

Teachers' Challenges and Perspectives towards Online Applications for Online Learning

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*Riyo Pasca Alexander Koroh¹, Moh. Yamin², Elsa Rosalina³ 

¹²³Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Lambung Mangkurat University, Indonesia
Corresponding Author : riyoalexsanders@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to identify perspectives and challenges in using online learning applications. The sample for this research was 3 EFL teachers at SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin. This research uses a qualitative approach to obtain data. The instrument used in this research consisted of 8 open-ended questionnaires created online using Google Forms. The data is then collected, analyzed, and described. This research found that, SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin teachers used online learning applications such as Zoom, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Canva. The challenges come from a need for more skills in using Zoom's features, time constraints, and a need for features on the free account. Teachers believe that online learning can be implemented with thorough preparation because it is beneficial for education in the future. Therefore, the researcher suggests that further research use a more detailed methodology in collecting samples and analyzing data to further serve for in-depth findings about online learning applications.

Keywords: *Teacher Challenges, Teacher Perspectives, Online Applications, Online Learning*

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INTRODUCTION

The global COVID-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020, forced the suspension of face-to-face activity at every level of education in most countries worldwide. Like colleagues in other disciplines, English language teachers must find alternative modes of teaching and interacting with their students (Moorhouse et al., 2023). Hafeez et al. (2022) state that many educators are promoting online education. The face-to-face teaching and learning process must switched to an online system. This is a disturbance for many teachers and students for this online system since, before the pandemic, the teacher did a learning activities in the class or offline. The pandemic has brought the change from the face-to-face learning process to using online applications or devices. Online learning can be very protracted and expensive. It can be challenging, requiring significant effort in acquiring materials and hardware, managing and train the labours, and developing online learning content (Hafeez et al., 2022). These may lead to a problem for teachers and students, known as a challenge. Rosalina et al. (2020) study the teachers' challenges toward online learning divided into some parts. They are the supporting facilitation like internet connection, gadgets, and quota. Then, the learning process will be followed by the interaction, the explanation, the age gap between teacher and students, and the way to control students.

With such challenges, teachers must also understand how to maximize online learning applications. Many online applications and platforms are available for online learning. Octaviani (2021) mentions Google Classroom, Google Hangout, WhatsApp, Telegram, Youtube, and Instagram. Video conferencing services like Google Meet, Microsoft

applications, Zoom Cloud Meeting, Skype, GoTo Meetings, and Cisco WebEx Teams, some of which can be used for educational purposes.

The study by Rosalina et al. (2020) concluded teachers' challenges toward online learning, which are supporting facilitation like internet availability, gadgets, and internet quota, then the learning process such as the interaction, the explanation, the age gap between teacher and students, and the way to control students. The research stated teachers' challenges in common while not explicitly mentioning the teachers' challenges with using each specific application used for teaching online. A previous study by Octaviani (2021) states plenty of online resources can be utilized for learning, which contrasts with Hafeez et al. (2022) study that online learning can be very protracted, costly, and challenging. Teachers need to select the best tools to deliver education to their students. Based on all previous studies, this research identifies the challenges teachers face when using a specific application. The main difference between previous research and current research lies in the subjects studied. This research reveals the challenges in using applications for online learning instead of common challenges.

METHOD

The researcher used qualitative surveys, specifically online surveys, to gather feedback from the research subject. Qualitative surveys are tools for gathering rich feedback (Farrell, 2016). This research uses descriptive qualitative methods to identify and describe teachers' challenges in using online applications. Qualitative description could be interpreted as a comprehensive description to provide a detailed description of the findings and more likely to generate consensus among observers (Seixas et al., 2017).

Respondents

This research involves 3 English teachers from SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin. The researchers chose these teachers because they actively taught English at SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin

Instruments

The instrument in this study consists of 8 open-ended questionnaires made using Google form. The topic of the questions includes the teacher's understanding of online learning, online applications used during a pandemic, problems or challenges faced when using these applications, solutions to problems encountered, teaching differences during post-pandemic, problems faced during post-pandemic, solutions to the challenge during post-pandemic, and teacher's perspective regarding online learning in the future.

Data analysis

The questionnaires were then given to the research participants using WhatsApp by sharing the link from the Google form to be filled out. The data is then collected online from a filled Google form to be identified and analyzed using a qualitative description. The researcher then gave a code for each teacher with letters and numbers (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3). After that, the researcher classifies the data based on the order of answers given. Based on the answers to this questionnaire, the researcher then describes the findings using related theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The following answer presents the study's findings based on the research using open-ended questionnaires. The first concerns teachers' understanding and perspective of online learning. All teachers described the meaning briefly and stated that online learning is a learning process using internet facilities, digital media, and various online platforms.

"Online learning is a learning process using internet facilities, digital media, or computer networks in delivering material." (Teacher 1)

"Online learning means a learning process that is provided by technology for media and tools." (Teacher 2)

"Instruction that is delivered through various multimedia and internet platforms and applications." (Teacher 3)

Secondly, it concerns what media or applications are used for online learning in SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin and why the school uses them. All teachers said they use Zoom, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp, followed by Google Meet and Canva.

"There are many kinds of applications (media) used for online learning in SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin, like Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Classroom, and Google Meet. It depends on the needs that the teacher thinks are the best and suitable." (Teacher 1)

"We used almost all applications that the government provided. For example, we used free Google features, free Canva for editing, and WhatsApp as our most common communication tool with the parents. We also used Zoom because it was helpful enough to teach and share the learning media with the students." (Teacher 2)

The reason for choosing these applications is because these applications allow learning activities like discussions and share the learning material like in face-to-face learning and support communication needs with many people at any moments without meeting physically. Teachers agree that those media applications are commonly used for online learning.

"Our school uses Zoom and Google Meet because these applications allow learning activities, discussions, and support demands for interaction with various people anywhere and anytime without physically meeting." (Teacher 1)

"The government gave the Google features to the teachers so we could use all the tools. We also used Zoom because it was helpful enough to teach and share the learning media with the students. Zoom had a feature: share screen. It helped to explain the material clearly, and students could join us actively in the classroom." (Teacher 2)

The third is about challenges or problems while using some specific application. All teachers stated that video conferencing platforms, especially Zoom, have problems because they only understand how to use Zoom in basic and having a hard time using some of Zoom's features. They also stated that Zoom has a time limit for free accounts, which can make learning stop briefly to make a new room. One teacher also mentioned Canva for learning media and stated that the government only gave the teacher premium Canva in the second year of the pandemic session.

"Some teachers and students are still not good at using digital technology" (Teacher 1)

"Most of the students only understood Zoom in basic. Zoom has limited time, so the teacher bought unlimited Zoom. The government only gave the teacher free Canva in the second year of the pandemic session." (Teacher 2)

"Zoom, because more hard to understand application" (Teacher 3)

Next is about solutions to the challenges faced by teachers. Teachers state that they learn how to use the application that they find difficult to use. One teacher also stated that the solution is to buy a premium Zoom account to maximize its features. Another teacher also stated that instead of using Zoom, the teacher switched to another platform by using Google Meet because there is no time restriction and it is easier to use.

"Learn from others who already understand the use of learning application." (Teacher 1)

"They learned how to use it. Teacher needed to buy premium Zoom, and it was expensive." (Teacher 2)

"Use Google Meet to student because easy for students." (Teacher 3)

The next topic is about the use of online learning after the pandemic and the difference between the pandemic and the post-pandemic era. All teachers stated they still use online learning to give summative assessments, deliver learning material, and collect students' work.

"During the pandemic, we usually use online learning by holding video conferences, but during post-pandemic, we only use online learning for giving summative assessments in Google Classroom." (Teacher 1)

"Yes, we did. We still use the Google feature to help us share the material and collect student's work in the class." (Teacher 2)

"Yes, using Google Class to deliver materials that haven't been delivered yet." (Teacher 3)

The following finding is about challenges in using online applications during the post-pandemic era. Some teachers stated that they still found problems with using the online application by using the Zoom application; one teacher stated that there were no problems during the post-pandemic.

"We will learn how to use it." (Teacher 1)

"No, we don't have any problems during post-pandemic because we do all our activities in offline activities." (Teacher 2)

"Zoom, Because hard for me" (Teacher 3)

Next is about the solution to the challenges faced by teachers during post-pandemic era. All teachers stated that they learned how to use the application and how to use easier applications.

"We will learn how to use it." (Teacher 1)

"We have no problem" (Teacher 2)

The last topic concerns the teacher's perspective on how online learning can occur after the pandemic. Each teacher briefly stated their view regarding this topic and stated that online learning can be carried out after the pandemic, but everything must be prepared well because online learning provides more opportunities to develop students' comprehension in listening and their ability to speak by talking to a native speaker without going to another country.

"In my opinion, online learning can be carried out after the pandemic, but everything has been prepared properly so that learning can take place well and smoothly. I think it's the same for the future for online learning. It's ok, but everything must be prepared well." (Teacher 1)

"Online learning can be more helpful to us, especially for English teachers. We can use all online learning apps to help us to develop student's abilities in English. For example, we can use Zoom to develop students' comprehension of listening and their ability to speak by talking to a native speaker without going to another country. We can practice it only in the classroom. I hope that in the future, online learning will be used maximally to develop students' learning abilities." (Teacher 2)

"After the pandemic, we sometimes use it in the classroom. In a world that's quickly becoming dominated by mobile technology, flexible working opportunities, and a post-pandemic economy, online learning is here to stay." (Teacher 3)

Discussion

Based on those findings, teachers from SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin can briefly explain online learning definition, which Greenhow et al. (2022) state that online learning comprises interactions that are conducted through digital internet-based technology. During the pandemic, teachers from SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin used many online learning applications such as Zoom, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Canva. The reason for choosing such applications is because these applications allow learning activities like discussions and sharing the learning material in face-to-face learning and support communication needs with many people at any moment without meeting physically. These findings are supported by Diharjo (2021), who mentions that WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Zoom applications are some of the innovations are believed to have alternatives for learning endeavours. WhatsApp is very effective because of its features, unlike other instant messaging applications (Suswandari & Purba, 2022). Google Meet is effective in online learning nowadays (Hutajulu, 2022). The Zoom application is less effective; nonetheless, this application seems more efficient and practical for learners (Zainal et al., 2022). A study by Okmawati (2020) mention Google Classroom is effective and useful in improving students' skill and discipline, as well as continuing the learning process. Canva is an easy tool to utilize in classes. It can be easily accessed through many gadgets. Canva can be freely downloaded on users' gadgets. Canva is easy to use and allows students to experience interactive learning activities (Priyatna et al., 2023).

As for the problems, teachers mention that they only understood how to use Zoom in basic and spend their money on the premium account because of the time limit. These problems were also found in Octaviani (2021), finding that Zoom had a time limitation of only 40 minutes since teachers did not have a paid account because the schools did not make it obligatory that Zoom to be utilized. Thus, teachers only used free Zoom account. It caused the teaching process to operate improperly because Zoom briefly stopped before the teaching process finishes. The findings also state that despite the teachers state that they felt it was easy to use Zoom, they were unable to maximize important features. On the contrary, Google Meet can be used for free without any restriction. It contrasted with challenges in using Canva. A previous study by Priyatna et al. (2023) mentions that although Canva provides premium accounts, free account also provides numerous templates for use. Free accounts can use free and exclusive templates and designs, but the exclusive templates will have a watermark if the users use a free account.

The teacher's ability to learn is essential because the more knowledge the teacher obtains from learning results, the greater the success in teaching. From the teacher's viewpoint, success of online learning hinges on a few key points: the thorough preparation of educators and their continued enhancement of skills tailored for the digital classroom. It is about evolving and adapting. As we wade deeper into this digital age, the importance of online learning continues to grow, morphing into an indispensable part of modern education. With digital skills ranking high among the must-haves for 21st-century learners, it's essential that we nurture and refine these abilities in our students (Jamilah & Fahyuni, 2022). Contemporary teachers can pass on more sophisticated ideas into the future through multimedia recording and storage (Li, 2023).

This research implies that teachers must be prepared to use various media from any online source for learning today. Teachers' preparation is highly demanded in online teaching. One way to determine a teacher's quality is their readiness to teach (Mukmin et al., 2024). When teachers embrace the idea of diving into online learning, they're not just taking a step into a new way of teaching, it also opening the door to a whole world of exciting possibilities. Imagine the transformative power of an LMS application, or the engaging nature of virtual conferences that bring classroom discussions to life in a new and dynamic way. There's also the wealth of knowledge found in learning videos, the fun of educational games, and the rich content offered through e-modules, each adding a unique. Teacher training and preparation in dealing with new models of learning will require greater facilities and funds than learning using traditional methods (Sagala et al., 2022). This is supported by Damayanti (2020), who states that some platforms require users to pay a price or subscription to enjoy some of the additional features provided. Rahayu & Wirza (2020) they reported encountering various hurdles while navigating online learning, including a shortage of technical know-how, inadequate infrastructure and resources, challenges in teaching methods employed by instructors, and overarching economic difficulties. With good preparation, teachers must also be able to adapt to changes that can occur at any time. Adopting and using online programs requires a versatile mindset it calls for a flexible mindset that challenges the very essence of traditional learning (Camacho & Legare, 2021).

This research also found that problems in using the application are related to the problem of application features, which are different between free and paid accounts. With various kinds of online applications that can be utilized by teachers and the increasing sophistication of technology, there are more and more features that can help teachers in providing learning, but this can be hindered by the large number of online application services or learning media that require more funds for maximum features. In line with Hassan (2021) in Sabir Ahmad et al. (2021), the tools that educators rely on most often tend to come with a price tag or demand a subscription. As a result, many teachers are steering clear of free services and trial versions. These options frequently come with a whole host of limitations, such as restricted features and ticking clocks on usage. It is no wonder that they are moving towards more reliable and often costly alternatives.

Online learning in the future also offers various advantages and flexibility in education. This online platform opens up a treasure trove of opportunities, inviting countless individuals to embark on their professional journeys, allowing them to study anytime and anywhere (Trinova et al., 2022). While online education presents opportunities for enhanced flexibility, inclusivity, and innovation, it also demands addressing challenges related to digital access, pedagogical adaptation, and student engagement (Subiyantoro, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

SMP Santa Maria Banjarmasin uses many online learning applications such as Zoom, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Canva. Most of the challenges come from the lack of skill in using the Zoom feature and are hindered by time restrictions because of the free account. Canva was only given a free premium account in the second year of the pandemic. Teachers deal with these challenges by learning how to maximize all the features of Zoom and use their funds to buy premium accounts for their applications. Teachers also believe that online learning is still very relevant and beneficial for the future of education as long as teachers are prepared for any situation. Therefore, the researcher suggests conducting further research regarding the effectiveness of using specific applications for online learning. The researcher also suggests conducting further research in schools or other institutions. The researcher believes that this study has many limitations in terms of methodology, such as sample quantity and self-reported presentation of data findings. The researcher hopes for input and constructive criticism so that the researcher and this research can develop in the future. Therefore, the researcher suggests that further research use a more detailed methodology in collecting samples, analyzing data, and presenting the findings.

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