EXPLORING TEACHERS’ PERCEPTION AND EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH VIRTUAL MEETING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Virtual education has exploded in recent years and become even more central to university and school life globally, especially with the advent of Covid-19. With the rise in popularity of virtual meetings, an increasing number of teachers use them to teach English speaking as an alternative to face-to-face instruction. This article examines the attitudes of teachers and the features of virtual meeting platforms that help and hinder the teaching of speaking skills. The study was conducted at several universities in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, based on a survey of twelve teachers. Seven teachers have recognized virtual meetings for their positive attitudes toward their use in teaching English speaking. Virtual meeting applications raise the most critical concerns regarding limited expression and limited variation. The most popular platforms among teachers are Zoom and Google Meet.

Keywords : speaking skill, virtual meeting, teacher perception & experience, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Today, practically all language teachers and learners use digital learning (Healey, 2018), which opens up new possibilities for effective, realistic language instruction that can excite students (Kessler, 2018). These chances include rich, real-time, and easy mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) that allow students to study whenever and wherever they want (Rawashdeh, 2021). In addition, it also would assist teachers in improving their pedagogical skills, and students who participated in digital learning were more likely to perform better than students who learned traditionally, particularly in teaching and learning English (Ahmadi, 2018).

English is considered a core subject in private and public schools as well as universities. For this reason, it is necessary for teachers to know how to teach speaking well. As teachers, we certainly rely on our students’ spoken responses of language to give us information about what they have learned in the classroom (Edge, 1999). Multiple studies have demonstrated that teachers face challenges when attempting to teach English speaking skills (Saeed Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; and Arfani & Sulistia, 2019). Saeed Al-Sobhi & Preece (2018) pointed that the English teachers in teaching speaking find some obstacles such as absence of listening & speaking tests, teaching method is not communicative, students’ attitude towards speaking and lack of necessary facilities.
In the fast developing 21st century there are various innovative technologies being introduced to teach speaking skill in the classroom. The integration of technology in the classroom is viewed as an important strategy to increase the effectiveness of the teaching learning process (Mirzajani et al., 2016). Technology is viewed essential to successful performance outcomes (i.e., student learning). In other words, effective teaching requires effective technology use (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Technological tools have been considered as ways of help students improve language skills such as speaking skill. Internet, virtual meeting, video conferencing, podcasts, videos and speech recognition software and many others are tools for teaching speaking skill.

Consequently, educators or teachers need to incorporate MALL into language teaching and learning (Burston, 2015). It is therefore vital to evaluate the perceptions of such technology for teaching. This study explores teachers’ perceptions and experience of teaching English speaking skill through virtual meeting.

The current rapid development of technology creates many new features that make it easier for users to interact, especially in teaching English. The traditional modes like face-to-face communication in both personal and professional spheres have shifted to Virtual Meeting Platforms (VMPs), particularly due to the complexity of the current situation (Oeppen et al., 2020). There are many web apps/mobile apps that enhance virtual meetings. They include, among others, Zoom, google hangout, Skype, Google Meet, GoToMeeting, Bitrix24, Cisco WebEx, Blue Jeans, Blue Button, Slack, Appear.in, webinar, etc. They can be readily downloaded.

Through this media the teacher and participants can interact anywhere. Virtual media is one of the most effective tools for conducting online learning or training (Kultawanich et al., 2015). In teaching English speaking in Indonesia, teachers in higher education mostly use zoom and google meet (Fakhruddin, 2018; Arumsari & Octaviani, 2021; and Putri & Suryaman, 2022). These applications have some advantages such as enables its users to collaborate from any device overall types of connections while providing a rich video conferencing experience, easy-to-use, provide the learning process practical, safe, efficient, (K. E. Adenegan & O. A. Abiodun, 2018 and Pratama et al., 2020).

Of the many benefits of technological developments that are increasing in the current era, those make the teaching process more effective and efficient. Including the use of virtual meetings in teaching speaking skills have many obstacles. Sun & Chen (2016) stated teaching speaking becomes one of the hardest parts to be taught in online because the interaction could not be done directly. In addition, it cannot be done smoothly somehow when the connection does not stable. Many challenges of course are faced by the teacher in teaching speaking by virtual meeting, which seems to be really interesting to be studied and revealed to the public.

There are several studies related to use technology like as virtual meeting, video conferences, video, and many others in language teaching especially speaking skill. Hung (2015) investigated video blogs can enhance EFL presentation skills. In this study, the result shows that video blogs helped the students improve overall presentation performance. Therefore, teaching media are expected to help a teacher present the lesson more clearly and attractive to be followed by the students (Sadiman, et.al, 2009).
According to Sudjana' and Rivai (1997) using teaching online media like virtual meeting in a learning process can attract students' interest, focus and motivate their learning. They can learn from activities such as taking notes, responding, and sharing their ideas, and hopefully, the learning process becomes more attractive. There are some studies also focusing on speaking skill as dependent variable that there are significant differences on students speaking skill after being taught by using video (Octavia, 2015; Saleng et al., 2014; Mustikawati, 2013). Those findings show that video technology integration is effective in teaching speaking.

In addition, some other studies focusing on the teacher’s beliefs or perception on integration of technology also have been conducted by prior researchers. Kim et al. (2013) investigated how teacher beliefs were related to technology integration practices. The findings revealed that beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning were significantly correlated with beliefs about effective ways of teaching. Besides, some other researchers learnt the connection between teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices experiences, and it was found that teachers’ beliefs are strongly connected to teaching practices (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992).

According to Nguyen (2021) using video conferencing as online virtual meeting. It is an effective tool that cannot be lacking in distance education when it is the unique way to communicate between teachers and learners in remote learning settings. Conducting video conferences is quite complex when it requires to assure the quality of video and audio, fixed time between teachers and learners, clear teaching strategies, and chances for a face-to-face meeting on screen. In general, learners expressed their appreciation, satisfaction, and engagement in more video conferences activities help to increase learners’ learning attitudes, instructors' presence, and other sense of caring.

However, the prior studies related to the use of technology primarily focus on investigating the effect of online teaching or video technology on different variables (see, for example, Octavia, 2015; Saleng et al., 2014). None of them specifically learned the teachers’ perception and experience in teaching English by using one of the online learning like virtual meeting. Therefore, it is needed a further research to explore not only about the effectiveness of online technology in teaching and learning process or learners’ perceptions in online but also investigating teachers’ perception and experiences of teaching English. In addition, it is also needed a more specific study investigating what kind of technology that teachers integrate in the classroom to get a more focused result.

Regarding to this preliminary study, we will explore the teachers’ perception and experience of teaching English Speaking skill by using one of famous online technology, it was virtual meeting. Further novelty offered regards to become reference and give indirect experiences for the teacher who teaches speaking; so that they can imagine the best strategy to be used. Furthermore, it further becomes one of references for other researchers in conducting other studies in a similar scope. There were two research questions:

RQ1. What are teachers’ attitudes toward teaching speaking skill through virtual meeting?
RQ2. What features of virtual meeting platforms assist and hinder teachers to teach speaking skill?
METHODOLOGY

This exploratory, interpretive, qualitative case study evaluated higher education teachers’ perception of virtual meeting platforms for teaching English speaking in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. As stated by Yin (2013), using a qualitative approach in a study allows researchers to represent the views and perspectives of participants. Subjectively, the interpretive paradigm is the most fit for this study because it is fundamentally concerned with understanding individuals and what impacts their behavior (Babbie & Mouton, 2008). It highlighted the complete complexity of, and provided in-depth insight into, utilizing the app for teaching English speaking, delivering dense responses that appropriately reflect the users’ lived experiences and their experiences with the app (Geertz, 1973 and Creswell, 2014). On an axiological level, the interpretivist paradigm prioritizes relevance over rigor.

FINDINGS

RQ: What are teachers’ attitudes toward teaching speaking skill through virtual meeting?

This research question is to find out what the teachers feel and perceive about teaching speaking skill through virtual meeting. 12 EFL teachers who had experience teaching speaking skill through virtual meeting were interviewed to answer this question. It was found that the majority of the participants (7 teachers) showed positive attitudes while 2 showed negative attitudes. The other 3 participants are in neutral position that they are benefited by virtual meeting only in some cases of Speaking instruction. The result of the teachers’ attitudes is illustrated in the following diagram:

The teachers’ positive attitudes are described specifically through some extracts below.

Effectiveness
Six interviewees responded that video conference platform is effective medium of teaching speaking skill as it enables teacher and students to communicate face-to-face even though they are not at the same location.

**P6**: *During the pandemic, I usually taught speaking by Zoom meeting. I think teaching speaking lecture by Zoom is good and effective. By Zoom meeting, I can directly watch my students when they practice speaking.*

One interviewee even described more specifically how virtual meeting help her teaching speaking skill.

**P10**: *I really enjoy teaching speaking through virtual meeting. Even though I cannot directly meet my students, I still can teach them speaking effectively through Google Meet. I still can give explanation orally, and my students still can ask question directly. Besides, I am still able to look at my students’ expression when they practice speaking, and I can correct their pronunciation directly after they practice.*

**Easiness**

While some technology-based learning media are difficult to use for teaching practical subject, video conference platforms like Zoom and Google Meet, are able to motivate teachers to teach Speaking skill because they are easy to access and operate. Besides, these platforms ease the teaching process of Speaking lecture in some ways. These are mentioned by four interviewees, like the following responses.

**P11**: *Even though many people say that teaching practical lecture is much better in offline mode, I still believe that teaching speaking lecture through virtual meeting is not less good. Besides easy to use, Zoom also have features that help me teaching speaking skill, like recording. I can evaluate the students’ speaking skill, as well as the learning process, more easily by this feature.*

**P3**: *For me, teaching speaking through virtual meeting is easier than in offline meeting. In virtual meeting, I can easily identify my students who have much and little participation as I can easily identify them by their name shown on the application.*

**Availability**

Teaching speaking skill through virtual meeting also help teachers in obtaining more varied teaching materials. Being in virtual world means the teachers and the students are connected to network, and this makes them easy to search and share learning materials from internet. Four participants raised this issue in their interview. This is reflected in the following response:

**P1**: *The good thing of virtual meeting for teaching speaking is that I can explore more examples on YouTube or Google, then immediately share the videos to my students. Like when I taught about expressions, I search on YouTube video about the use of that expression by native speaker, then asked my students to practice.*

**Interactivity**

In spite of the common idea saying that virtual meeting makes the learning process less interactive, 3 respondents in this research apparently showed the drawback. Based on the
experience of the 3 respondents, the students became more active in virtual meeting compared to
offline meeting. This can be seen in one of responses below:

**P4**: …. The students asked more questions, and participated more in learning process
via Zoom. Every time I gave them opportunity to ask or give opinion, most of them
showed “raise hand” feature in Zoom.

In contrast, 2 teachers show negative attitude toward the application of virtual meeting for
speaking skill lecture. The negative attitudes are illustrated as follows.

**Limited expression**

Of 12 lecturers, 2 emphasized about how their expressions in teaching are limited due to
virtual meeting. This is illustrated in the following teacher’s response:

**P2**: …. Besides that, when I teach speaking through virtual meeting, I am not enthusiastic
inserting humour or fun things in my teaching because there is only limited response
from the students. it may be caused by the bad signal.

**P5**: In my opinion, virtual meeting is a good medium, but direct face-to-face meeting
definitely is the best for speaking class. Based on my experience, some important
points in speaking, like expression, eye contact, and body language cannot be
conveyed well through virtual meeting

**Limited Variation**

Besides expression, the other thing which is restricted by virtual meeting is variation, in
this case variation of teaching strategy and instructional activity.

**P2**: About virtual meeting for teaching speaking, I think it can be an alternative when the
meeting cannot be conducted face-to-face in offline meeting. However, I personally
try to make my speaking class offline. It’s because teaching speaking skill online just
make my students bored with the limited kinds of activities, whereas in offline class, I
can make it through various activities, like games, story-telling, drama, and others.

**P5**: …. Unfortunately, in virtual meeting, the task that I could give to my students merely
to create a video or just record themselves speaking about a particular topic. That’s
why I rarely use virtual meeting for teaching speaking.

**RQ2. What features of virtual meeting platforms assist and hinder teachers to teach
speaking skill?**

**Zoom and Google meet**

The interviewees said that the most virtual meeting platforms for teaching speaking skill
are Zoom and Google Meet. Most agreed that Zoom and Google Meet are easy to use and there
are some features of them that can be an effective way to improve speaking skills as it allows for
more individualized practice and feedback. P1 and P7 noted this as follows:

**P1**: For me, I most used zoom meeting for teaching speaking skill. I say that because zoom
meeting is easy to use for me
P7: Zoom and google meet. This virtual meeting has some feature that help me as lecturer giving individualized practice and feedback.

Feature
Lecturers found several features of virtual meeting platforms to be useful when teaching speaking skills are Breakout Rooms, Recording and Screen sharing. According to P5, P3 and P9:

P5: I felt most useful of virtual meeting is its features, for example breakout rooms allows the lecturer to divide the class into smaller groups for group discussions and activities, which can be an effective way to improve speaking skills as it allows for more individualized practice and feedback.

P3: Feature recording and screen sharing are helpful in teaching speaking. Because feature recording has the ability to record the class session and play it back for the students, which is beneficial for speaking practice as students can review their own performance and receive feedback on their speaking skills.

P9: While screen sharing is enables, we to share their screen with the students, which can be useful for showing visual aids, presentations, and other materials related to the speaking lesson.

Flexibility
The lecturers agreed that virtual meeting platforms allow for flexibility in terms of scheduling and location, which can be beneficial for remote or hybrid learning setups. Lecturers can conduct classes from anywhere and at any time, and students can join from their own location. As P4 and P2 noted:

P4: Teaching in virtual meeting is flexible because we can be accessed from anywhere and on different devices

P2: Virtual meeting is interesting because it can join the class in anywhere and any time

Technical difficulties
Most lecturer indicated dissatisfaction with virtual meeting platforms when teaching speaking skill because it can be prone to technical difficulties such as connection issues, audio or video lag, or software crashes, which can disrupt the class and make it difficult for the lecturer to provide effective instruction. As P9 said:

P9: Technical difficulties can make the speaking class is not effective instruction, such as connection and audio of video

P6 added:

P6: Limited access to students make it harder for the lecturer to assist the students who may have difficulties with the technology.

Distractions
The interviewees felt virtual meetings can be more susceptible to distractions for both the lecturer and the students in teaching speaking skill, such as notifications, background noise, or other interruptions. As P7 said:
DISCUSSION

Numerous innovative technologies, including virtual meetings, are being implemented in the teaching English speaking. Technology is considered indispensable for achieving successful performance outcomes. Consideration has been given to the use of technological tools to assist teachers in overcoming obstacles in teaching English speaking, particularly for virtual meetings. The findings of the study are consistent with previous research on the same subject.

1. Teachers’ Attitudes toward Teaching Speaking Skill through Virtual Meeting

In terms of their attitudes, all teachers responded positively to virtual meetings, according to the findings. They were delighted that the virtual meeting had been so beneficial. This is consistent with the findings of Kultawanich et al. (2015), who asserted that virtual meetings are one of the most effective methods for conducting online learning. Teachers can provide oral feedback and facilitate oral communication with students by questioning and answering queries related to speaking class. In addition, teachers' perceptions of the virtual meeting's usability in teaching English as a second language and their intentions to use it have contributed to their favourable attitude towards its use. Teachers are able to evaluate students' speaking skills by using the recording feature of Zoom and Google Meet. In accordance with the findings of park and bonk (2007), online synchronous learning enables the sharing and viewing of presentation content, as well as the recording and archiving of sessions.

In addition, using virtual meetings to teach English speaking is equivalent to the teachers being connected to the network. According to the findings of the study, teachers obtained a variety of instructional materials, particularly on YouTube and Google. Teachers are able to share videos directly from YouTube (e.g., pronunciation and expressions) and play them in virtual meetings for students to view and practice. This facilitates teachers' access to online resources (Dung, 2020). Using virtual meetings, students are more interactive in the teaching and learning process, such as by asking the instructor more questions.

On the other hand, some teachers emphasize two drawbacks of virtual meetings. The first is that not all subjects, such as speaking English, can utilize virtual meetings (Fitria, 2020). Expression, eye contact, and body language are crucial aspects of the English language that cannot be conveyed through a virtual encounter. Second, when the teachers teach speaking English directly, they can create a variety of activities, such as games, story-telling, and drama, but the use of virtual meetings will limit the learning activities associated with speaking English. The findings have been supported through the study of Putri & Suryaman (2022) where students become tired with online learning (Putri & Suryaman, 2022).

2. Features of Virtual Meeting Platforms Assist and Hinder Teachers to Teach Speaking Skill

P7: ... one of difficulties VM is distraction such as notifications, background noise, or other interruptions for our environment when we practice on speaking.
In a learning and teaching process, a virtual meeting can pique students' attention, give them direction, and inspire them to learn (Sudjana and Rivai, 1997). Technology advancements have led to the creation of numerous features for virtual meeting platforms that make it simpler for users to use it in training English, particularly speaking ability. According to data, Google Meet and Zoom are the most popular virtual meeting platforms for training speaking skills. The speaking abilities of the students can be improved, according to Fakhruddin (2018), by using Google Meet or Zoom Meeting as a teaching tool in speaking exercises. Students have more opportunities to interact with their peers and can expose and explore verbally their speaking abilities when using video conferencing tools like Google Meet or Zoom Meeting.

Beside Zoom and Google Meet, there are also several features of virtual meeting platforms to be useful when teaching speaking skills are Breakout Rooms, Recording and Screen sharing. Platforms for online video chatting provided benefits for teaching English. For smaller-scale group talks, breakout rooms are available in Google Meet and Zoom, for example. Additionally, the presentation of learning materials was made possible by the screen-sharing tool, and the chat function can help with L2 vocabulary and spelling (Kozar, 2016, as cited in Kessler, Loewen, & Trego, 2021).

After analyzing the data, it can be said that using virtual meetings to teach English speaking has both benefits and drawbacks. The majority of the lecturers concurred that virtual meeting platforms allow for scheduling and location flexibility, which can be advantageous for hybrid or remote learning setups. Classes can be taught at any time and from any location by lecturers, and students can attend from their own location. It is supported by Vurdien (2019), video conferencing eliminated peer pressure from online discussions and offered flexibility because it gave students more time to get ready for their synchronous tasks. According to Vurdien, these advantages might encourage the growth of speaking fluency.

On the other hand, although the teaching and learning process could take place through remote learning, virtual meetings have technical issues such as connection problems, audio or video lag, and software crashes that can disrupt the class and make it challenging for the teacher to provide effective instruction. The poor internet connection of both teachers and students posed a problem, as it prevented teachers from responding to students' questions and providing feedback. Students' lack of motivation and engagement in online learning was also a challenge, as evidenced by instances such as lower participation in learning activities, slower responses to instructions, and lower attendance rates (Nugroho, Haghegh, and Triana, 2021). Virtual meetings can also be more susceptible to distractions, such as notifications, background noise, and other interruptions, for both the lecturer and the students when teaching speaking skills.

CONCLUSION

Virtual meetings are an effective method for teaching English speaking, providing oral feedback, evaluating students' speaking skills, and providing access to instructional materials. However, some teachers emphasize the drawbacks of virtual meetings, such as not all subjects, such as speaking English, being able to use them. Virtual meeting platforms are popular for teaching speaking skills, with Google Meet and Zoom being the most popular. Breakout Rooms, Recording and Screen sharing are also useful. Virtual meetings can be beneficial for teaching English speaking, but have technical issues and lack of motivation and engagement.

Teaching English speaking with virtual meeting will become more popular to make users feel safe and comfortable with the complement of teachers and mentors. Future studies are needed.
on a large scale, including best activities done by the teacher to make the learning process fun as when they conduct face-to-face learning in the class.

REFERENCES


