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Using E-Learning Platforms in Online Classes: A Survey on Tertiary English Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract

E-learning platforms have been widely applied in many tertiary institutions during the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic for their favorable advantages. This study employed a survey design to (1) explore certain e-learning platforms used by teachers in online classes and (2) discover their perceptions towards those tools. The open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, both conducted online, were the two primary research instruments in the study. The questionnaires discovered that English teachers from different tertiary settings were applying various information communication technology tools to their online classrooms for three distinctive purposes: providing information or delivering lessons, generating communication between teachers and students, and boosting collaboration among students. The data set gathered from the interviews revealed that teachers had positive perceptions towards the tools they were using and that their choices were reasonable based on the regulated environment, the functionality of the tools, teachers' information technology literacy, the appropriateness of the lesson contents and the utmost convenience the tools offered.

Keywords: E-learning platforms, online classrooms, tertiary English teachers' perceptions

1. Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic has unprecedentedly set in since the end of 2019, causing widespread damage on a global scale. According to a current report by the Worldometer website, among over 190 countries across the world that are extensively affected by the virus, the number of infected patients exceeds 195 million, with the death cases reaching up to 4.2 million.

In particular, in Vietnam, during the pandemic crisis, to reduce the spread of the virus and diminish its adverse consequences, certain remedial measures have been taken under the directives of the Prime Minister in almost every aspect of life. Education is not an exception, either. As a result of prolonged school lockdowns, tele-education, as an inevitable recourse proposed by the Ministry of Education, has been massively applied throughout the country to ensure the continuity of schooling. Although the virtual model of Education is not a new concept

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in the era of technological development, it was not until the pandemic broke out that this teaching and learning method started to grow in popularity, especially in tertiary levels. The statistics provided by MOET (2021) showed that up until July 2021, more than 43,000 schools have promptly switched over to virtual teaching and learning, in which tertiary institutions make up nearly 60%.

Therefore, the shift towards distance education has led to significant changes in teachers' pedagogical approaches, as teachers are the spearhead of teaching (Hoang & Le, 2021). While teachers in traditional classrooms can perform teaching activities through direct interactions with students, in online classes, they have to use e-learning platforms to reap the ultimate effectiveness of an online-delivered lesson (Schulten, 2020). In addition, according to Nguyen (2021), the integration of technology into virtual classroom environments is an ultimate necessity in the era of a technology-driven world. In his view, technological tools greatly facilitate the process of communication and interactions among students in their online classes.

In order to explore certain e-learning platforms employed by the teachers during their online teaching as well as delve into their perceptions towards those platforms, this study entitled ***"Using E-Learning Platforms in Online Classes: A Survey on Tertiary English Teachers' Perceptions"*** was conducted.

2. Literature review

2.1 E-Learning

2.1.1 Definition of e-learning

The definition of e-learning has been modified and developed to suit technological innovation and the needs of learners. In the broadest sense, Fee (2009, p. 16) defines e-learning as "an approach to learning and development: a collection of learning methods using digital technologies, which enable, distribute and enhance learning." It can be said that digital supports play an important part in enabling and boosting learners' learning experience in a digital environment. According to Ratheeswari (2012, p. 52), e-learning is a system in which formal teaching processes can take place in or out of the classroom using electronic resources such as computers or the Internet. Booth Fee (2015) and Ratheeswari (2012) agree that technological assistance plays a pivotal part in facilitating the learning process. Regarding e-learning in tertiary education, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) narrows down the definition of e-learning by emphasizing the importance of using information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance and/or support learning. In this sense, ICT can be used as a useful tool to support the learning process in traditional classes and in an online environment. (OECD, 2005, p. 11). ICT tools widely vary from the most basic use of computers, emails, lecture notes online to web-based solutions such as online courses, online discussion, assessment, and online projects. In this paper, the definition of e-learning adapted from the two authors' theories, Fee (2009) and Ratheeswari (2012), helps students improve their learning beyond the classroom through devices including computers or the Internet.

2.1.2 Classification of e-learning

As stated by Sangrà et al. (2012, pp. 146-149) in their research, they classify e-learning into four main groups, including (1) technical – driven: use of technological support to deliver learning; (2) delivery-system – oriented: accessibility of learning through various electronic means; (3) communication-oriented: e-learning as an effective approach to enable Communication, interaction and collaboration between learners and teacher or their peers and (4) educational – paradigm – oriented: learning process facilitated by utilizing latest multimedia technologies and the Internet to better students' learning experience. In other words, e-learning is a method to deliver educational content by making full use of electronic tools to facilitate communication, interaction and collaboration during the learning process. Liaw and Huang (2003, pp.27-32) describe e-learning on the ground of the following features:

- Multimedia environment
- Integration of various kinds of information
- Collaborative Communication
- Networks for accessing information
- Implementation of different kinds of computer operating systems

In a similar way, Wilson (2012, p. 162) illustrates these components as strands with a detailed explanation as follows:

Table 1

The characteristics of e-learning components (Wilson, 2012, p. 162)

Strand	Characteristics
Administration/ information provision	● Course documents are provided online ● Appointment booking may be provided online
Communication	● Communication is generally based exclusively on online ● Discussion occurs through forums ● There may be the use of web conferencing
Collaboration	● Use of social media tools ● Co-creation of multimedia online

According to Wilson (2012), there are three main factors relating to e-learning: administration or information provision, communication, and collaboration. The first one focuses on delivering course documents to students and arranging class appointments provided online. The second element relates to some online learning activities such as instructor-student or student-student communication, discussions or web-based conferences. The last factor is that teachers can make full use of social media tools to facilitate collaboration among students. Besides, in terms of

collaboration, Tsourela et al. (2015) adds that learners can actively and cooperatively take part in the learning process to create knowledge, not just passing the course and getting the certificate.

This is supported by Sangrà et al.(2012), Liaw & Huang (2018), who agree that information provision, communication, and collaboration are the three main components of e-learning. It is obvious that e-learning makes the learning process more active, interesting and enjoyable (Liaw et al., 2007), allow learners to receive a more flexible and effective way to access the learning resources and encourage a high interaction and collaboration level between teachers and students or among students (Tao et al., 2006).

2.2 E-Learning platforms

Liu et al. (2013, p. 230) stated that e-learning platforms exploit various devices (desktop, laptop, mobile services), network technologies (WIFI, cellular services) and software platforms (operating system, network protocols and services) to enable the role of the three main users – teacher, student and administrator (Ouadoud et al., 2016). Any e-learning platform should have three main roles, namely (1) the student's role (studying the course, completing the assignment and accessing collaborative working); (2) the teacher's role (designing and delivering online courses, following the progress of learners, monitoring activities); (3) administrator's role (managing the site and monitoring all education process). Ouadoud, Chkouri, Nejjari, & EL Kadiri (2016) indicated that the e-learning platform is a computer device that groups several tools and ensures the educational lines. Indeed, e-learning platforms vary in different applications, including Google app platforms such as Gmail, Google classroom, Google Meet, and so on, along with social networking sites like Zalo, Facebook, Viber and so forth. As Enis (2013) pointed out, the popularity and functionality of Google app sites help increase collaboration among students and faculty. Ravi Shankar (2012) added that online platforms (Google classroom, Google Meet, and so on) are designed to provide learners free and flexible access to learning regardless of geographical, physical, and time boundaries. Social network sites are construed as "networked communication platforms in which participants (1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; (2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and (3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site." (Boyd & Ellison, 2013, p. 158). It can be seen that students can receive momentous benefits from social web-based sites. Gikas & Grant (2013) also shared the positive viewpoints to these tools providing useful platforms where students can interact, communicate, and share emotional intelligence and look for people with other attitudes. Moreover, social media sites create room for students to interact, share the contents with peers, and also assist in building connections with others (Cain, 2008). Gewerc, Montero, and Lama (2014) concluded in their study that social networking sites provide ample chances for collaboration and visibility. In addition to collaboration, these social media platforms have become effective tools putting instructors and learners collaborate into a rich, interactive environment (Huffman, 2013). The collaboration and connection between teachers

and learners or among learner peers were also illustrated in a positive way through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Ning and so on in the research paper, which was scrutinized by Tran (2021).

2.3 Integration of E-learning platforms into online classes

With the blooming of multimedia and information technologies in the last decades, particularly the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the traditional teaching and learning process has undergone dramatic changes. The introduction and expansion of various e-learning platforms have been launching many changes at the tertiary level, particularly in terms of educational delivery and support processes (Dublin, 2013).

Liu et al. (2013, pp. 230-231) addressed six functions that should be ensured when integrating e-learning platforms: communication, collaboration, class management, assessment, learning activity management, and Learning Object Management.

- **Communication**: facilitating the exchange of information between teachers and students or between students and students. E-learning platforms are used to support asynchronous communication (email, discussion board) and synchronous communication (instant message, video conference).
- **Collaboration**: encouraging cooperation among students to complete learning activities or achieve educational goals (projects, games).
- **Class management:** supporting teachers in planning and organizing learning activities. E-learning platforms are applied to manage students' profiles, assist project group formation, and submit assignments or group reports online.
- **Assessment:** allowing teachers to evaluate and understand students' processes and also to provide feedback online.
- **Learning activity management:** facilitating teachers to design learning activities.
- **Learning object management:** helping teachers to create and delivering learning objects to students.

As for a wide range of functions, teachers can choose the most suitable e-learning platforms to meet the different learning objectives, effectively deliver the lessons to the students and actively manage the learning activities as well.

2.4 Perceptions of e-learning platforms from previous studies

According to Michener, Delamater and Myers (2004, p. 106), perception is referred to as "constructing and understanding of the social world from the data we get through our senses." In another way, perception is defined as the way people regard, understand or interpret something (Oxford Dictionary, 2012). In other words, when people perceive something, they consider and give their opinions on that thing based on their experiences. In this research, teachers' perceptions were illustrated through their experiences using e-learning platforms. Teachers have evaluated advantages and disadvantages while choosing these tools in teaching

and learning as well—some previous studies conducted to investigate teachers' perceptions on using E-learning platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, Almahasees et al. (2021) researched "faculty's and students' perceptions of Online Learning during COVID-19" with 50 faculty members and 280 students. From the findings, members from the faculty showed that they had used some E-learning platforms in teaching, such as Zoom (40%), Microsoft Team (60%). Besides, Facebook pages were used as a tool to exchange information and communicate between teachers and students. One more thing, teachers shared that they have got ample computer literacy to be ready for online classes thanks to being trained thoroughly for teaching virtually; however, teachers need to have thorough preparation to ensure stimulating interactive online classes. Another research performed by Mounjid et al. (2021) indicated a contradictory opinion on teachers' IT skills. 145 teachers (41.7%) admitted that they lack the technical knowledge for online Education and 136 teachers (39.1%) feel under a large amount of pressure due to increasing workload. Consequently, online teaching in their research has had little effectiveness for students. Additionally, the lack of staff's limited technology skills gained a high percentage in the research conducted by Zalat et al. (2021). Priyadarshani and Jesuiya (2021) studied teachers' perceptions of online teaching methods during Covid-19 at the Open University of Sri Lanka. The research was conducted with 39 teachers who were involved in virtual teaching. The teachers pointed out some of the popular e-learning platforms used in online classes, including Zoom with the most used (51%), Microsoft Team with the second most prevalent (35,9%) and Google Classroom with the least used (2.5%). Moreover, 77.5% of the teachers responded that they have enough confidence in their ICT knowledge. In comparison, there should have completed online courses without preparation for teachers to decrease their overwhelming teaching duties.

2.5. Research Questions

In order to achieve the above-mentioned purposes, the two following research questions were formulated.

a) What types of E-learning platforms do teachers use in their online classes?

b) What are teachers' perceptions of those platforms?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research settings and participants

To ask for teachers' participation in the study, the researcher designed online questionnaires and then randomly delivered them to groups of teachers on social networking sites. This means the sampling method was convenience sampling. The number of responses collected was 48, meaning that there was voluntary participation of 48 English teachers from five universities located in HCMC, namely Banking University (8%), Ton Duc Thang University (28%), Van Lang University (17%), Nguyen Tat Thanh University (22%), Saigon University (25%). According to the survey, the teacher participants aged all above 24 have had at least two-year

experiences in English teaching at the universities. In addition, they admitted that they had had little experience in online teaching prior to last year's Coronavirus pandemic outbreak.

3.2 Design of the study

The study was a survey design that was carried out based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. Firstly, the open-ended questionnaire was primarily created on the platform of Google Forms and was directly delivered through its link to groups of tertiary teachers on networking sites with the aim of investigating certain e-learning platforms currently applied in their online classes. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions, divided into two parts. In part A, there were three questions about the teachers' background information: age, teaching experience, and current educational institutions. In part B, the teachers were asked to list out certain e-learning platforms they were currently employed to provide information for their students, maintain communication with them, and create collaboration among students in their online classes. Secondly, one-on-one interviews were also conducted online via Zoom cloud meetings to explore the teachers' choices of the platforms and the reasons for their preferences. Eight teachers voluntarily agreed to share in the interviews. The time and date for each interview meeting were decided based on the teachers' convenience. The interviews lasted from 40 to 55 minutes.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

The statistics collected through the online questionnaire were then analyzed and illustrated in the form of bar charts by using Microsoft Excel version 2016, whereas the data gathered from the interviews was descriptively presented into themes so as to reach the research objectives.

4. Results and discussion

This chapter illustrates the descriptive statistics presented in bar charts with the aim of displaying the participant responses from the questionnaire analyzed regarding Information provision, Communication and Collaboration, respectively. Moreover, insightful perceptions of the eight interviewees about using such e-learning platforms were included to clarify the objectives of the research. The results' discussion section would be followed to investigate the correlation between the analyzed results and the theoretical grounds presented in the part "Introduction" and "Literature Review."

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Results from the questionnaire

4.1.1.1 Information provision

The chart below represents several e-learning platforms the teachers use to provide students with essential information prior to their online classes.

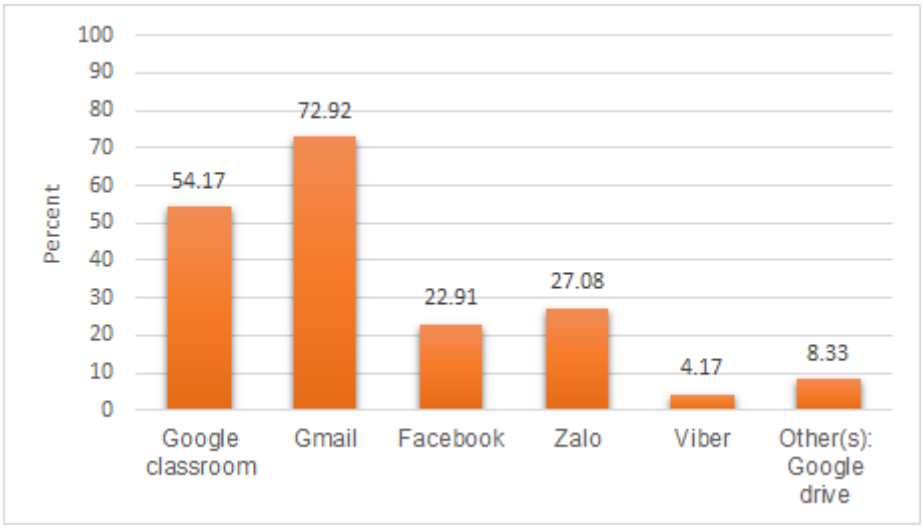

Figure 1. E-learning platforms are used to provide students with learning documents.

A closer glance at the chart reveals that the teacher participants were using a variety of platforms at the administration or information provision stage. Among them, Gmail and Google classroom are the two most preferred platforms. Specifically, Gmail accounts for 72.92% of the teachers' choices, followed by Google classroom with over a half. The proportion of teachers currently using Facebook and Zalo takes up approximately one-fourth while the two lowest percentages go to Viber or Google drive with roughly 4% and 8%, respectively.

In the questionnaire, one open-ended question asked the teachers to specify the kind of information they provided to the students by using the above platforms. The responses were diverse among the teacher participants. In detail, all of the teachers claimed that e-learning platforms had become effective tools to inform announcements on online class discipline, progress scores, make-up classes, etc. Most of the teachers (45 teachers) pointed out that they were taking advantage of their e-learning platforms to provide students with learning materials such as teachers' visual slides, e-textbooks, answer keys to exercises. 40 out of 48 teachers shared that the tools are used to send class syllabi to students, and half of the teachers wrote that they were informing the students of class meeting schedules through these e-learning platforms.

Also, via the questionnaire, it was found out that teachers were employing the aforementioned platforms at different frequencies.

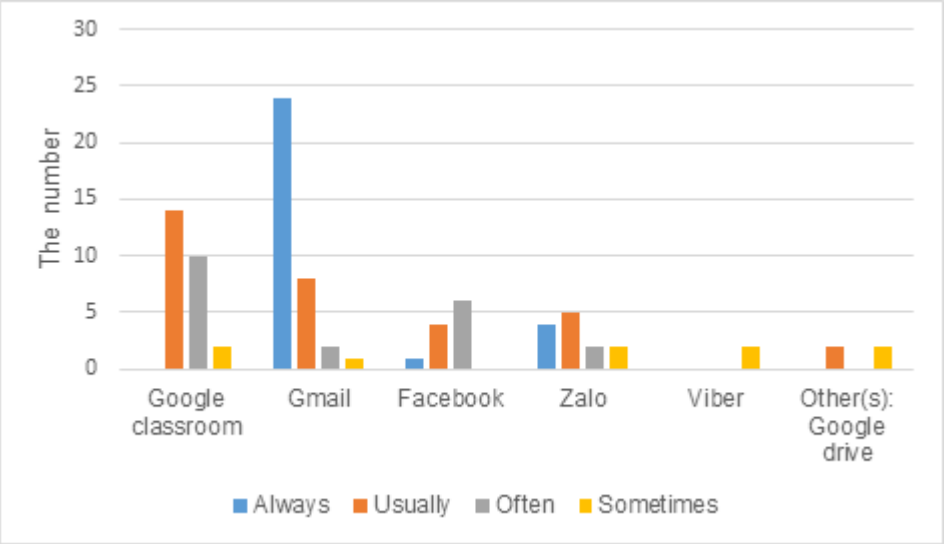

Figure 2. Frequency of using the e-learning platforms for information provision

The data result indicates that the teachers prefer Google classroom and Gmail to the other platforms. Additionally, the highest number of teachers (24 teachers) always use Gmail to send their students tasks or assignments while only one teacher sometimes does. Google classroom stands at the second position of the teachers' choices, with 14 out of 26 teachers favoring this tool. Facebook and Zalo show a similar number of teachers who usually use these tools for material distribution. On the other hand, Viber and Google Drive are the two least frequently used platforms by teachers.

4.1.1.2 Communication

Similarly, regarding communication, there were some common e-learning platforms reported to be used by the teachers to enhance the communicative connection between teachers and students as well as among students to exchange information related to the lessons. The chart below shows the percentages of different e-learning tools used as means of communication.

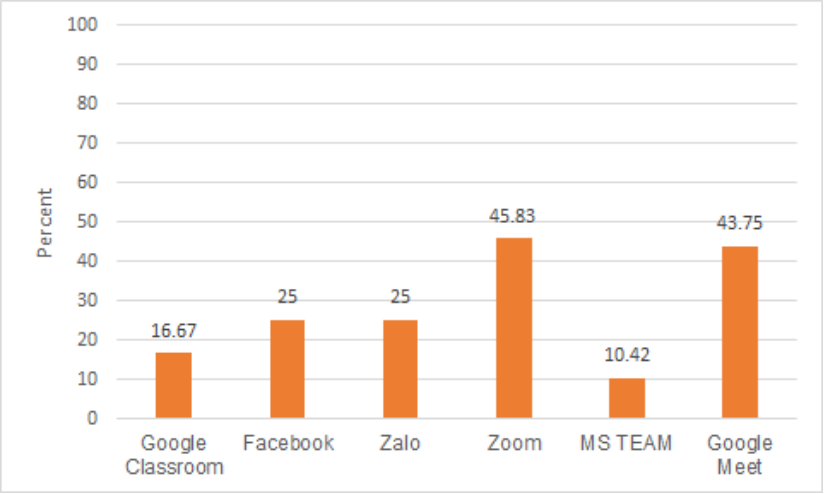

Figure 3. E-learning platforms used to communicate in online classes

It is clear that Zoom and Google Meet are used more frequently than the other platforms during teacher's lesson delivery (45.83% and 43.75% in the order). Facebook and Zalo show the same proportion with 25% each. MS TEAM, meanwhile, has the lowest rate with just over 10%.

The responses from the questionnaire reveal that communication takes place in various forms during teachers' online classes. It is statistically shown that most of the participants (44 teachers) disclosed that they were utilizing the e-learning tools mentioned above to deliver the lessons online. It, accordingly, means that two-sided communication between teachers and students is constantly created through direct or indirect interactions during the lessons. More than half of the teachers responded that they were using certain e-learning platforms to create opportunities for their students to communicate in speaking lessons. What is more, about one-third of the participants shared that they were making use of these platforms to let their students discuss the problems related to the learning tasks in pairs or groups.

The frequency of using the above tools to create different kinds of communication is varied, which is shown in the following chart.

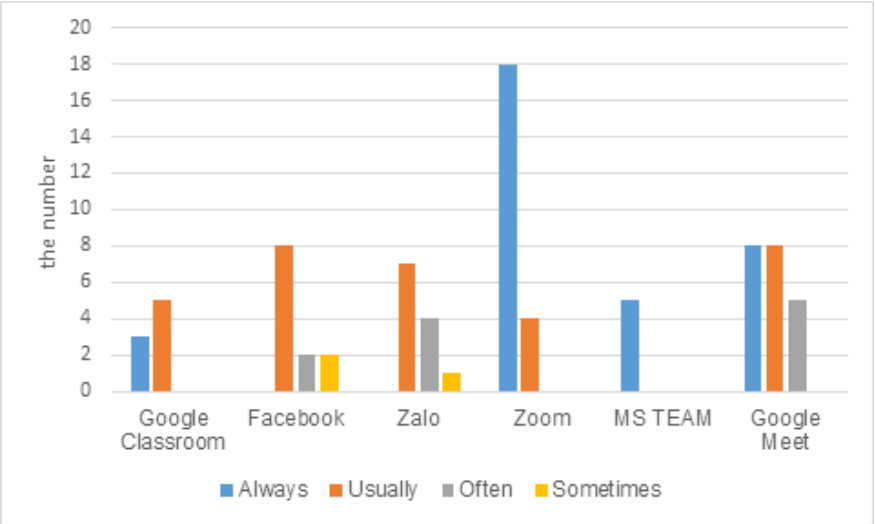

Figure 4. Frequency of using the e-learning platforms for communication

As can be seen, Zoom is the platform that most teachers always use to conduct distance teaching, whereas Facebook and Zalo are not invariably employed in online classes. Google meet and MS TEAM came as a second and third priority in teachers' choices of the tools for communication. On top of that, Google classroom, which is a decent means of indirect communication between teachers and students, is preferred by a few participants in their every online lesson.

4.1.1.3 Collaboration

Pertaining to collaboration, below is an array of platforms that teachers opt for in their online teaching.

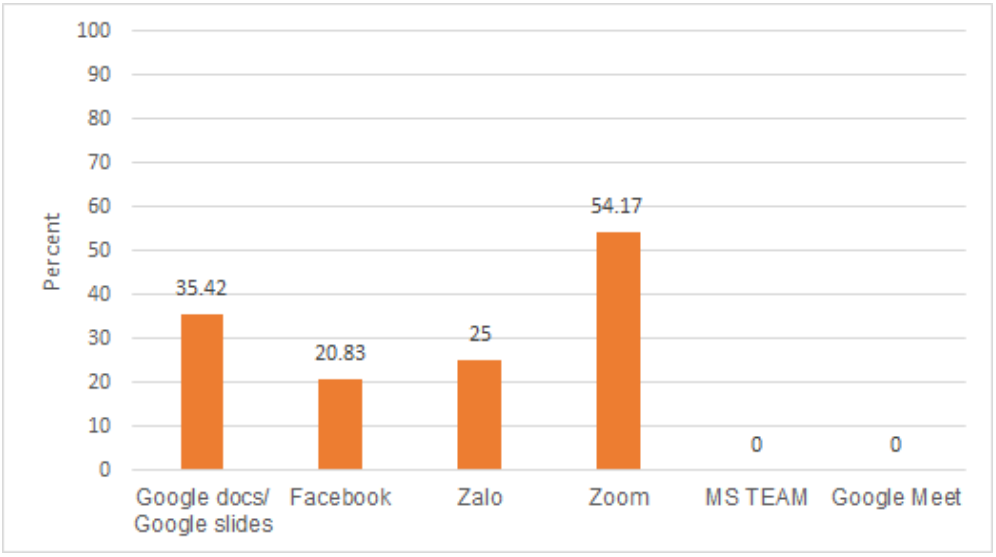

Figure 5. E-learning platforms used to create collaboration among students

From the statistics, there are only four platforms perceived to be used by teachers in their virtual classrooms. Apparently, Zoom was principally used by teachers to create collaboration, followed by Google platforms. By contrast, social media tools such as Facebook and Zalo took a back seat with 20.83% and 25%, respectively.

As shared in the questionnaire, the teacher participants informed that the purpose of using these means was to create collaborative group work. Specifically, nearly 70% of the teachers admitted that they let their students use the platforms to do exercises in groups, while 44.6% believed that these tools were useful for students to exchange cross-group feedback on writing. Only small numbers of teachers were making use of the platforms to have students carry out group projects (18%) and create group Powerpoint slides for oral presentation (22%).

These networked platforms were analyzed with a various range of frequencies in the following figure.

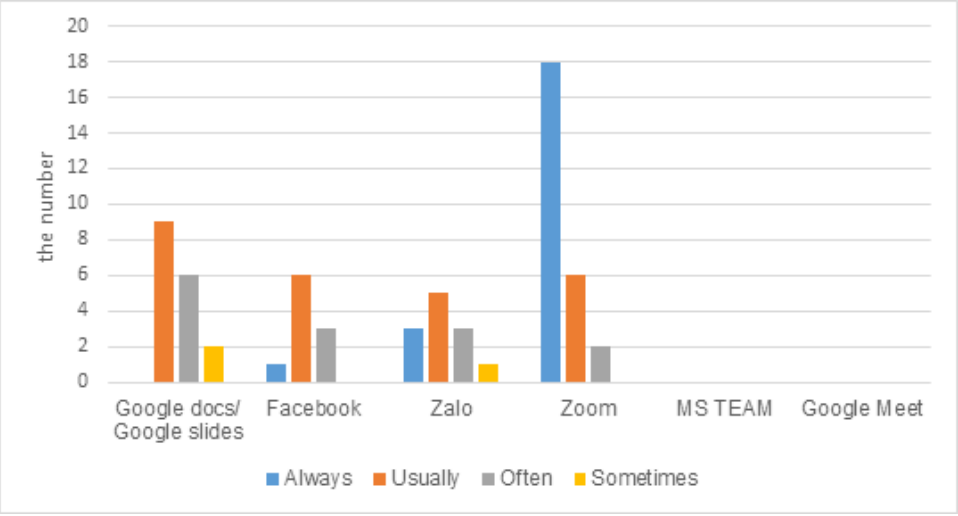

Figure 6. Frequency of using the e-learning platforms to create collaboration

It is clear that Zoom is the most preferred platform for collaboration purposes, with 18 responses from the totality of 48 teachers. On the other hand, Facebook and Zalo are infrequently used to facilitate collaboration among students in online classes. Although not always used, Google platforms are chosen by more teacher participants when it comes to what means should be used to support students' collaborative work.

4.1.2. Results from the interviews

Overall, the teacher participants had positive perceptions towards the platforms they were using in their online classes. The choices for the e-learning platforms were primarily derived from the functionality of the tools, the convenience they offer, the suitability of the lesson content, and the school's requirement.

4.1.2.1. Teachers' perceptions of platforms used for information provision

First, it was quantitatively shown that Gmail and Google classroom were the teachers' two most favorite means of providing information. The interview discovered that teachers' preferences for these platforms stem from their systematic storage of information.

> I always send learning materials and anything similar to my students via Gmail. They are kept in place in Gmail, so whenever the students want to find the materials again, they can quickly and conveniently do it by sorting out my email address on the platform. (T6)

> Google classroom is such an ideal channel to provide my students with learning schedules or class syllabi. I usually create a topic in Google classroom, where I upload anything related to the lesson for the day. In this way, the lesson content and other related documents are arranged logically in alignment with the topics of the teaching day. The students, hence, can visit and access them easily. (T4)

Furthermore, some other interviewees shared that they put Gmail on top priority over the other platforms because of its formality. The point is, in essence, to create discipline-based virtual classrooms at the tertiary level where formality is a must.

> I choose Gmail rather than social networking platforms such as Zalo or Facebook simply because Gmail offers a more formal environment for Education. I see that Facebook or Zalo are just mostly used for playing, not studying. (T2)

A few teacher participants, by contrast, favored certain social networking sites such as Zalo, Facebook or Viber because of the instantaneous conveyance of information brought by the platforms.

> Honestly, Zalo is so popular that everyone has an account. I can send a message on the Zalo group with my students and receive responses and feedback on the spot. Zalo is such a useful tool for sending information related to the lesson to my students. (T6)

> Some of my students informed me that they did not have a Gmail account. However, all of them have Facebook accounts. Therefore, I decided to use this social networking site to post the class meeting time as well as other necessary announcements. (T5)

4.1.2.2. Teachers' perceptions of platforms used for communication

Communication is perceived to take up most of the online class time. In the interviews, it is clear that there are three primary reasons accounting for the teachers' preferences for these e-learning tools.

First, some teachers stated that they were merely allowed to use certain platforms to conduct online teaching as requested by their schools. As a teacher from Ton Duc Thang University shared, English teachers in his departments were required to choose either Zoom or Google meet to deliver their lessons online. Meanwhile, another teacher from Van Lang University claimed that she was supposed to use MS TEAM as it was the only platform on which the whole university's online teaching system was running.

> In my university, we have to use MS TEAM and have no other choices. My school supplied each teacher with a paid account, and we can use it free of charge with full features available, which is so convenient… (T3)

Second, the limited features of the tools discourage the teachers from choosing them during their online teaching. A teacher interviewee confirmed that she would rather choose Google Meet than Zoom because the former is more convenient in terms of meeting time limits.

> My school didn't make us choose any platforms to teach online. We were free to choose whatever suited us. In my case, I am using Google meet to teach as it's free and does not limit the meeting time. Many others are using free Zoom accounts, and it's so inconvenient. The meetings stop every 40 minutes, which interrupts the flow of the lesson… (T7)

By contrast, another teacher participant favored Zoom over Google meet since the first platform was more functional than the latter, as in her opinion.

> My department suggested using either Zoom or Google meet for online teaching. However, I like Zoom more. I find it more convenient to teach via Zoom. It has many useful features that helpfully facilitate the teaching and learning process. For example, in Zoom, I can share audios with the students with ease or divide them into groups for discussion using the function called Breakout rooms. Google meet does not have such features, though... (T4)

Third, the teacher's IT literacy is also a decisive factor in the teachers' choices of the tools. Strikingly, some teachers confessed to their fear of technology in distance teaching. As a result, they were unwilling to employ certain platforms with complicated features.

> Honestly, I am so terrible at IT. It was so challenging to start teaching online. I tried out different tools and chose the simplest one, which is Google meet. I know Zoom is better because it has more functions. But it was so hard for me to handle some technical problems. I tried teaching by Zoom once, and one student just kept doodling on the screen I was sharing. I didn't know how to stop it, so I gave up using Zoom since then… (T2)

Concurring with the view, some other teachers also admitted their inability to use technology in teaching online and claimed that they were "technophobes". Consequently, they resorted to asking for help from other people to teach them how to use the basic functions of the platforms. A teacher from Saigon university was a case in point. From her sharing, she had to seek support from her twelve-year-old son on the use of Google classroom to post materials about the lessons. Understandably, those with telltale signs of nervousness about technology are middle-aged teachers, who are far behind the times compared to younger teacher participants.

4.2.3. Teachers' perceptions of platforms used for collaboration

Regarding collaboration, the suitability of the lesson contents was perceived to be the fundamental reason why there was a variation in the teachers' choices of the platforms.

> In my online classes, I use a mix of platforms when I want to assign students some work to do together. It depends on what task or assignment it is and how big it is. If there are just speaking activities, I would choose Zoom to invite the students into different rooms for the practice. If it is a writing task, I would let them write together using Google Docs. (T4)
>
> The kinds of collaborative tasks will determine which platforms I use accordingly. For example, there are some projects in my class in which the students are supposed to present orally in front of the class. Then I let them work in groups in the Breakout rooms to work on the visual slides together with the help of Google slides… (T7)

Moreover, according to the teachers, students can collaborate during online classes or outside of class time. This means students can cooperate directly or indirectly using certain platforms they prefer whenever they can.

> I sometimes assign some tasks as homework requiring the students to do outside the class hours jointly. They are free to use any social networking sites they prefer, such as Zoom, Facebook or Zalo, to contact and work together as long as they complete the tasks in the end. My students self-plan suitable time and tools to work with and accomplish their assignments. (T5)

4.2. Discussion

In this section, analyzed results grouped into three aspects: Information provision, Communication and Collaboration, would be discussed to explore teachers' preferences of using E-learning platforms and simultaneously investigate advantages and disadvantages of using these tools through teachers' perceptions. The results from the questionnaire with respect to Information provision indicated that six e-learning working sites (Google classroom, Gmail, Facebook, Zalo, Viber, Google drive) more or less receive teachers' and students' inclination. Furthermore, these platforms were chosen as announcement tools or material distribution ones. The teachers' responses made close connections with Wilson's (2012) and Liu et al. 's (2013) theories about the first component, Information provision or Administration, mentioned in the "Literature Review" part. Responses from the teachers' interviews showed that there are different perceptions in choosing these tools. Many teachers chose their favorable platforms like Gmail or Google classroom because of these tools' usefulness and formality. However, many universities indeed set a rule to deliver necessary documents to students via Gmail and Google classroom. The two tools, therefore, have become teachers' must-use choices. Additionally, many of the teachers choose Google classroom and Gmail because they perceive the others which are suitable for recreational purposes in lieu of learning aims. Consequently, they expressed doubtful perceptions about social networking platforms such as Facebook or Zalo. By contrast, social media platforms were perceived positively by some younger teacher users thanks to their quick feedback with the aim of exchanging information. This result is consistent with the theory that Cain (2008) discussed in part "Literature Review." In general,

these e-learning tools used for online-delivered lessons or documents show extremely effective functions and aid students in accessing learning materials efficiently. This result from the interviews is in accordance with Schulten's (2020) opinion stated in part "Introduction."

In relation to communication, teachers reported in the questionnaire that both Google app platforms and social networking tools create an active learning environment for students to interact and communicate content related to the lessons, which is similar to Gikas & Grant's (2013) viewpoint about the strong points of these tools. As Huffman (2013) mentioned in the theoretical section, students were sent to interactive learning environments thanks to social media sites. This was proven in the interviews when teachers gave their answers on using these tools. Teachers also express insightful perceptions in terms of strengths and weaknesses when considering choosing the learning platform in online classes. Teachers choose Google Meet instead of the other tools because it increases accessibility without time restriction, which is in line with Ravi Shankar's (2012) concept stated in part "Literature Review" about the advantage of Google app platforms. Sometimes problems arise from technology users who lack advanced knowledge to work with innovative platforms easily. This finding is intimately linked to the findings shown in the studies of Mounjid et al. (2021) and Zalat et al. (2021) but yielded the seemingly contradictory finding with findings presented in the research of Almahasees et al. (2021) and Priyadarshani and Jesuiya (2021) mentioned in the second part. The teachers, hence, encounter difficulties in handling and manipulating top-notch functions of e-learning platforms.

Regarding the last component, collaboration, four out of six e-learning platforms took teachers' options as tools to support students in dealing with group work or pair work in the questionnaire result. Generally speaking, Google docs/ Google slides, Facebook, Zalo, and Zoom have become effective tools to comprehensively create a dynamic learning environment and promote students' collaborative ability. The findings are completely suitable with the theory Liu et al. (2013) implied in part "Literature Review" about functions of e-learning platforms. Besides that, the teacher respondents from the interview clearly show that students' choice of learning platforms depends on their needs. For example, students choose Google docs or Google slides because these applications allow multiple editors to simultaneously make changes to the same document at the same time. Students find this feature extremely useful and flexible to develop cooperation. In conjunction with these tools' usefulness, students can visually see all contents that other students are manipulating. This finding is closely related to Gewerc, Montero, and Lama's (2014) conclusion specified in part "Literature Review." What is more, students can approach these tools like Zoom, Facebook or Zalo to work together whenever the time is convenient for the whole group. This result is in correspondence with Ravi Shankar's (2012) concept given in the part "Literature Review."

5. Conclusion

In summary, the study found out that there is a wide range of e-learning platforms used by tertiary teachers in their online classes for different purposes, namely information provision, communication and collaboration creation. Generally, the participants have positive perceptions of these tools and make reasonable choices to use them to facilitate the process of online teaching and learning depending on the school's requirement, the functionality of the platforms, teachers' IT literacy and the suitability of the task types.

Based on these findings, it is pedagogically implied that teachers should be sufficiently equipped with IT-related knowledge and skills so that they are better prepared for their distance teaching. This can be achieved through practical workshops organized by the departments or schools to provide training about necessary IT skills and particular platforms they are supposed to use in their virtual classrooms. In addition, it is advisable for teachers to give students adequate instructions on certain e-learning platforms prior to the start of online classes to ensure students' efficient use of the tools in their learning. However, more than anyone, students also need to search for and equip themselves with fundamental IT knowledge to take full advantage of the e-learning platforms. Finally, as it is hard for teachers to manage students' learning progress in large-sized online classes, students are encouraged to take active roles in collaborative work when assigned by their teachers so that distraction and procrastination can be avoided to the fullest extent.

Regarding the limitation of the study, as the study was limited to the tertiary contexts in Vietnam, the findings are not used to generalize the research issue. Therefore, it is internally valid within the given contexts and just makes a humble contribution to the research on the same field.

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