthening technological infrastructure such as stable internet access, device provision, and technical support since they are essential to reduce the digital divide. Together, these actions would help ensure more equitable, consistent, and effective ICT-mediated language learning in future remote or blended educational scenarios.

Use of ICT Tools

Students experienced ICT tools in online English learning in different ways. Many regularly used digital platforms, but collaborative tools such as Google Docs and Padlet were not widely viewed as effective. Some students adapted easily to the digital environment, while others faced challenges. Technical problems including internet disruptions and power outages created significant obstacles, supporting Moodley and Segoete (2024) argument about digital inequality.

Motivation and engagement were also varied. While certain students found the tools helpful, others felt they did not promote interactive learning effectively, which aligns with Nagashibaevna (2019) view of the limitations of passive online instruction.

Student participation produced mixed results. Some students appreciated the increased engagement and feedback offered by digital tools, while others did not experience the same benefits. However, many acknowledged improvements in their digital skills, supporting Huang et al.'s (2019) assertion that technology contributes to technical competence.

Even though students in this study showed more adaptability compared to earlier research, challenges related to engagement continued. Perspectives on the long-term usefulness of ICT tools were also divided. Some students believed they would remain valuable beyond the pandemic period, while



others questioned their ongoing relevance, echoing Huang et al. (2019) discussion on the evolving role of technology in education.

Although the findings confirm that ICT tools were essential for maintaining instructional continuity during the lockdown, they also revealed significant gaps in students' development of communication skills and active engagement. These results suggest that the challenges experienced were not merely technical but also pedagogical. This situation points to a broader issue which is the rapid transition to virtual learning that showed the weaknesses in the system's capacity to support effective digital pedagogy. This highlights the need to critically reconsider how ICT is integrated into language teaching, not only as an emergency response but as a long-term instructional component.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This research on 10th graders' perceptions of EFL learning through ICT during the COVID-19 lockdown identified both benefits and challenges. Students recognized the importance of learning English but faced difficulties due to limited interaction, fewer opportunities for speaking practice, and low engagement. Teacher support and digital tools helped, but many found them less effective than face-to-face learning, especially lacking in guidance and immediate feedback. Access to technology and technical problems also hindered consistent participation, though some students improved their digital skills. The study suggests a need for more interactive methods, stronger teacher involvement, and fair access to technology to improve ICT-based EFL learning.

7. LIMITATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Although this study provides valuable insights into 10th graders' perceptions of ICT-mediated EFL learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size ($n = 26$) limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific school context. Second, self-reported data in surveys and interviews may be influenced by recall bias and students' subjective interpretations of their experiences during the lockdown. Finally, technical issues during interviews (e.g., audio quality) may have constrained the depth of some responses. Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful contributions to understanding how students experienced EFL learning through ICT tools during the COVID-19 lockdown, an unprecedented global educational disruption.

Importantly, the findings also point to practical implications for teachers, which should be considered alongside the identified limitations. Teachers may benefit from targeted professional development that strengthens their skills in providing clear guidance, designing structured online activities, and delivering consistent formative feedback in virtual environments. Likewise, training focused on digital pedagogical strategies and ICT integration can help educators adapt their instructional practices more effectively in remote or blended learning contexts. These implications also raise important questions for policymakers, as incorporating these practical considerations can support more equitable and engaging learning experiences in future technology-mediated EFL instruction.

Future research could explore strategies to enhance online learning engagement, such as incorporating real-time speaking activities, adaptive learning technologies, and more personalized feedback mechanisms. Additionally, examining the long-term impact of ICT-based learning beyond the pandemic could provide further insights into the sustainability of digital education in EFL contexts.



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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding this research.



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