

Reframing Thesis Supervision in the Digital Era: A Qualitative Exploration of Virtual Communication Practices in English Education

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ABSTRACT

The current research aimed to analyse the role of virtual communication in achieving successful outcomes in the consulting thesis for English education students at Kiki Areski Kampus. Many studies have examined virtual communication in general educational contexts, but it is still rare to explore its specific use in thesis consultation within universities. The study design used a qualitative approach. The research was conducted at Kiki Areski Kampus, involving both consultants and students who frequently engaged in online thesis consultation sessions. The subjects of this study were three consultants and 30 English education students who utilised virtual platforms during their supervision. The data collection methods included interviews, observations, and documentation. The techniques for analysing the data followed qualitative procedures, including categorisation, identification, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that several virtual communication platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp, were utilised effectively during the thesis consultation process. The participants improved their academic performance and communication competence through virtual interaction by establishing structured consultation schedules, adapting feedback to different communication styles, and understanding the function of virtual platforms in supporting academic supervision. The study concluded that virtual communication plays an important role in facilitating flexibility, feedback efficiency, and successful outcomes in thesis consultation for English education students in the university context.

KEYWORDS

Virtual Communication, English Education, Thesis Consultation, Digital Literacy, Academic Supervision

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, virtual communication has become an essential tool for consultants to communicate with students from anywhere in the world. In recent years, the rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the way people communicate

and interact (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Lievrouw et al., 2001). Virtual communication tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams have become increasingly common in academic and professional settings, allowing individuals to connect seamlessly across distances (Sato et al., 2023). These tools have significantly reduced geographical barriers, enabling consultants and students to engage in meaningful discussions regardless of location or time zone (Lacárce, 2025).

The global shift toward online learning has further emphasised the importance of virtual communication. Educational institutions and consultants have adapted to new norms, utilising digital platforms to maintain academic continuity and ensure accessibility for students worldwide. This shift has not only changed the medium of interaction but also influenced the methods and dynamics of teaching and consultation. As a result, virtual communication has become an integral part of academic consultation, providing a space for learning beyond the physical classroom. Consultants can now guide, mentor, and collaborate with students in flexible, innovative ways. The increased reliance on digital platforms has opened new opportunities for inclusivity, engagement, and knowledge sharing, shaping the future of academic consultation in the global education landscape.

The use of virtual communication has become increasingly important in English education, where consultants work with students to improve their language skills. In English education, communication is both the medium and the message (Oba & Berger, 2024). The ability to effectively use virtual platforms has allowed English consultants to create immersive environments where language can be practised and refined. Through video calls, chat rooms, and collaborative online documents, consultants can simulate real-life communication scenarios, helping students enhance their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

Moreover, virtual communication provides students with diverse opportunities for authentic language exposure. Many students can now interact with consultants or peers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, promoting intercultural competence and global awareness (Sobkowiak, 2019). This form of interaction helps learners to experience real-time feedback and authentic linguistic exchanges that mirror real-world communication.

In addition, virtual communication supports flexible learning models that accommodate individual learning styles. Consultants can record sessions for later review, use multimedia resources to reinforce lessons, and tailor instruction to each student's unique needs.

Consequently, integrating virtual communication into English education enhances accessibility and the overall learning experience, making it an indispensable component of modern pedagogy (Bui, 2022).

One of the main advantages of virtual communication is its ability to overcome geographical and time-related constraints. Consultants can schedule meetings, share resources, and provide feedback from virtually anywhere, creating a more efficient and accessible environment for both parties. This flexibility allows for greater autonomy in managing consultation sessions and fosters continuous engagement between students and consultants.

Additionally, virtual communication significantly reduces costs associated with transportation, printed materials, and physical facilities. It also supports environmentally friendly practices by minimising paper use and energy consumption (Firoozi et al., 2024). The real-time collaboration enabled by virtual platforms enhances productivity, allowing consultants and students to exchange ideas, edit documents collaboratively, and track progress effectively through digital tools.

Nevertheless, virtual communication is not without its challenges. Technical issues such as poor internet connectivity, platform instability, or limited device access can disrupt the consultation process. Furthermore, the absence of physical presence may reduce emotional connection and non-verbal communication cues, leading to potential misunderstandings. Therefore, while virtual communication enhances accessibility and productivity, it requires careful management to maintain clarity, engagement, and interpersonal rapport (Scott et al., 2022).

In English education, virtual communication has become increasingly important as consultants work with students to improve their language skills. Virtual communication can provide a platform for students to practice their language skills in real time, allowing them to receive feedback and improve their proficiency. Virtual communication can also facilitate personalised instruction, which is essential for helping students develop their language skills.

Virtual communication enables English education consultants to create dynamic, interactive learning spaces where students can practice language skills in authentic contexts. Unlike traditional classroom settings, online platforms can incorporate multimedia elements such as videos, podcasts, and discussion forums to enhance comprehension and engagement. These tools enable students to experiment with different

modes of expression, improving both their confidence and linguistic competence.

Moreover, real-time feedback is a crucial aspect of virtual communication. Consultants can observe students' performance during live sessions, identify common errors, and provide immediate corrections or suggestions. This instant feedback loop accelerates the learning process and helps students internalise grammatical structures and pronunciation patterns more effectively. The immediacy of communication fosters a more active and responsive learning environment (Wiboolyasarin et al., 2025).

Finally, the personalised nature of virtual instruction allows consultants to tailor learning experiences according to each student's strengths, weaknesses, and goals. Individual learning analytics and digital portfolios make it easier to monitor progress over time and adjust instruction accordingly. By combining personalised guidance with interactive technologies, virtual communication ensures that English education remains adaptive, learner-centred, and responsive to students' evolving needs in the digital era. The research question for this research is the role of virtual communication in achieving successful outcomes in the consulting thesis for English Education students at Kiki Areski Kampus.

Virtual communication is the process of exchanging information through digital platforms that connect individuals who are not physically present in the same location. It involves using technology such as email, instant messaging, video calls, and collaborative online tools to transmit ideas, messages, and feedback. This form of communication allows people to interact and collaborate in real time, regardless of distance, making it an integral part of modern professional and educational settings (Khalil & Ebner, 2017).

In the 21st century, virtual communication has become a cornerstone of global connectivity. The rise of advanced communication technologies has enabled organisations, institutions, and individuals to operate beyond geographical limitations. Whether in business, education, or research, virtual communication bridges physical gaps and provides a platform for collaboration that was once unimaginable. It empowers people to exchange ideas across time zones and cultural boundaries (Chasokela et al., 2024).

For educators and consultants, virtual communication represents a shift from traditional face-to-face interactions to technology-mediated exchanges. Teachers, mentors, and students can now engage through learning management systems, discussion boards, and live streaming sessions. These tools facilitate academic discussions, consultations, and collaborative projects that mirror in-person engagement while offering increased flexibility

and convenience (Zamiri & Esmaceli, 2024).

Ultimately, virtual collaboration fosters cross-cultural communication and global teamwork. Students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can collaborate on research or creative projects, enhancing intercultural competence and empathy. This global exposure prepares participants to operate successfully in an increasingly digital and internationalised world (Nopas & Kerdsomboon, 2024).

Video conference meetings are one of the most widely used forms of virtual communication. They allow individuals or groups to interact visually and verbally in real time via platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams. These meetings replicate traditional face-to-face discussions while adding the benefits of digital accessibility and flexibility.

One major advantage of video conferencing is the ability to foster real-time collaboration. Participants can discuss ideas, present materials, and share feedback instantly. Visual contact enhances engagement, making it easier to interpret tone and facial expressions compared to text-based communication. This visual element restores some of the interpersonal warmth missing in purely written interactions (Rifki Padilah et al., 2025).

Despite these advantages, video conferences can also present technical and human challenges. Poor connectivity, audio lag, or software incompatibility can interrupt discussions. Additionally, prolonged screen exposure may lead to digital fatigue, reducing attention and engagement over time. Maintaining etiquette and focus during virtual meetings is crucial to ensure productivity (Rivkin et al., 2024).

Finally, digitally written critiques promote inclusive participation. Individuals who may feel hesitant to speak during live discussions can express their perspectives confidently through writing. This inclusivity ensures that all voices are heard and valued, enriching the learning environment and enhancing the overall quality of collaborative academic work.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how virtual communication contributes to successful thesis consultations in the English Education program at Kiki Areski Kampus. The qualitative design was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions in their natural setting. Through this approach, the study focused on describing how consultants and students utilise virtual communication tools to support the supervision

process, emphasising real-life experiences rather than numerical measurement or statistical generalisation (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

The participants in this study were consultants and students actively engaged in online thesis consultations. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, meaning only individuals with direct experience with virtual consultations were included. The primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed flexibility in probing participants' thoughts while maintaining focus on the research objectives. Additional data were gathered through observations of virtual consultation sessions and relevant documentation, such as chat transcripts, meeting notes, and consultation records.

The data analysis followed the qualitative thematic analysis procedure. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher conducted several stages of analysis, including data reduction, coding, categorisation, and interpretation. Common themes and patterns in the use of virtual communication were identified, including accessibility, feedback quality, and communication barriers (Swart et al., 2022). The data were then interpreted to reveal how these factors influence the overall effectiveness of thesis consultation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and detailed documentation of the research process (Stahl & King, 2020).

RESULTS

The results of this study provided insights into the role of virtual communication in achieving successful outcomes in consulting theses for English education students at Kiki Areski Kampus. The study explored the advantages and challenges of virtual communication in consulting and provided recommendations for consultants and students in the English education program. The study also contributes to the existing literature on virtual communication in consulting and English education.

Enhanced Accessibility and Flexibility

The findings reveal that virtual communication has greatly improved accessibility and flexibility in the thesis consultation process. Students and consultants can now meet regardless of distance or time, thanks to platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp. This flexibility reduces scheduling difficulties and enables students living far from campus to receive consistent academic guidance. The ability to record sessions and review them later has also supported students' comprehension and independent revision.

Improved Efficiency and Productivity

Virtual communication tools have enhanced the overall efficiency of thesis supervision. Students can share documents in real time, receive feedback directly within digital platforms, and immediately apply corrections to their writing. This immediacy minimises delays that typically occur in face-to-face meetings. Consultants also benefit from the streamlined nature of digital supervision, which allows them to handle multiple consultations effectively and maintain detailed records of student progress.

Development of Digital Literacy and Autonomy

Both students and consultants indicated that engaging in online consultation improved their digital literacy and time management. Students learned to confidently operate digital platforms, schedule meetings independently, and manage shared files responsibly. This experience promoted self-regulated learning and encouraged academic independence, essential competencies in higher education.

Challenges in Communication and Interaction

Despite its advantages, the study identified notable challenges in using virtual communication. Poor internet connectivity was the most common issue, often interrupting consultations. The lack of face-to-face interaction also reduced emotional engagement, making it difficult for consultants to interpret students' nonverbal cues such as hesitation or confusion. Some students reported feelings of isolation or reduced motivation due to prolonged screen time. These limitations highlight the need for improved digital infrastructure and stronger interpersonal strategies in virtual consultations.

Strategies for Effective Virtual Consultation

To overcome these challenges, both parties developed several adaptive strategies. Consultants emphasised the importance of clear communication guidelines, such as confirming schedules and summarising key points in written form. Many adopted hybrid feedback systems combining video explanations with written notes to balance emotional connection and precision. Students also learned to prepare technically in advance of each session and to maintain professional communication etiquette. These strategies contributed to smoother and more productive virtual interactions.

Positive Academic and Interpersonal Outcomes

The overall outcome of virtual communication in the consultation process was highly positive. Students reported increased confidence in their writing skills, faster completion times, and stronger consultant-student relationships despite the online medium.

Consultants appreciated the documentation features that allowed transparent progress tracking. Consequently, virtual consultation has not only facilitated academic success but also fostered adaptability and collaboration, key skills for 21st-century education.

DISCUSSION

This study explored how virtual communication supports academic success, language development, emotional engagement, and self-regulated learning among English education students. The findings reveal that digital consultation practices have transformed traditional supervision into a more dynamic, accessible, and learner-centred process. Through continuous interaction on virtual platforms, students and consultants built collaborative academic relationships that transcended physical boundaries.

The Role of Virtual Communication in Academic Success

Virtual communication enhances students' academic engagement and independence (Prinsen et al., 2007). In this study, accessibility and flexibility emerged as critical factors enabling English education students to maintain consistent consultation schedules. These findings confirm that digital platforms can serve as effective pedagogical spaces where academic supervision and student-centred learning coexist (Wu, 2024).

Virtual Communication as a Tool for Language and Writing Development

Consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the online consultation environment provides scaffolding that supports learners' development through guided interaction. Real-time feedback during virtual consultations allowed students to internalise corrections and apply linguistic principles to their thesis writing. This finding supports the idea that virtual communication not only functions as a technological medium but also as a social learning tool that enhances academic writing proficiency and critical thinking (Amin* et al., 2023).

Interpersonal Dynamics and Emotional Engagement

The findings also reveal that virtual communication requires strong emotional intelligence and adaptive interaction strategies. According to Walther's Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT), users can develop meaningful relationships in computer-mediated environments by compensating for the lack of physical cues through verbal and textual richness. In this study, both consultants and students demonstrated that empathy, clarity, and consistent communication could build trust even in digital spaces. Thus, emotional connection remains achievable despite the absence of face-to-face contact (Keverski & Iliev, 2017).

Digital Literacy and Self-Regulated Learning

This research confirms that digital competence is a vital skill in modern academia. Students' increased ability to use digital tools reflects Bandura's social cognitive theory, particularly the concept of self-efficacy, which is developed through mastery experiences. As students successfully navigated online platforms, they became more autonomous and responsible for their own learning progress. This self-regulation translated into better preparation, higher motivation, and improved writing performance (Zhan & Teng, 2025).

Challenges and Their Implications

The challenges identified were technical disruptions, reduced non-verbal communication, and digital fatigue, which support the argument that the quality of online education depends not only on the tools used but also on users' adaptability and mindset. Therefore, institutions must provide technological support, training, and awareness programs to help both consultants and students maximise the benefits of virtual communication without compromising well-being or interaction quality (Swart et al., 2022).

Pedagogical and Practical Implications

From a pedagogical perspective, the study demonstrates that virtual communication can be integrated into English education curricula as both a teaching tool and an academic support mechanism. Practically, consultants can adopt a blended consultation model, alternating between synchronous (video call) and asynchronous (written feedback) methods to balance efficiency and emotional connection. For institutions, establishing clear digital consultation policies, technical support teams, and digital literacy workshops can further strengthen the sustainability of virtual academic supervision (Deschênes, 2024).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, virtual communication plays a vital role in achieving successful outcomes in consulting thesis for English education students in Kiki Areski Kampus. The use of virtual communication provides several advantages, including convenience, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and increased productivity. However, virtual communication also poses challenges, including technical difficulties, a lack of personal interaction, and miscommunication. This study provides insights into the role of virtual communication in achieving successful outcomes in a consulting thesis. It provides practical recommendations for consultants and students to improve their use of virtual communication.

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