

EFL TEACHERS' PERCEIVED EFFICACY OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN VARIED ONLINE ENGLISH CLASSES IN A HIGHER EDUCATION

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: October 2023 Revised: November 2023 Published: January 2024	<i>As the Covid-19 pandemic progressed, such measures disrupted schools and universities. Leaders of educational institutions identified online learning as the best option for students and teachers to continue their education when they were unable to attend school. Although EFL students' and teachers' attitudes toward online learning were much discussed in the context of higher education, little evidence addresses how EFL teachers practice digital platforms in various EFL programs. This study aimed to investigate numerous digital platforms utilized by EFL teachers for online learning and the purposes in using those platforms. It also tried to find out the most frequently used platforms during the pandemic. Using a qualitative approach, this study involved ten EFL teachers from the English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) of all faculties in a state Islamic institute in Indonesia. Through a closed and open questionnaire, this study found that all EFL teachers combined multiple digital platforms (the college's e-learning platform developed from Moodle, WhatsApp group, YouTube, Google Form, Google Meet, Zoom meeting, Google Drive, Socrative, and Quizziz) for various purposes in online classroom activities. In addition, college's e-learning platform developed from Moodle, WhatsApp group, and YouTube were found to be the most frequently used due to the benefits for online learning. In light of these findings, a discussion of the research implications for institutions of higher education and potential future researchers is presented.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

These days, online learning which is also known as e-learning (Christopherson, 2020; Gonzalez & St.Louis, 2018) has almost completely replaced traditional teaching methods particularly given how the pandemic has dispersed teachers all across the world. In response to this issue, almost all Indonesian schools, colleges, and universities have been occupying online learning. Due to the alteration from face-to-face to face-to-screen online teaching engagement (Farrell, 2021), English teachers have been forced to abruptly switch to delivering their lessons via online platforms (Al-Zaabi, 2021; Christopherson, 2020). According to Anderson (2008), in online learning, some forms of technology such as computers, tablets, and smartphones requiring Internet connection are used by the learners who are at a distance from the teachers or instructors. In other words, time zones, location, and distance are not issues. As the Internet's ubiquity and utility have grown in recent years, online learning has become more and more popular today. The communication in online learning (Gonzalez & St.Louis, 2018) can be done through synchronous learning environment (at the same time or live) using media such as Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, or

asynchronous (no timing requirement) learning environment via e-mail, lecturer's online notes, and videos uploaded in a certain Learning Management System (LMS) accessible anytime (Christopherson, 2020; Perveen, 2016).

Synchronous online learning that takes place simultaneously through electronic devices provides an opportunity for teacher-student and student-student interaction and collaboration in the same real time. It resembles a regular classroom in that webcams and class discussion features are utilized. Lessons can be saved in an electronic library. With the preserved e-library, students can access and replay the teacher's explanation as many times as necessary to learn the content (Perveen, 2016). Students might be engaged in e-activities for longer periods of time during synchronous sessions because of the presence of the teacher and other students and teachers can see how they are doing during the learning process (Hrastinski, 2008; Wdowik, 2014; Yamagata-Lynch, 2014). Students can use immediate feedback and answers to help them solve any problems they might have while learning. They can have a more human experience and connect with people all over the world for a low cost by using facial expressions and voice tones (Perveen, 2016).

Asynchronous online learning, on the other hand, enables students to utilize their higher order learning skills since they can think about a subject for a longer amount of time, which may lead to the development of divergent thinking and the reduction of shyness. (Perveen, 2016). A constructed response replaces spontaneity of expression. As a result, asynchronous space promotes self-paced, student-centered learning, and independent supplemented paired with synchronous instruction (Murphy et al., 2011). It is commonly believed that asynchronous online learning is more student-centered than synchronous online learning since it provides students with greater flexibility. Thus, students without flexible schedules like asynchronous online learning. Students are permitted to choose their own learning schedules and are not compelled to study at specified times with other students (Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020).

A lot of research exploring learning process during pandemic revealed that the majority of students argue that online instruction provided a high-quality academic experience and that it is more academically challenging than traditional classroom instruction (Anwar & Wahid, 2021; Bagata, 2020; Wyatt, 2005). In the context of EFL in higher education, students' attitudes toward online distance learning are positive, allowing them to achieve high levels of creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, research and information fluency, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, digital citizenship, and a flexible and appropriate learning environment (Hazaymeh, 2021). As stated by Appana (2008), the flexibility of online learning is clearly valuable to many mature adults who are juggling work, family, and study obligations. They have the luxury of selecting the location and time that is most convenient for them (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014). Online learning is regarded by higher education students as positive experience in general (Anwar & Wahid, 2021; Bagata et al., 2020), a better way to learn than in traditional classrooms (Rahim & Chandran, 2021), a desire to learn something new or explore, interest, and excitement, and the digital technology usage advancement and adaptation (Mulyani et al., 2021), flexible and effective ways to learn (Laili & Nashir, 2021; Sudewi, 2021), personalization for allowing students to choose their own learning path and pace (Krishnapatria, 2020), a satisfying result (Zou et al., 2021), positive experiences and convenience in operating 4 out of 10 popular online learning applications (Hendrawaty et al., 2021), even students' critical thinking (Rinekso & Muslim, 2020) and writing improvement (Surayatika, 2019).

Despite those advantages of EFL online learning achievement in higher education, bad internet access, technical problems, lack of physical interactions and engagement between students and teachers (Anwar & Wahid, 2021; Hazaymeh, 2021; Mulyani et al.,

2021; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Rahim & Chandran, 2021), burdensome bandwidth quota (Nasution & Ahmad, 2020), less motivation and more difficult conversation practice (Laili & Nashir, 2021), the constraints on learning material explanation and absorption, and the effects of social media (Mulyani et al., 2021), high expenses of IT tools, absence of infrastructures, and lack of ICT expertise among teachers and students (Rahim & Chandran, 2021) are perceived by the students to be the obstacles to integrating online EFL instruction in higher education.

Due to the lack of traditional classroom instruction and individual engagement as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, it is crucial to investigate not only the issues faced by EFL students but also those faced by EFL teachers with the online learning system employed at the higher education level. A study conducted by Nugroho et al. (2021) reveal that the key challenges for EFL higher education teachers have been the lack of an e-learning platform, a lack of student interest and involvement, and the time required to produce online learning materials. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look into kinds of platforms to deal with that can shed light on what works and what does not work in our need (Coombe & Khan, 2015).

Many studies have been conducted to meet applicable practices in online English language teaching amidst Covid-19 pandemic in higher education level. In English education study program, students believe that synchronous online discussion in the form of live-chat discussions via WhatsApp Group was effective in teaching their class in terms of content (Rinekso & Muslim, 2020). To support this, a study of Kholis (2020) found that the use of WhatsApp can help language learning be more effective and efficient because of its ease access and low technology for distance learning. Furthermore, utilizing Google Classroom was beneficial in EFL online learning in terms of making students disciplined in submitting assignments (Sukmawati & Nensia, 2019) and obtaining communicative feedback from their lecturers (Salam, 2020). Another platform considered being good to employ in this occurrence is Moodle with a high rank of students' satisfaction average and positive responses (Iswanto, 2021; Maulana & Lintang Sari, 2021) and even for their better writing performance in a blended English writing class (Vu et al., 2021). With the proper configuration, management, changes, and instructional strategy, the Moodle classroom's language-learning activities are able to meet the needs of learners at all levels of proficiency (Prasetya, 2021) since it simplifies course administration and reduces the cost and time required to offer training (Suppatsere & Dennis, 2010).

For English as a general course in higher education for online learning, Suadi (2021) investigated EFL university students' perceptions of the use of Zoom and WhatsApp in ELT. The results revealed that the virtual ELT class in the form of Zoom and WhatsApp was regarded positively by the students since they were also rated effective and efficient in terms of time, place, and cost. In addition to this, students could use WhatsApp as one of the helpful tools to learn integrated English (Dewi, 2019). To enhance more fun EFL teaching and learning activities, Google Meet for teachers' positive perspective and attitude (Souheyla, 2022), Google Classroom, and WhatsApp can be used in tandem (Sunardi, 2021). Similarly, the most popular digital platforms for general English proficiency courses, according to Malaysian university English language teachers, are online web meeting platforms for synchronous language classes, learning management systems for task-based language learning, and cross-platform instant messaging applications for interactions and class discussions (Amin & Paiman, 2022).

In online learning of English for specific purposes (ESP) program in higher education, one of the strategies used by lecturers is utilizing various learning platforms such as video call, WhatsApp group, and Zoom (Iswati, 2021). Similarly, ESP lecturers combine three media of learning platform as the best experience to provide better learning experiences for students. They are Edlink for presenting instructions and delivering assignments, Zoom

Cloud Meeting for teacher explanations and practicing specific language skills, and Telegram or social media for interactive communication in the distance learning mode by delivering quizzes/polls (Mandasari & Wulandari, 2021). Abubakar and Tsuraya (2021) argue that because many things are missing during online learning, no single perfect digital platform can replace face-to-face learning. Thus, in order to keep it running smoothly, a combination of platforms must be used. To bolster this assertion, Mandasari and Wulandari (2021) state that utilizing multiple platforms aided students in avoiding task overload and boredom, as well as in creating an attractive learning environment. Additionally, combining two or three platforms into a series of online meetings increased students' motivation.

In light of the various EFL programs in a higher education, including English education, general English, and ESP, it has become clear that few writers have been able to draw on any successful practices of digital platforms use on EFL online teaching in a higher education that cover all three programs simultaneously. As a consequence, there is no standardised approach to the delivery of digital platforms across these three programmes in higher education. This lack of uniformity presents an opportunity to fill in the gap by investigating EFL teachers' use of digital platforms for online learning amidst the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of teaching English Education, General English, and ESP in order to boost their digital supply that might be applied in the post-pandemic. To ensure the study's objectives are met, two research questions serve as a guide:

- (1) What digital platforms do EFL teachers use for online learning and for what purposes?
- (2) What digital platforms are most frequently used by EFL teachers for teaching English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP)?

RESEARCH METHOD

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 outbreak, the goal of this study was to evaluate EFL teachers' use of platforms and the most popular ones for online learning in higher education in order to teach English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP). To achieve the study's purpose, a descriptive qualitative design was employed. Qualitative research, which, according to Creswell (2007), employs a variety of measuring forms and associations to study a small number of themes or concerns, enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of their respondents' conscious engagement. This study was carried out at one of Islamic institutes in East Java, Indonesia.

Participants

The setting of the state Islamic institute was chosen because it is in one of the East Java regions that attracts students from nearby regencies and districts in pursuit of higher education. Thus, it is projected that the teaching experiences of teachers can enrich the results gathered in this study. Ten EFL teachers from all faculties teaching English Education Program and non-English Education Programs participated in this study voluntarily (General English and ESP). The participants were dominated by lecturers of 29-34 years old. Due to the fact that qualitative research frequently employs purposive sampling to achieve its research objectives (Hamied, 2017), the participants were selected based on their experiences with online teaching and learning using various digital platforms during the Covid-19 outbreak for more than a year beginning in February 2020. The majority of participants have 0-5 years of teaching experience, while the rest have 6-10 years of teaching experience. Overall, qualitative research is a good choice for this study because its main focus is on the subjective thoughts, experiences, and opinions that individuals have (Dornyei, 2007).

Instruments

Before gathering data, the participants' explicit agreement was acquired in writing format by personal communication via WhatsApp. To collect data, participants had to fill out a

questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions based on a review of the literature on the topic sent to participants through Google Form. A closed-ended section was used to elicit information about the platforms used by 10 EFL teachers in teaching English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) across all faculties, namely Religious Teaching (*Ushuluddin dan Dakwah*), Education (*Tarbiyah*), Economy and Islamic Business (*FEBI*), and Law (*Syariah*). Additionally, an open-ended section was used to elicit the participants' purposes in using the platforms during online classes.

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed in three stages: data reduction by ignoring irrelevant data, data visualization by giving notes, and conclusion. Data relevant to the present study were selected to be displayed in the form of a diagram and participants' excerpts. Finally, a conclusion based on the study's purpose was drawn to address the research questions. To ascertain the precision of the acquired data, subsequent to their completion of open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires, the participants were contacted.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This section summarizes the findings of the data analysis in relation to two research questions: EFL teachers' employment of digital platforms and their intended uses, as well as the most frequently utilized digital platforms in the context of a global pandemic for online learning. The most representative quotes from open-ended questionnaire responses by the participants are presented and coded as "P" to support the description of the findings. Then, a discussion follows the elucidation of the data and how they relate to current theories and previous studies.

EFL Teachers' Use of Digital Platforms and their Intended Uses during the Covid-19 Outbreak for Online Learning

The results of a closed-ended questionnaire administered through Google form to ten EFL teachers as participants in this study who used a variety of online learning digital platforms are summarized in Figure 1.

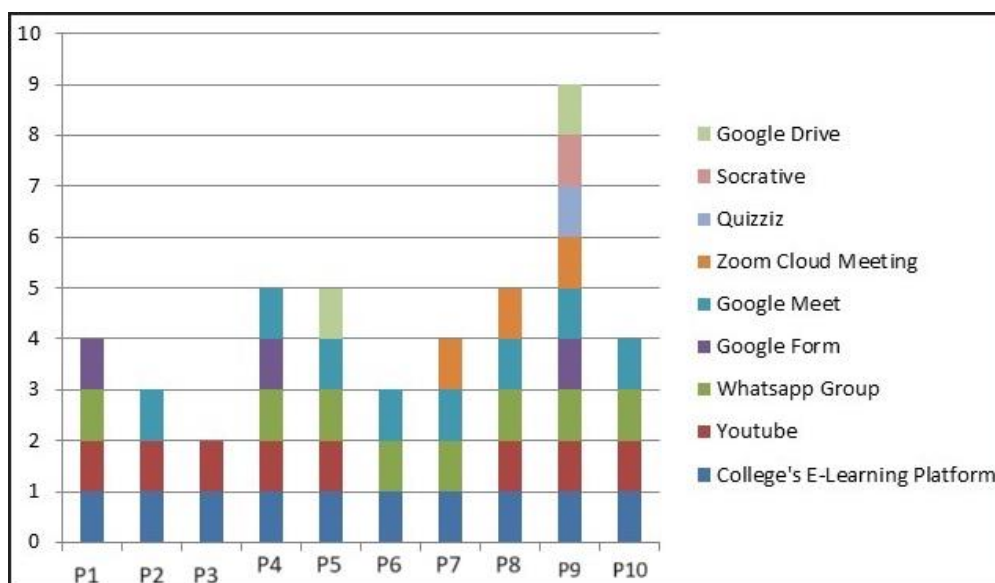


Figure 1. EFL teachers' use of digital platforms

Figure 1 depicts the analysis of data from closed-ended questionnaires administered to higher education EFL teachers regarding their use of various digital platforms for online

learning to teach English Education and non-English Education Programs (General English ESP) amidst Covid-19 pandemic. As illustrated in the chart, they all preferred the college's e-learning developed from Moodle as the main digital platform. It was reached 100% of the time. Apart from the college's e-learning platform, the participants confirmed that they used other digital platforms to assist with English online learning such as Google Meet, WhatsApp Group, Zoom cloud meeting, Quizziz, Google classroom, Socrative, Google Drive, and YouTube. To address the first research question on the intended purposes of various digital platforms utilized by EFL teachers during the Covid-19 outbreak for online learning, two important themes are classified according to the study program of EFL teachers: English Education and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP). Table 1 shows various digital platforms and their intended uses by EFL teacher (participant 9) in English Education Program.

Table 1. EFL participants' various digital platforms and its purposes in English Education Program

Digital Platforms	Purposes
College's e-learning (Moodle)	to record students' attendance
	to keep the documents in PDF and PPT
	to record teaching journals regularly
Google Drive	to store files with large size
Google Form	to assess students' skills
Video-based platform (Google Meet or Zoom cloud meeting)	to present and explain new materials synchronously
	to have a discussion such as Q and A session
	to check the students' pronunciation when speaking
	to identify and listen to those who are sharing their challenges in online learning
	to check the students' understanding of the topic discussed on the day
WhatsApp Group	to download files
	to upload files
	to send voice notes
	to have a discussion asynchronously
YouTube	to share important links
	to download videos (created by the students or others)
Others (Socrative and Quizizz)	to upload videos (created by the teachers or the students)
	to play games or quizzes related to the topics

The second theme is about EFL teachers' various digital platforms and their intended uses in non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP). Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 are the EFL teachers in General English and ESP Programs at various faculties. General English is taught in the odd semester at one of Islamic institutes in East Java, Indonesia. Then, as a continuation of General English, they teach ESP in the even semester. The primary online digital platforms that they all used was the college's e-learning platform combined with the others for a variety of activities as follows.

Table 2. EFL teacher's various digital platforms and its purposes in General English and ESP Programs

Digital Platforms	Purposes
College's e-learning (Moodle)	to track student attendance (P1, P4, P5)
	to uploaded the materials and quizzes for each meeting (P1)
	to share a file containing the materials and some links to YouTube videos (P2, P3)

	to distribute the materials and grade the students in the end of semester (P6)
	to deliver instructional materials (P7)
	to provide instructional materials and assessment (P8)
	to keep track of students' attendance and provide assignment submission for them (P10)
Google Drive	to store students' videos presentation (P10)
Google Form	to have students' evaluation (P1)
	to provide exercises for the students (P4)
Video-based platform (Google Meet or Zoom cloud meeting)	to meet and greet the students synchronously (P2, P4, P6)
	to explain new materials (P2, P4, P7, P8, P10)
	to have an urgent discussion (P5, P6)
	to grade the students' performance (P6)
	to explain the instructional assignments (P8)
WhatsApp Group	to manage a class discussion (P1)
	to lead Q and A sessions and send voice notes (P4)
	to conduct the discussion and share a link from Google Drive and YouTube of the students' presentation (P5)
	to share information for the following meeting (P6)
	to share a recorded video related to the day's topics and conduct a discussion (P8)
	to share and discuss information about the teaching and learning process (P10)
YouTube	to download videos (created by the students or others) then share its link (P10)
	to upload videos (created by the teachers or the students) then share its link (P1, P2, P5, P8)

What Digital Platforms are Most Frequently Used by EFL Teachers for Teaching English Education Program and Non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP)?

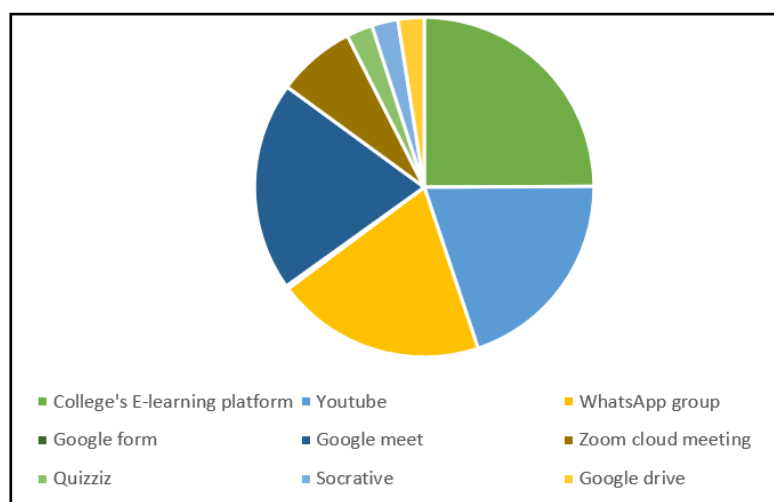


Figure 2. Most frequently used digital platforms by EFL teachers

Figure 2 depicts the most frequently used digital platforms by EFL teachers for online learning in English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) during the Covid-19 pandemic. It demonstrates that all EFL teachers in all programs (100%) used college e-learning for various online classroom activities as specified in Tables 1 and 2. Furthermore, 8 (P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10) out of 10 EFL teachers as participants in this study utilized YouTube to upload and download videos made by themselves, their students, or others and Google Meet to explain new instructional materials and

assignments, grade the students, check their pronunciation, etc. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, 8 (P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10) EFL teachers in the same range used WhatsApp Group to hold a discussion, send voice notes, share critical information, and so on. In short, college's e-learning (developed from Moodle), YouTube, and WhatsApp Group are the most frequently used digital platforms by EFL teachers for online learning in English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) amidst the Covid-19 outbreak.

Discussion

Despite the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic pushed our educational system to shift from face-to-face to online learning, the learning process can continue on a regular basis due to technological advancements that can be explored into extensive research (Moorhouse, 2020). Additionally, technological advancement results in the development of numerous digital platforms that can be used to facilitate the teaching and learning processes. All English teachers in higher education, whether in English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) have dealt with this situation. It can be an initiative to accomplish a variety of online learning platforms as well as the study's findings regarding its intended uses or purposes. The EFL teachers from all faculties in this study believed and demonstrated that they could effectively pilot online learning for higher education students during the Covid-19 pandemic by combining multiple online platforms. These include the college's e-learning platform (Moodle), WhatsApp group, YouTube, Google Form, Google Meet, Zoom meeting, Google Drive, Socrative, and Quizziz. These findings corroborate previous research indicating that a combination of multiple online learning digital platforms must be used to achieve valuable online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in higher education (Abubakar & Tsuraya, 2021; Iswati, 2021; Mandasari & Wulandari, 2021; Suadi, 2021; Sunardi, 2021).

According to Lao and Gonzales (2005), studying in an online setting via web-based platforms can be a satisfying and rich experience for both students and teachers, particularly if the tool used to conduct the class is successfully employed. This supports this study's findings that all EFL teachers both in English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) used those various platforms for numerous online learning activities or purposes fruitfully, training students' responsibility, creativity, independence, and confidence to increase the students' learning outcomes (Nguyen, 2015), as described in Table 1 and 2. The utilization of multiple digital platforms may result in the absence of an ideal digital learning medium. There are learning media that are not universally applicable to all institutional, instructor, and student settings. Furthermore, not every learning instrument is capable of supporting every type of activity that teachers create. In situations where a particular learning medium proves suboptimal, teachers are compelled to identify and investigate alternative digital platforms that may more effectively support their instructional objectives. Choosing an appropriate learning platform is undeniably a challenging endeavor (Iswati, 2021).

In terms of the most frequently used digital platforms by EFL teachers for online learning in English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) as the second research question in this study amidst the Covid-19 outbreak, college's e-learning (developed from Moodle), YouTube, WhatsApp Group, and Google Meet are found to be the most frequently utilized. Moodle has been uncovered to be the main platform for online learning in all faculties of the state Islamic institute because of its efficacy as proved by many studies in the context of higher education (Maulana & Lintangari, 2021; Prasetya, 2021; Vu et al., 2021). It is explained that Moodle has the potential to be a comprehensive and sufficient platform for application in higher education settings with high expectations for teaching facilitating interaction among its members to engage in an online synchronous discourse. The database, on the other hand, allows participants to create, maintain, and examine

a collection of records (Prasetya, 2021). Additionally, Moodle is a highly successful alternative for facilitating and enhancing students' enthusiasm to study English. This is mostly due to its accessibility and flexibility (Iswanto, 2021).

The second most frequently used digital platform in this study is WhatsApp Group which is a more cost-effective option. Several studies have established this fact (Dewi, 2019; Iswati, 2021; Kholis, 2020; Rinekso & Muslim, 2020; Suadi, 2021). Based on the study of Kholis (2020), because it was easy, light, and inexpensive, the WhatsApp app is ideal for studying English from a distance. It is also straightforward and appropriate for the students' situation, as it offers a low cost for working on the internet. The teachers can provide information as quickly as the students. They can clearly connect and speak with the students in the chat room without becoming trapped. Another advantage of WhatsApp is smart asynchronous communication. It is useful software for assisting EFL teachers in teaching virtual classes. The students can open and look at the materials whenever they want and from any location. A wide range of material is provided that can be read and re-read on the smartphone. In addition, Students can have a real-time online discussion in a WhatsApp group where they share emotional expressions like 'thank you' emoticons, support, and hopes. This creates a live learning atmosphere (Rinekso & Muslim, 2020).

The third most frequently used digital platform in this study is YouTube as a video-based platform which is extremely beneficial when the teachers explained critical concepts both synchronously and asynchronously. This finding is similar to the studies conducted by some researchers (Iswati, 2021; Mandasari & Wulandari, 2021; Suadi, 2021; Sunardi, 2021). These studies argue that YouTube can provide students and teachers with numerous authentic samples of ordinary English used by native English speakers in their daily lives that can be found in certain channels which contain videos dedicated to a specific topic or English content area. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, Google Meet is another popular digital platform in our study for a variety of online activities. It demonstrates that almost all of the EFL teachers in this study embraced Google Meet and were able to adapt to online teaching mode. This conclusion backs with Souheyla's (2022) study, which discovered that EFL teachers were expected to broadcast lectures on platforms, issue assignments, and complete assessments remotely via Google Meet in online teaching.

CONCLUSION

Relying on the findings and discussion, this study discovered that all EFL teachers for online learning in English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) amidst the pandemic used a variety of online learning digital platforms (college's e-learning platform assisted with Google Meet, WhatsApp Group, Zoom cloud meeting, Quizziz, Google classroom, Socrative, Google Drive, and YouTube) for various purposes. It is also found that college's e-learning (developed from Moodle), YouTube, WhatsApp Group, and Google Meet were the most frequently utilized by the EFL teachers for online learning in all faculties of the state Islamic institute for its benefits. The current study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding effective practices in integrating digital platforms for online learning both in English Education Program and non-English Education Programs (General English and ESP) in a higher education amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Concerning limitations and recommendations for future research, the study collected data from a single college with ten participants; therefore, it would be preferable if future research included more participants from multiple colleges to make the findings more reliable and generalizable. Additionally, it is hoped that additional research can be conducted on EFL fruitful performances for online or blended learning classes in the future, even after the Covid-19 pandemic emergency has passed.

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