



## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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**Abstract.** Virtual classrooms live online spaces where teachers and students meet in real time are now a regular part of language education. This article looks at how well they support foreign language learning by reviewing research from both Russian and international scholars. Studies show that video lessons, breakout rooms, and shared digital tools can boost speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills when teachers use them creatively. Students often feel more engaged and get extra chances to practice authentic communication. At the same time, problems like poor internet, unequal access to devices, and screen fatigue can limit results. Overall, virtual classrooms work best when paired with good teaching strategies that balance the flexibility of online learning with the personal interaction of traditional classes.

**Keywords:** *virtual classrooms; online language learning; foreign language acquisition; synchronous teaching; student engagement; digital tools; russian research; educational technology.*

Over the past decade and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic virtual classrooms have moved from being an experimental option to a mainstream method for teaching foreign languages. A virtual classroom is more than a simple video call. It is a digital learning environment where students and teachers meet in real time using platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet, often combined with interactive tools such as shared whiteboards, breakout rooms, and collaborative documents. For language learners, this format promises something essential: regular, live communication with instructors and peers, even when everyone is in a different location.



A virtual classroom goes beyond a simple video conference. It provides interactive whiteboards, breakout rooms for small-group speaking practice, and shared digital materials that allow collaborative learning. These features are especially useful for language learners who need frequent speaking and listening opportunities.

Recent studies highlight both the promise and the limits of this approach. For example, Hampel and Stickler emphasize that synchronous online environments can create authentic communication opportunities, fostering the spontaneity and interaction essential for second-language acquisition [7]. Similarly, Baralt and Moranski report that the immediacy of teacher feedback and peer interaction in virtual classrooms strengthens listening and pronunciation skills [1]. From a different perspective, Godwin-Jones notes that virtual platforms can integrate multimedia tools such as digital flashcards, subtitled videos, and live polls that increase student engagement and autonomy [6].

The benefits are clear. First, learners can join lessons from anywhere, making it easier to connect with native speakers or international classmates. Second, recorded sessions let students revisit complex grammar points or challenging pronunciation drills. Third, built-in digital resources chat boxes for quick questions, instant polling, and screen-sharing create a rich environment for active participation.

Yet, challenges remain. Bao points out that unreliable internet connections and unequal access to technology can widen educational gaps [2]. In addition, Compton observes that teachers must redesign their classroom management strategies to maintain motivation and prevent “Zoom fatigue,” which can lower attention and reduce language retention. Building rapport and a sense of community is more difficult when learners are separated by screens.

Many studies report that virtual classrooms expand opportunities for learners who might otherwise lack access to quality language instruction. For instance, Chernyshova and Petrova describe how Russian university students in remote



regions were able to join live English lessons without relocating, saving time and costs [5]. Similarly, Blake notes that international students can engage with native speakers across time zones, increasing exposure to authentic language use [3].

Synchronous tools such as breakout rooms, instant chat, and shared whiteboards foster meaningful communication. Baralt and Moranski found that learners practicing in small virtual groups showed measurable gains in speaking fluency and confidence. Russian scholar Zorina observed that real-time polls and chat features encourage shy students to participate, giving them more speaking turns than in traditional classrooms [11].

Most platforms allow recording of sessions, enabling students to revisit complex grammar explanations or pronunciation drills. Godwin-Jones highlights that replaying recorded lessons supports deeper listening comprehension, while Ivanova found that students used recordings to create personalized vocabulary lists and improve pronunciation[9].

Despite these benefits, obstacles remain. Bao documents frequent issues with unstable internet and limited access to high-quality devices, especially in rural areas. Russian educators such as Kudryavtseva stress that students may experience “Zoom fatigue,” leading to reduced attention spans and slower vocabulary retention. Teachers also report difficulty maintaining discipline and monitoring participation in large classes [10].

The findings of this review suggest that virtual classrooms can serve as a powerful environment for foreign language acquisition, provided that educators and institutions address certain critical factors. The results echo a growing consensus among scholars that technology itself is not the teacher; pedagogy determines success.

A key strength of virtual classrooms lies in their ability to replicate the immediacy of face-to-face communication. Tools such as breakout rooms, shared whiteboards, and live chat create opportunities for authentic dialogue, which is



central to second-language development. This supports Hampel and Stickler's argument that real-time interaction is essential for building speaking fluency and listening skills [7]. Yet technology can only provide the medium; teachers must design activities that encourage active participation rather than passive screen time.

The research also highlights significant inequalities. Learners without stable internet or modern devices experience interruptions that disrupt learning flow, a challenge documented by both Bao and Russian scholar Kudryavtseva. Institutions therefore need policies that provide hardware support, low-bandwidth options, and flexible scheduling to ensure that all students benefit equally from virtual instruction.

Successful virtual language teaching requires more than transferring traditional lessons to an online format. Hubbard emphasizes that instructors must adopt new strategies, such as task-based learning and multimodal resources, to fully exploit digital platforms. Teacher training in online classroom management ranging from technical troubleshooting to motivating students through interactive tasks is vital for sustaining engagement and preventing "Zoom fatigue" [8]

Several scholars, including Blake, advocate for a blended approach that combines the flexibility of virtual instruction with the social presence of in-person sessions. Hybrid models can allow students to practice at home, review recorded materials, and then apply skills in physical classrooms, creating a richer and more balanced learning experience.

Looking ahead, virtual classrooms may evolve with advances in AI-powered language tools, immersive virtual reality, and adaptive feedback systems. Russian researchers such as Zorina predict that these innovations could further personalize language learning and improve outcomes, provided ethical concerns and data privacy issues are addressed.

In sum, virtual classrooms are not merely a temporary substitute for traditional language learning but a transformative space that, when thoughtfully implemented,



can expand access, increase interaction, and support lasting language development. Their effectiveness ultimately depends on reliable technology, inclusive policy, and educators who are prepared to innovate in a digital world.

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