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Boredom in Virtual Environments: Arbitrating Factors and Managing Strategies

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Research Article

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Abstract

Background: Boredom has recently attracted increasing attention in second (L2) or foreign language learning (EFL), but little is known about how this feeling affects student and teacher engagement in virtual English learning. The present study aims to determine the arbitrary factors and strategies for managing boredom in virtual learning.

Method: The current study conducted a qualitative survey on 14 teachers and 126 students from a public university in Saudi Arabia.

Results: The study found that students and teachers considered virtual classes to be more boring than face-to-face classes. However, teachers considered skill sets and content-related classes of virtual classes boring, while students only considered content-related virtual classes boring.

Conclusions: The results exhibited that most students and teachers perceived virtual learning as more tedious than face-to-face classes.

1. Introduction

Second (L2) and foreign language learning (EFL) are highly emotional interactions with potentially serious circumstances. Currently, there is an increased awareness that emotional reactions are as important as other personality characteristics variables, such as learning, memory, and motivation (Akkok, 2021; Q. Wang et al., 2021). Emotions can be favorable, including delight, involvement, and pleasure, or negative, such as shame and embarrassment (Revord et al., 2021) and anxiety. While positive emotions create pleasurable language learning and increase students' motivation (Baaqeel, 2020), negative emotions prevent personal learning initiatives and disrupt teacher efforts to produce a better L2 learning environment. Among the negative emotions, anxiety has been widely discussed and researched in L2 studies (X. Hu et al., 2021; Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019). Boredom is an unpleasant, underrepresented feeling that has recently received attention. It is a passive and multifaceted emotion characterised by milder conceptions of time, evidenced primarily via non-engagement or abandonment of academic tasks (Li et al., 2023; Shukang & Yuhan, 2020). As a compelling attainment, boredom can possibly hinder learning processes. It is, therefore, critical to investigate the complexities of this compassion from the perspectives of both students and instructors.

Boredom is a specific characteristic of an individual's state that could be considered tedious (Shehzad et al., 2020). The state of learning boredom is a single, situational, temporal condition grounded in a person's comprehension of their educational process as not captivating enough and inadequate (Shirvan et al., 2021). Personality boredom is a fundamental aspect of one's temperament. It is divided into two categories: (i) exterior boredom, referring to uninspired surroundings, and (ii) intrinsic boredom, referring to difficulties finding exciting features to do (Shirvan et al., 2021; Zawodniak et al., 2017). Accordingly, boredom negatively impacts engagement. Engagement is a multidimensional trait that is an essential element of developing the learning process. According to (Zawodniak et al., 2017), boredom should be overcome to avoid disengagement.

Failure to understand and connect the importance of academic experience can lead to boredom. Empirical findings on boredom have been found in general education classroom environments. These investigations found three explicitly boredom-dealing approaches students adopt: avoiders, criticisers, and reappraisers (Pawlak, Kruk, et al., 2020). In addition, studies have been conducted on student boredom in academic settings. For example, (Pawlak, Kruk, et al., 2020) discussed boredom in EFL classrooms, particularly in Polish EFL classrooms, while (Li et al., 2023) researched EFL boredom in Asian settings. On top of that, EFL boredom analysis has been conducted in conventional, offline classroom settings. Thus, studies on boredom in virtual classrooms are scarce, particularly during disease outbreaks.

Recently, schools have been implementing distance teaching via computer-mediated communication (CMC) operating systems (Dumančić, 2018). Throughout the global epidemic, the world's schooling was delivered virtually, posing problems for learners and instructors to adjust to a novel medium of education (AlKhunzain & Khan, 2021; Khan et al., 2021). There is growing evidence that the utilization of advanced audio-visual technologies or CMC systems has impeded people's mental and physical health. The experience is called CMC fatigue Field (Nadler, 2020) or Zoom exhaustion (Mutlu & Eroz-Tuga, 2013). As a result, researchers should investigate and document students' and educators' emotional difficulties in virtual worlds (Mutlu & Eroz-Tuga, 2013), including the state of boredom in EFL settings.

Previous research investigated EFL boredom in traditional instruction in two significant ways. Most earlier attempts were carried in the Polish EFL perspective, with most of them trying to take a centred approach, investigating boredom from just an emic viewpoint (Li et al., 2023). The present study used variance sampling to discuss boredom from a broader perspective by gathering data from

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a wide range of Saudi EFL students and teachers. The present attempt was expected to contribute to the existing body of research on EFL boredom in Saudi Arabian contexts. Furthermore, prior research has primarily examined challenges, including the mechanisms influencing boredom or its intensity on student performance from students' perspective (Khan, Alahmadi, Radzuan et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). To deal with this situation, workable alternatives and practical approaches could be used to alleviate its impacts. The current attempt extended the range of EFL boredom academia by investigating boredom of skills (i.e., abilities vs content-based) and methods (i.e., face-to-face vs online) from the perspective of students and teachers. In addition, the study aimed to identify strategies teachers and students use to avoid boredom, including teachers' strategies to minimise student boredom. This research also offered insights into teachers who were aware of EFL boredom and how their emotional stability served a significant function in their identities, classroom instruction, and professional development.

The lack of studies on boredom in the Saudi EFL context in virtual learning drove this exploratory research. This research investigated boredom among 126 EFL students and 14 EFL teachers from Prince Sattam University (PSU). This was to address the shortcomings and develop an awareness of boredom, particularly in virtual English teaching and learning. The study expected a panoramic, explanatory perspective of boredom to offer insight and an advanced view of boredom, hence producing meaningful results in various educational circumstances.

2. Literature Review

Emotion is often overlooked as an unreasoned element in EFL studies (Gkonou et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there has been a considerable rise in focus on various emotions in EFL settings. For example, Dewaele et al. (2016) studied emotion as a part of the positive psychology progression in the second language acquisition (SLA) (McDermott, 2020). This has resulted in the expansion of studies on emotions to include not only anxiety but also pleasure, adore, prestige, hope, shame, guilt, boredom, frustration, and distress (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Zawodniak et al., 2017).

EFL learning is a social endeavour in which the objective of language learning is preferably accomplished through action via the engagement between students and teachers (Luan et al., 2020) (Shehzad et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the domain of SLA has long been engrossed with cognitive components, viewing emotion as second to cognition and a danger to reason (Ortega, 2019). For instance, the effective reversal in SLA (Pishghadam et al., 2016) was the position of the impact that was decided to be brought to the forefront, and the focus of studies on the influence of impact was expanded dramatically. Since then, instead of being researched as an intriguing emergent phenomenon, emotion has been investigated as a unique theme with its privilege.

Two significant advancements have reshaped the range of emotion investigations in SLA. First, following a constant influx of studies addressing the influence of emotion on a personal stage, initiatives have been taken to investigate emotions from social or interactive standpoints. This social switch resulted from the profound importance of the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) and the resulting urge to focus on meaning and learner interaction in the EFL framework (Khan, Alahmadi, & Kumar, 2024; McLeod, 2014). In addition, the incorporation of social psychology into the domain has led to the investigations on positive emotions, including pleasure (Li et al., 2023), involvement (Wang & Goodman, 2012), and wellbeing (Zhang & Tsung, 2021). Boredom, on the other hand, has negatively impacted EFL or SLA. Growing evidence, mostly in instructional studies, reveals that boredom is accountable for underprivileged academic achievement and a heightened risk of dropping rates (Pawlak, Zawodniak, et al., 2020). A significant development in affective research has emphasised the importance of emotions in classroom instruction (Li et al., 2023; van Tilburg et al., 2024). This recognition stems from epistemological evidence demonstrating the role of emotion,

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including emotional exhaustion, in varied education areas, from providing feedback to individual writing to engage students in learning identity (Dewaele et al., 2024; Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019). According to the trend, the current study examined the perspective of boredom among EFL instructors, which has been overlooked in prior research on EFL boredom.

Even though non-disruptive tendencies such as quietness and lack of engagement (MacIntyre & Chughtai, 2020) have been discussed in EFL experiments, EFL boredom has failed to gain the attention of language scholars (Dai & Wang, 2024). Chapman (2013) investigated boredom in the implementation of teaching German as L2 learning. This ground-breaking effort then led to extensive research in Poland (e.g., (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Martarelli et al., 2024; Pawlak, Kruk, et al., 2020; Pawlak, Zawodniak, et al., 2020). Most of these Polish experiments on L2 boredom took a micro-perspective by concentrating mostly on specific practical EFL classes in specific academic settings. To illustrate, Pawlak, Kruk, and Zawodniak (2020) explored the dynamics and induced boredom encountered by 11 ESL students and found that students' overall stages of boredom tendencies are not an accurate determinant of actual dynamics of boredom. Zawodniak et al. (2021) investigated the roots of boredom as witnessed by elementary EFL students. They discovered that boredom caused difficulties in language tasks, teacher management, classroom mechanisms, and session elements. As recommended by Kruk (2021), this finding should be supplemented with research that employs an etic point of view to deal with the issue from a macro-perspective, hence producing a worldwide consideration of the importance of boredom in L2 research and education.

EFL scholars have recently investigated boredom. Nakamura et al. (2021) examined the causes of boredom among Thai learners registered during a communicative language course. They concluded from the exploration of the survey questionnaire that the dissimilarities between student intrinsic learning factors and external instructional factors primarily triggered boredom. Li (2021) conducted a study with over 2,000 Chinese ESL learners to explore boredom concerning the control-value theory. Li's findings confirmed that student apparent regulation and learning experience are the main factors underlying boredom. Students who feel less distracted are more proficient and appreciate English learning, and vice versa. Research on Poland and Asian EFL boredom reveals a similar theme: Students perform well, particularly in functional or skill learning in English classes. Whether boredom manifests itself in the various content-based core courses of students majoring in English in their academic programmes remains to be perceived.

Virtual learning happens on the internet and requires multifaceted attention (Hwang et al., 2024; Li & Han, 2024). However, little is regarded of the emotional features of virtual learning, particularly how adverse emotions could affect learning and teaching endeavors (Naylor & Nyanjom, 2021). Inquiries on the efficacious side of virtual learning maintain that the comprehensive pledge of web-based learning would not be achieved except if efficacious elements are appropriately acknowledged. Recently, virtual learning has gained the attention of instructors and learners in various educational institutions. The application of virtual instruction was exacerbated after the outbreak of COVID-19 when students were forced to switch to digitally delivered virtual learning (Ali et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2023; Pawlak, Kruk et al., 2020). It is vital to examine the state of boredom among students and teachers in virtual English classes, an area of concern that has only recently been acknowledged by two extensive Asian research. According to Shirvan et al. (2021) interpretation of questionnaire statistics on general English learning of university participants, learners with a high level of associated emotional insight and understanding of success preconceptions are less expected to fall victim to the dullness of virtual classrooms.

Similarly, Derakhshan et al. (2021) investigated the reasons and suggestions for boredom encountered by 208 English majors from various universities in Iran during virtual classrooms during COVID-19. They revealed that boredom throughout this specific situation was primarily caused by cognitively undemanding tasks or an absence of student involvement in exclusively teacher-led

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classes. Though these research findings primarily focus on the issues of boredom in digital EFL modules, understanding how teachers and students deal with boredom in virtual learning is novel.

Zeng et al. (2024) explored the complicated relationship between boredom in virtual learning settings, and students' perceived academic accomplishment, the prominence of the controlling roles of gender, and school motivation. Research designates that boredom considerably detracts from supposed academic performance, highlighting the critical necessity for commitment in virtual learning environments. The authors also conclude that gender differences are predominantly notable, with conclusions signifying that male students account for more boredom than their female colleagues, which may undesirably distress their academic goal in a broader context. Furthermore, the study emphasized the significance of school motivation; learners who unveil higher motivation levels incline to experience less boredom, thus nurturing a more constructive perception of their educational accomplishment. These comprehensions advocate that instructors must select strategies that enrich commitment and motivation, predominantly for male learners, to lessen the negative influences of boredom in virtual learning contexts.

Boredom in educational backgrounds has gathered increasing consideration in recent research, mainly concerning its influence on learning outcomes and learner engagement. Hu et al. (2024) examined the interaction between boredom and self-perceived learning attainment among advanced-level students. They underlined the arbitrating roles of engagement and motivation, enlightening that higher boredom levels associate with reduced engagement, which in turn undesirably upsets students perceived educational success. The study emphasized the perilous significance of fostering engagement to boost students' sense of success, supporting their motivation.

In a corresponding approach, Ng et al. (2024) studied an intervention designed to combat boredom through a virtual attention teaching program. Their outcomes establish that such targeted interferences can meaningfully improve courtesy spans while decreasing feelings of boredom. This finding delivered valued empirical indication for applied strategies that instructors can imply to improve student commitment, principally in online learning backgrounds, where sustaining attention can be stimulating. Gorelik and Eastwood (2024) presented a theoretical model that reconceptualizes boredom as a trait reduced by the absence of intervention. They argued that individuals who observe restricted control over their environments are more exposed to suffers boredom. This perception transfers the discourse from situational features to specific differences, suggesting a new assessment instrument to gauge the trait of boredom. The findings highlight the significance of personality traits in considering boredom while teaching virtually. This review underscores the necessity for inclusive strategies that can efficiently deal with individual traits and situational dynamics to mitigate boredom in educational environments.

Previous research on EFL boredom has focused primarily on various groups in Polish and Asian scenarios, investigated boredom predominantly in functional English lessons, fell short of discovering and/or proposing boredom-managing strategies, and almost totally overlooked teachers' perspectives concerning their frustration and how this feeling could perhaps figure in virtual classrooms. In an effort to bridge these discrepancies, this research applies a macro strategy, looking at boredom through the eyes of a considerable figure of learners and instructors from a public university in Saudi Arabia. In addition, this study aimed to add additional insight to the burgeoning body of research on EFL boredom in multiple ways. It examined various causes, dynamics, and perspectives of boredom in skill sets with content-based classes. This study would be the most recent effort to understand boredom encountered by EFL teachers and students in virtual classrooms, contributing to many studies on emotional work in virtual learning. Ultimately, the study investigated boredom from the perspectives of both teachers and students, twofold attention that enhances awareness of language boredom. Teachers who are emotionally disrupted would be unable to

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monitor and control the emotional tone of the classes or establish emotionally controlled classes where there is neither excessive nor too little emotion from both perspectives (Revord et al., 2021).

In accordance with that, this study primarily addressed the research questions listed below:

1. Which classes between offline or virtual classes do Saudi EFL teachers and students find more boring?

2. Which courses between content-based or skills classes do Saudi EFL teachers and students find more boring?

3. What are the managing strategies used by Saudi EFL learners and instructors to deal with boredom in virtual classes?

3. Methodology

The current study concentrated on the aspect of boredom encountered by Saudi EFL students and teachers in virtual classrooms. A link to a boredom questionnaire was sent to 14 English major teachers through email and WhatsApp. Prior to the questionnaire, teachers shared their consent. They then forwarded it to 126 students via WhatsApp.

Purposive random sampling was employed to determine student and teacher boredom in virtual learning. The teachers were male (n=8) and female (m=6), and their ages ranged from 31 to 56 years old. Their teaching experience at the time of data collection was between 2.5 and 24 years. Three had a PhD, seven had a Masters, and three had a Bachelor's degree in English language-related majors. Student participants were male (n=71) and (n=55) female, and their ages ranged from 15 to 25 years old. Table 1 summarises the participants of the study.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Participants

Teachers	Questionnaire	Interviews	Age
14	14	6	25–35 = 3 36–44 = 7 45–55 = 3
Students			
126	126	12	Age
			15–17 = 35 18–22 = 31 23–25 = 60

The variance of the study population in terms of gender, competency, and academic programmes generalised the study findings to a broader population of English language students in Saudi Arabia. This variance sampling also enabled qualitative investigations to leverage the philosophies of a broad spectrum of people, resulting in data that is deeply characteristic of the entire population (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013).

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3.1. Data Collection

Data were gathered using two open-ended structured questionnaires: (i) a teacher questionnaire and (ii) a student questionnaire, as well as semi-structured interview sessions with chosen students and teachers. These participants had consented to their participation.

The questionnaires were developed, distributed, and collected online. Both teacher and student questionnaires were divided into three sections: (i) the preliminary section, (ii) the main section, and (iii) the last section. The preliminary section gathered participants' basic information. The main section included questions about elements of boredom as they were related to the study's questions. Finally, the last section inquired about respondents' contact information and willingness to participate in an interview.

The pilot study that was conducted indicated that respondents had no trouble answering in English. Thus, the questionnaires were provided in English, and respondents had to write their responses in that language. Semi-structured interviews were held on digital platforms, namely Blackboard, and Zoom, with 12 students and 6 teachers. This was done to enhance and corroborate the data sources and strengthen the study's authenticity and generalisability (Nassaji, 2020). The interviewees were carefully selected to be as demographically identical to the earlier participants. The interviews began with a couple of short pre-planned questions. However, respondents were allowed to elaborate on their responses and bring up other pertinent points as necessary. The interview sessions lasted approximately 20 minutes.

3.2. Data Analysis

The data was collected from online sessions. All completed questionnaires were transcribed verbatim and entered into Nvivo software (Version 2020). The expressions indicated the existence or concentration of boredom in either virtual or in-person courses and skill sets or information courses. The findings were tallied for research questions 1 and 2. Then, indicative comment sections were outlined to help clarify the respondents' choices.

Creswell (2013) thematic analysis was used to transcribe and interpret data for question 3. First, the transcripts were reread to identify errors and irrelevant responses. Due to only one type of task, some respondents misunderstood certain queries and produced unnecessary answers. In the second phase, open codes were developed for every research question. The codes were likened and clustered under connecting themes, resulting in 178 themes for research question 3. The themes were again selectively coded into broader expressions or categories (Creswell, 2013). A comprehensive description of the data analysis was needed, with vibrant, convincing extract illustrations associated with the nature of the study (Gao & Zhang, 2020). Accordingly, two steps were taken after data analysis to enhance the credibility and confirmability of the findings of the study (Nassaji, 2020).

First, the derived themes and inferences were shared with the participants of the interview section to see whether they conformed, which they did unanimously. A data analysis audit was then conducted by three EFL experts with vast experience in the impact of L2 learning. All Nvivo data files and annotations were disclosed to these experts, who validated the study results' reliability and relevance. Nevertheless, there were some differences in opinions on identifying or characterising certain themes, which were resolved through discussion.

4. Findings

The first research question was associated with the perception of boredom between teachers and students in virtual and in-person classes. More teachers (n = 9) considered virtual learning much

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more boring than offline classes (n = 5). The most common reasons were (i) a lack of ability to sense students' presence and (ii) a one-way, non-interactive essence of teaching.

According to T10, 'Occasionally I feel like I am actually speaking to a doorframe instead of to fellow humans!' T6, an English teacher, mentioned that teaching literature classes, such as plays and poems, on digital services was unimaginable since these courses needed facial expressions, gestures, and engagement among student teachers, which can promote learning. Some less frequently noted causes included stress caused by not understanding how to assess students consistently or finding it hard to instruct constantly. According to T3, teachers' offline classes can 'show up late, mark attendance, make preparations the device but if these kinds of things happen in virtual classrooms, they are most often regarded as cheating and being reckless and irresponsible.' Furthermore, one teacher asserted that online and offline classes were uninteresting. Three teachers stated that neither online nor offline classes were boring, such as T9, who stated that mechanisms of delivering are not simply boring because 'each may be to some significant degree boring at points of time, based upon different influencing variables, for example, student-related factors, education level, and so on'. Table 2 presents the perspective of boredom.

Table 2. Students and Teachers Perspectives of Boredom

Teachers	Virtual Classes	Offline classes	Skills Classes	Content-Based
Number	9	5	6	8
%	64.3	35.7	32	58
Students	86	40	93	33
Number	68.2	31.8	74	26

In addition, student respondents (n = 86) viewed virtual learning as much more boring than offline classes (n = 40). They speculated that 'to be alone and viewing the same appearance or mode for 90 minutes' class (S47), 'internet connection infrastructure' (S19), a complete absence of 'verbal and sensorimotor engagement' (S41), 'have been too benched and passive' (S96), and deprived students of the motivation to start competing group members' (S23), leading to feelings of ennui or disinterest to learning resources. The respondents indicated that in traditional instruction, boredom was alleviated by 'being with classmates and discovering the campus between classes or that teachers could spot bored and/or uninvolved students and take appropriate steps to get them to discuss and invigorate the class' (S103).

Nonetheless, some student respondents preferred virtual classes, on either hand, stated that they 'could at least have just e something to enjoy or have a little break' (S119) or 'you would not have to keep putting up with both the environment and classmates you do not actually appreciate' (S10, S79). For example, (S59) remarked:

'Sitting in a virtual classroom has been less boring to me than sitting in a class. It appears more relaxed, and I can dress up or do anything I want, eat, and keep moving whenever needed. Overall, I favour online courses over attending university and wasting valuable time on transportation.'"

4.1. Skill versus content-based boredom

The second study question about boredom diverged between students and teachers in skill sets and content-related virtual courses (see Table 2). A total of six teachers believed skill sets in virtual courses were more boring, whereas eight teachers thought the latter was more uninteresting. The

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teachers indicated virtual skills-based classes as 'not actual' (T2) and 'fictional' (T12), asserting that the repeated, systematised, boring, and repetitive essence of virtual learning made students preferred content-based classes, as 'students constantly ask queries' (T5) and the teacher had 'more autonomy of using a broader range of materials' (T8). T4 attributed the boredom of skill sets classes to the real sense that 'students could also understand language ability at the academic institutions.' A total of six teachers asserted that virtual content-based classes were duller as there was one-way interaction and lesson, with the teacher being the primary speaker, and the lack of physical interaction created problems of guessing 'if the learners were continuing to follow the conversation' (T9). T5 also stated that:

'This provides a sense of unease and frustration. Explaining how to write a paragraph and addressing a student's interpretation necessitates both students and the teacher to be patient and interactive. I am every so often concerned about my pupils.'

Regarding students, 103 respondents considered content-based classes duller than skill-set classes. They assumed the former were dull as they were mostly educated in a lecture method, with no necessity for student engagement and direct involvement (S63). This is because the classes were significantly more challenging and complicated, necessitating 'more brainwork and mental focus' (S86). Some students also mentioned the 'impractical' (S51) and 'artificial' (S101) characteristics of virtual classes, as classes like pragmatics require in-person classroom instruction.

Students taught in virtual skills-based classes stated that lessons largely centred on language components in virtual classrooms, making them cognitively unexciting, or that they had already 'managed to learn about the experience and understanding of skills' (S121) before starting university. For example, speaking classes were considered boring due to the absence of physical contact (S83), while listening classes were generally considered more tedious because 'listening to audio recordings should indeed be accomplished in class' (S30). Surprisingly, a total of 19 students were neutral as they believed that boredom was ascertained by how well a class was operated and organised or depending on 'the teachers' teaching style' (S46). In general, course organisation and balance were essential for almost all modes of the classes (S125).

4.2. Strategies for Alleviating boredom in virtual classes

The third study question concerned the strategies used mostly by students and teachers to overcome boredom in virtual classrooms. Regarding strategies teachers used, developing student participation was the most prevalent strategy (n = 9). Teachers used strategies such as 'reassigning the instructional tasks for the students' (T4), 'operating the course in a discussion board (T2), 'utilizing flipped reinforcement learning' (T5), and 'allocating them presentation concepts' (T8) to motivate student engagement and minimise their feelings of frustration. A few teachers used novel methods

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to promote student engagement in the class and enhance their confidence. Figure 1 displays the strategies teachers employ to alleviate boredom in virtual classes.

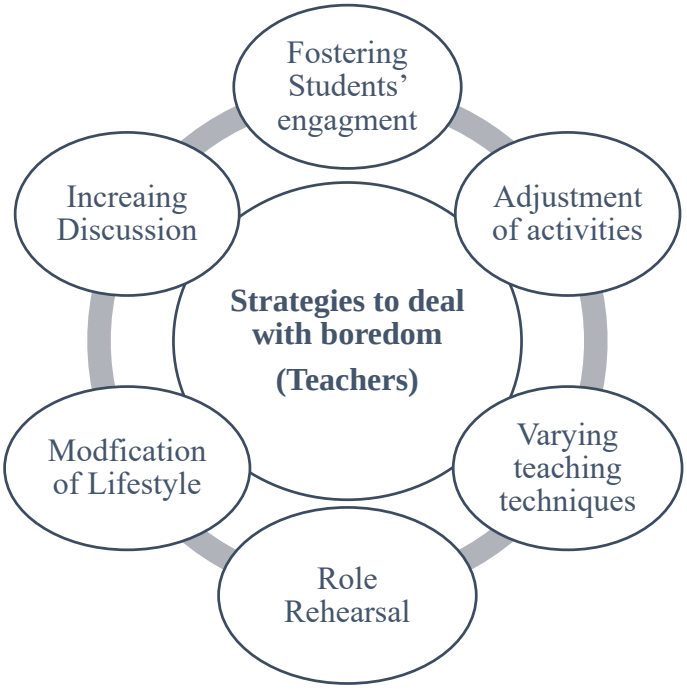

Figure 1. Strategies to cope with boredom (teachers).

Other techniques used by teachers to avoid boredom included assignment modification (n = 3), teaching strategy adjustment (n = 4), lifestyle adaptation (n = 6), and teachers' beliefs (n = 3). In addition, some teachers provided students with several extra duties (T5) and switched to new educational resources, which were task-associated strategies (T12).

Student strategies for dealing with boredom were broadly classified into facilitative techniques, which demonstrated students' cognisant efforts to improve the issue and make use of all the innovative virtual educational setting, as well as debilitative strategies, which demonstrated students' distress and despair within the dream of learning how to cope with boredom. The most of the mentioned strategies were classified as 'becoming active and considerate' (n = 63). It was practical steps that students would take to improve things and illustrate their proper integration to increase participation, pay more attention, and stay engaged in the lesson. Students, in general, mentioned attempting to revise what they had learned by asking questions (S16), skimming the lecture and summarising the key points prior to the main class (S18), highlighting notes (S12), concentrating on the contents uploaded in BB, asking questions, and making responses (S122) to stay on track and avoid boredom. In addition, some students adapted their lifestyle (n = 39) by incorporating practical measures in routine modifications to keep them vibrant and dynamic, notwithstanding being limited in their lecture halls and gazing at their monitors for hours. Respondents, for example, referenced exercising, swapping badinage with fellow students in a respective social media cluster, disinfecting their hands, trying to listen to soothing music, having coffee/tea, gaining some natural light, and so

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on as techniques for obtaining over boredom. Figure 2 illustrates the strategies for dealing with boredom during virtual classes.

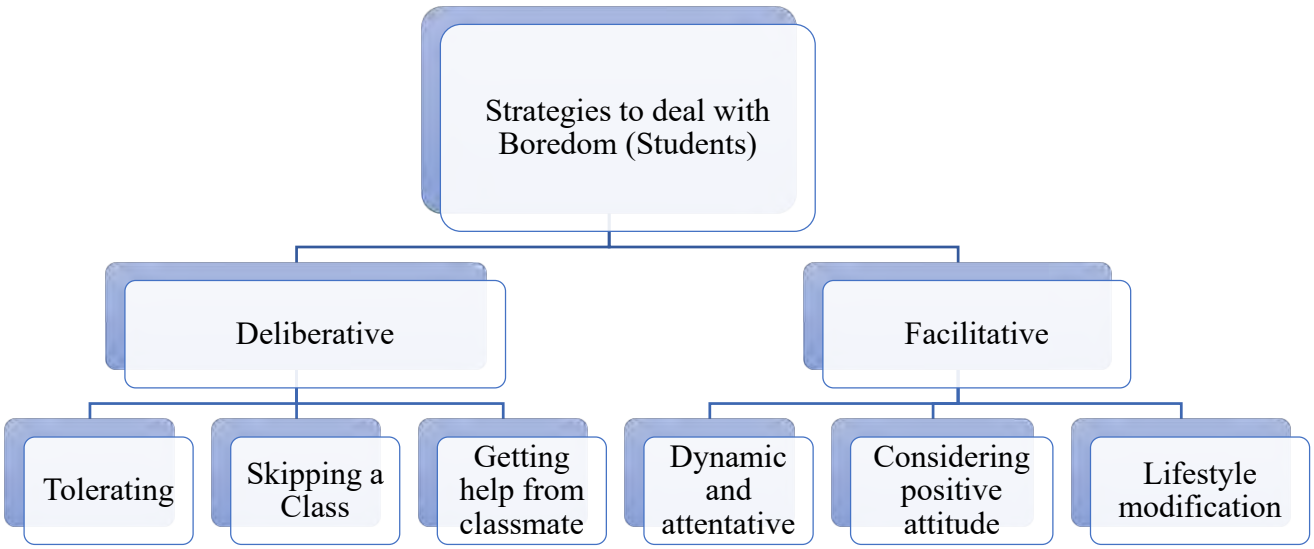

Figure 2. Strategies to deal with boredom

The data in figure 2 can help the teachers to reduce the boredom in virtual learning and they can mitigate the situation effectively. In general, if they follow deliberative and facilitative strategies students' can be more engaged in the situation of online learning. However, teachers need to decide which may be useful for different learners.

5. Discussion

Research question 1 concerned the significant influence of class mechanisms on the perception of boredom. Most teacher and student respondents concluded that virtual learning was far more boring. Both groups of respondents agreed that the lack of physical involvement, or human element, and the lecture-style, one-way nature of online courses were the main causes of boredom. This is described by the recent socially directed concepts of boredom (Ohlmeier et al., 2020), which results from abstract interactions that underperform to engage individuals directly. As a result, interaction in a virtual classroom lacks the natural rise and fall of offline communication and is more likely to occur in emotions of boredom.

Students and teachers recorded a number of concerns. Teachers, for instance, voiced displeasure with their inability to perform validated and accurate evaluations of their students. Even though there were pleas for teachers to draw judgments on students' academic achievement during everyday learning and teaching (Dumančić, 2018), teachers of virtual classrooms considered this assignment difficult since they could not constantly monitor students' behavioral patterns. The whole reality, combined with decades of relying solely on face-to-face, end-of-term, or years summative assessments, caused teachers to be skeptical of the consistency and objectivity of the assessments sent through virtual classrooms. Teachers were also frustrated that they had sufficient materials to keep their student's attention throughout the virtual lesson. Despite that there was an indication that off-task environments were also accessible in traditional classrooms; for example, when teachers were marking attendance, the time was optimal for teachers to be used with laughter in order to

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interact with their students socially. Online learning lacked intimate contact and/or immediate oral input. These 'non-curriculum-oriented spots' (Zawodniak et al., 2021) seem unavailable or underutilised.

The elements of boredom in online learning as a result of inactive listening to a lecture or not being able to socialise with classmates were described by (Chapman, 2013) in his under-stimulation framework. The framework explains the result of inadequate degrees of behavioural stimulation in a classroom atmosphere. This is consistent with the findings of a recent study done by Derakhshan et al. (2021), which revealed that the major source of boredom in virtual classes is the lack of engagement and purposeful interaction. Furthermore, numerous students commented that relatively high physical activity levels and engagement in regular classes, while likely to trigger fatigue, kept them vigilant and cognitively dynamic. Meanwhile, passive listening in virtual classrooms made them feel so relaxed and cognitively unengaged that such classrooms seemed to pull on perpetuity.

Virtual learning, which is made possible and inspired by the advancing technology and greater accessibility of digital media, has expanded learning experiences by stripping away barriers of time and distance. However, difficulties experienced by teachers and students negatively impact their emotions. Research findings of students' emotions in the digital realm of the internet platform Virtual Life, for example, have shown how negative emotions, such as anxiousness and boredom, caused by various considerations, can avert users from fully utilizing these online channels (Kruk, 2021). Some teachers considered the involvement of curriculum type and skill sets courses duller and expressed concerns that the complete absence of interaction and lecture-style demonstration in such course work made them monotonous. Nonetheless, teachers had autonomy in their resources. Thus, teachers' self-recognition that they have something distinctive could outweigh the boredom experienced during virtual learning.

The most effective way for teachers to avoid boredom is to increase student engagement. The results of this study suggest that teachers dislike lengthy monologues and teacher-based directions, just as students dislike non-participation and classroom teaching classes (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Nakamura et al., 2021). Teachers could break the tedium of being solo communicators by allowing students to respond and inspiring direct engagement via discussions and peer instruction. Moreover, students who learn consciousness and anxiety coping strategies have significantly higher levels of wellness, which can give them academic confidence (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019). Regretfully, such essential support seems to be totally overlooked in the rush to virtual learning environments.

The findings illustrate the complex association between boredom and virtual learning environments, drawing on findings from Zeng et al. (2024) and Hu et al. (2024). The study by Zeng et al. signified gender disparity in boredom, with male learners facing higher levels than females, demanding targeted strategies to boost motivation and interaction among male learners. The instructors' responses also indicate in the present study that implementing virtual learning strategies can help learners cope with boredom. Likewise, Hu et al. emphasized the recurring nature of boredom and engagement, demonstrating that augmented boredom primes to decreased engagement and destructively influences academic outcomes. This accentuates the prominence of collaborating teaching methods that dynamically increase learners' interaction. Virtual attention training can enhance the learners' involvement and lessen the boredom in the perspective (Ng et al., 2024).

Gorelik and Eastwood asserted, (2024) that a shift to concentrated to individual personalities, signifying the insights to control boredom levels. This advocates distant modes of evaluation tools for the learners who are at risk. Addressing boredom in virtual learning necessitates a multidimensional approach that deliberates individual differences, enthusiasm, interaction and readiness.

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Educationalists are also required to device targeted strategies and adapted support to generate a more appealing online learning environment that improves academic results.

6. Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the notion of boredom as encountered by students and teachers from the perspective of Saudi online EFL classes. The results exhibited that (i) most students and teachers perceived virtual learning as more tedious than face-to-face classes, (ii) teachers were almost evenly split between the frustration essence of language skills and content-based classes, 26 percent of students thought content-based classes were more uninteresting, nearly half thought skilled-based courses were more boring, and (iii) teachers were prepared with suitable techniques to deal the impact of boredom.

The twofold elements of students' physical presence and one-way interaction, the non-interactive spirit of instruction - are noteworthy concerns raised during data analysis in certain educational backgrounds, predominantly in distant learning milieus. The absence of student matter largely arose in virtual learning environments where educators cannot substantially interact or see learners. This incorporates various aspects that impede the learning process. Instructors can notice learners' facial expressions, engagement, interaction and body language in conventional instruction classrooms. These visual indications benefit instructors estimate understanding, curiosity, and possible confusion. Lacking this feedback, instructors may face challenges in acquiring their instruction methods.

In addition, the absence of physical attendance makes it demanding for instructors to obtain prompt, non-verbal feedback. Ultimately, this can take the instructors to misunderstanding the students' understanding levels and emotional levels. Students cannot learn effectively if they are not emotionally attached to their classmates and teachers. Likewise, participation in the class gives learners a chance to exceed their learning abilities. Although digital infrastructure and platforms often have various features to track login attempts, confirming that learners are dynamically present and engaged during the learning process is thought-provoking. The strength and shared mood of a physical teaching are hard to imitate in computer-generated settings, leading teachers to encounter challenges to make an encouraging learning pursuit. difficult for teachers to create a conducive learning environment. The facility to physically approach learners, instructors may deem it hard to offer adapted support or address distinct essentials of instruction effectively.

As an outcome of the research, there is indeed a greater need for more interactive information and a more enjoyable process of learning English courses. In general, students value participating in group discussions highly, and teachers are supposed to act more like potential mediators instead of solo speakers of subject knowledge. A need for universities and higher education decision-makers to grab ongoing directions and individual counseling where students can access specialized stress management techniques for dealing with boredom is more pressing. Furthermore, the study found that teachers were frustrated because they did not understand how to assess their students virtually. This requires teacher preparation workshops so teachers can be advised about consistently conducting student assessment tasks.

7. Pedagogical Implication

The study examined the aspects of boredom in virtual learning/ It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will help students and teachers get a more satisfying emotional journey in their virtual classrooms. As a result of the expansion of the e-learning presence, teachers might have experienced frustration in the virtual English classroom. Furthermore, because scheduled digital learning will become more extremely common following the pandemic, owing to increased recognition of its

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benefits, the results of the study could advise web-based EFL education. However, one limitation of the study is that it only offered the perceived notion of boredom and the strategies used to cope with it. Future research must examine the effects of individual pedagogical treatments that can minimise boredom in both online and traditional classes.

Boredom in virtual learning backgrounds pretenses a substantial challenge to learner engagement and l the outcomes. To efficiently deal with this matter, it is indispensable to recognize the features that cause boredom for the student. The study's outcome also helps the instructors focus on important factors, including the applicability of content, distribution of material, and interactivity aspect of the learning. When instructional materials seem disengaged from learners' interests or absence applied applications, boredom can supervene. Consequently, instructors should target to assimilate relevant specimens and confirm that content remains appropriate and target to attain the desired goal. Moreover, low interactivity result in passive learning practices; thus, increasing prospects for communication through discussion, short quizzes, and combined projects are decisive for supporting student attention. Likewise, it is essential to consider the that the available content should is either too easy or too challenging can disengage learners. Employing differentiated teaching and variable levels can accommodate to varied learner needs and lessen boredom to a great extent.

Planning attractive learning settings involves integrating multimedia features such as videos, imitations, and gamified tasks, which can address diverse learning styles and sustain attention. Providing consistent feedback nurtures a sense of association and worth among learners, underlining their development and further lessening emotional state of boredom. Furthermore, adopting a sense of community through peer collaboration such as group projects or combined platforms can improve social commitment and improve the isolation often practised in virtual situations.

8. Limitations

The present study admits some limitations. The study utilized purposive sampling, while valuable for including expert viewpoints, may limit the generalizability of the conclusions to larger populations. In addition, the moderately small sample size for qualitative data analysis may not fully apprehend the intricacy and variety of practices across all virtual learning environments. Furthermore, the study's scope was restricted to specific platforms, which may not fully involve the diversity of E-learning. Lastly, the use of qualitative data analysis design of the study restricts the ability to conclude causal associations, highlighting the need for longitudinal research to further authenticate the results of the present study.

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